





Article

Importance of Pedagogical Practice in Teaching Satisfaction

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Abstract: The motivation shown by teachers in the early stages of their professional development affects their future professional competence and adaptability to an occupational setting. This study explores the motivational variables that affect satisfaction with choosing a degree in pedagogy in Chile by comparing teachers in training with in-service teachers. A quantitative non-experimental and correlational–explanatory design was used, surveying 758 participants (328 teachers in training and 430 in-service teachers) using the FIT-Choice questionnaire. Results reveal that intrinsic motivations, such as the desire to work with children, teenagers, and previous teaching experiences, have a strong positive correlation with satisfaction in both groups. This reveals the importance of encouraging and strengthening practical experience in initial teacher training. Furthermore, the differences in the value of job security and social contribution reflect the evolution of motivation from initial teacher training up to professional practice.

Keywords: pedagogy; teaching practice; teaching education; occupational satisfaction; motivation



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1. Introduction

Pedagogical practice in initial teacher training is a central topic in educational research, emphasizing its fundamental role in the professional development of future teachers (Barrios, 2024; García-Lázaro et al., 2022; Saiz-Linares & Ceballos-López, 2020).

It not only provides pre-service teachers with opportunities to apply theories and knowledge in real-world contexts but also fosters a deep understanding of teaching and learning processes while significantly enhancing their professional and personal development (Cano-Quintero & Ordoñez, 2021; Vanegas-Ortega & Fuentealba-Jara, 2019; Villalobos-Iturriaga et al., 2021).

Research also highlights the critical role of pedagogical practice in teacher training, which not only impacts future teachers' decisions to enter the educational field but also influences their satisfaction with their career choice (Rots et al., 2012). This evidence suggests that experiences during training can modify initial motivations, enhancing a sense of professional competence and adaptation to workplace realities. Consequently, it is essential that initial teacher training programs incorporate rich and varied pedagogical practices that reflect the demands and challenges of contemporary educational settings. Indeed, Rots et al. (2012) argues that experiences in pedagogical practice can profoundly transform pre-service teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward their future profession. Through direct interaction with the school environment, pre-service teachers face challenges, develop

classroom management skills, and gain a more in-depth understanding of student learning dynamics. These experiences are crucial for fostering a sense of professional competence and forming a strong teaching identity. [Tang et al. \(2015\)](#) emphasize the importance of pedagogical practices in promoting motivational change. By experiencing firsthand the impact of their teaching on students, future teachers can develop a stronger commitment to the profession and greater satisfaction with their career choice. This process of reflection and learning is fundamental for the development of strong intrinsic motivations and a sense of purpose in teaching.

Pedagogical and Educational Motivations in Initial Teacher Training

The research conducted by [Henoach et al. \(2015\)](#) contributes to this discussion by revealing how experiences in pedagogical practice enable pre-service teachers to assess their personal skills and affinities for teaching. These early classroom experiences help future teachers make informed decisions about their suitability and commitment to the teaching profession, thus fostering a more deliberate career choice and a deeper engagement with the profession.

Interest in contributing to society and the desire to work with children and young people emerge as dominant motivational factors, aligning with previous theories that emphasize commitment and a sense of service as primary reasons for entering the teaching profession ([Bakar et al., 2014](#)). This research underscores that intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in choosing teaching as a career, suggesting that enjoyment and passion for teaching, along with an interest in specific subject matters, are essential for long-term commitment to the profession ([Jungert et al., 2014](#); [Struyven et al., 2013](#)). In the educational sphere, motivation is a pivotal lens through which the choice of teaching as a professional vocation is examined. This perspective is supported by [Fray and Gore \(2018\)](#), who argue that motivation constitutes the core of most studies aimed at understanding the reasons behind individuals' decisions to pursue a teaching career ([Akpochofa, 2020](#); [Giersch et al., 2021](#); [Glutsch & König, 2019](#); [Sevilla & Madero, 2023](#); [Silvestre et al., 2020](#)). However, as [Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus \(2014\)](#) note, this phenomenon is complex, influenced by a plurality of often interwoven and competing factors.

Numerous researchers, including [Bakar et al. \(2014\)](#), [Massari \(2014\)](#), and [Reeves and Lowenhaupt \(2016\)](#), have emphasized the predominance of altruistic motivations in choosing teaching, seen as an opportunity to "serve others" and make a meaningful societal impact through committed educational practice. This altruistic disposition intersects with the concept of intrinsic motivation, defined by [Klassen et al. \(2011\)](#) as a driving force in selecting teaching as a profession.

Beyond the commitment to the educational dimension of society, intrinsic motivation encompasses various facets, including the joy and passion for teaching and interest in specific educational topics, as highlighted by [Struyven et al. \(2013\)](#). Intrinsic motivation also relates to the development of cognitive competencies and skills, enhancing the educator's personal and professional growth ([Jungert et al., 2014](#)).

Simultaneously, research has extended its focus to extrinsic motivation, distinguishing between factors related to lifestyle and working conditions. Lifestyle factors include the ability to balance work, family commitments and flexible schedules ([Jungert et al., 2014](#)), while working conditions focus on job security and employment opportunities ([Cheung & Yuen, 2015](#)). The significance of these factors varies greatly across geographical, cultural, political, and economic contexts, revealing significant differences in teaching motivation between Western and non-Western countries ([Jungert et al., 2014](#); [Struyven et al., 2013](#)).

Additionally, some studies suggest the existence of "adaptive" and "maladaptive" motivations as complementary factors to traditional motivational categories ([Wong, 2013](#)).

While adaptive motivation is associated with commitment and the desire to contribute to social and professional development, maladaptive motivation reflects negative perceptions of teaching and discouragement from external influences.

Despite the consensus on the centrality of motivation in choosing teaching as a profession, the literature indicates the need for a more holistic approach that integrates demographic factors, career trajectories, and pedagogical structures into the analysis (König & Rothland, 2012). This should include geopolitical issues and the structuring of school systems across states. Quantitative methodologies, such as the FIT-Choice model, have revealed significant trends in teaching motivation, highlighting the importance of addressing these variations at a structural and political level within the educational system (Watt et al., 2017).

This theoretical framework is enriched by incorporating analyses of gender as a variable, revealing how cultural constructions influence the choice of teaching as a career (González-Sanzana et al., 2023). Moreover, research suggests that understanding students' aspirations toward teaching from an early age is crucial for fostering interest in the profession (McKenzie et al., 2014).

In conclusion, while motivation remains a key interpretative axis in the choice of teaching as a profession, it is imperative to broaden the research perspective to encompass a wider range of factors that shape this phenomenon, contributing to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the dynamics influencing the selection of teaching as a career.

In the vast spectrum of research dedicated to analyzing motivations driving individuals toward a teaching career, academic consensus highlights the importance of intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic motivations as fundamental pillars underpinning the decision to undertake this noble profession (González-Sanzana et al., 2022; González-Sanzana et al., 2023; McKenzie et al., 2014). This approach, deeply rooted in the belief that such motivations are essential for a satisfying and lasting teaching career, is supported by numerous studies underscoring the inability of initial motivations to ensure perseverance through the transition to the workplace. This issue is closely linked to teacher shortages (Benavente et al., 2024; Quiroz, 2024) and high dropout rates in the sector.

From the perspective of socio-cognitive theories, particularly those centered on achievement goals and expectancy values, academic research has delved into the evolution of motivational orientations among pre-service teachers. A shift toward mastery goals over performance goals stands out as a recurring finding, suggesting a significant correlation between prior academic success and the development of a tendency toward continuous improvement and pedagogical excellence. However, this inclination may be threatened by behaviors and attitudes that divert focus from academic performance (Richardson & Watt, 2006).

The FIT-Choice model, derived from expectancy-value theory and developed by Richardson and Watt (2006), emerges as a highly relevant analytical tool, providing a framework for systematically understanding the various factors shaping the choice of teaching as a professional career. This model has proven exceptionally useful when applied to diverse samples and contexts, revealing a complex network of motivations that vary not only across sociocultural contexts but also among educational levels and personal characteristics of pre-service teachers.

This diversity of motivations, ranging from the desire to interact with young people and children to the commitment to intellectual and social advancement, reflects a rich tapestry of factors including, but not limited to, the nature of teaching work, working conditions, and perceptions of quality of life (Sinclair, 2008). This complexity suggests that teaching motivation is a multifaceted phenomenon that must be addressed with a holistic vision adaptable to contextual variations.

The model proposed by Watt et al. (2012) (Figure 1) represents different psychological mechanisms involved in choosing teaching as a career. It assumes that all parts of the model work together in individuals' decision-making processes. From this perspective, individuals are likely to pursue options they believe they have the necessary skills for, assign value to, and consider less costly.

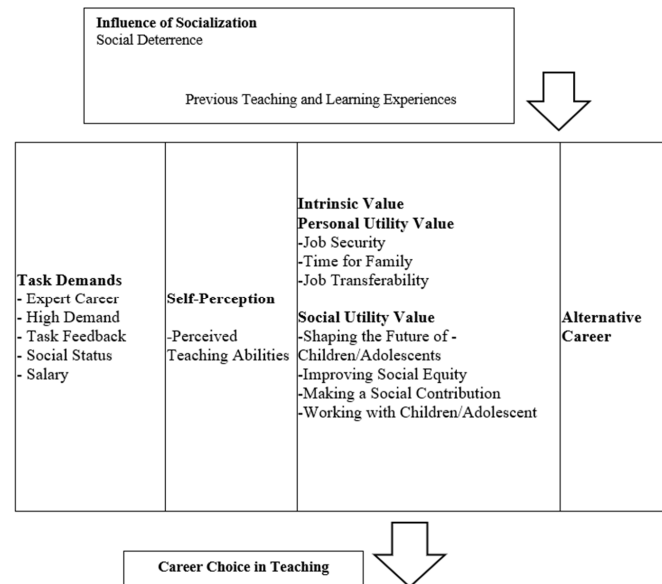


Figure 1. Theoretical FIT-Choice model.

This study aims to analyze the factors influencing satisfaction with the choice of a teaching career, focusing on motivational and perceptual variables among pre-service and in-service teachers. Specifically, it seeks to compare the similarities and differences between these groups, examine the relationships between motivational and perceptual variables within each group, and determine their explanatory power in career satisfaction. Based on this, the research question guiding this study is: What are the similarities and differences in the motivational and perceptual variables influencing satisfaction with the choice of a teaching career between pre-service and in-service teachers?

2. Materials and Methods

For this study, a quantitative non-experimental and correlational–explanatory design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was used to determine differences in motivational factors and satisfaction with pedagogy between the pre-service and in-service teachers. This design can be helpful in studies that want to inform decision-making and to improve or initiate activities or changes in teacher education (Curtis et al., 2016). The design and methodological steps of this study have been validated in previous research with a similar sample and objectives (González-Sanzana et al., 2022), making it relevant for this investigation.

In this context, Satisfaction with Career Choices was the dependent variable, while the other studied variables served as independent variables (Job Security, Shaping the Future of Children/Adolescents, Making a Social Contribution, Working with Children/Adolescents, Prior Teaching and Learning Experiences, Social Influences, Expertise, Social Status, and Social Deterrence).

2.1. Sample

The sample consisted of a group of pre-service and in-service teachers from northern Chile (N = 758). The pre-service teachers were enrolled in degree programs in special

education, elementary education, and early childhood education at a state university (N = 328). The in-service teachers were employed in public schools in Chile (N = 430).

2.2. Data Collection and Research Instrument

Data were collected using the “Factors Influencing Teacher Choice” (FIT-Choice) questionnaire developed by Watt and Richardson (2007) and translated into Spanish by Gratacós and Puig (2016). The study conducted by González-Sanzana et al. (2024) confirmed that the scale is valid and reliable for use in the Chilean context. This scale assesses motivation and perceptions related to choosing a teaching career, including achievement expectations, subjective task value, and social influences. The version used in this study remained largely unchanged, except for minor linguistic adjustments for cultural relevance and the removal of one item from the “Social Status” factor, as prior research indicated it did not contribute to the scale’s reliability.

The FIT-Choice Scale comprises 57 items distributed across 12 motivational and 6 perceptual factors, using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Motivational dimensions include “Social Utility Value” (altruistic motivations), “Personal Utility Value” (extrinsic motivations), “Task Demand” (perceived workload and challenges), and “Task Return” (financial and social benefits). Additionally, the instrument evaluates satisfaction with career choice, perceived ability, social influences, prior teaching experiences, and professional expectations, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping teaching motivation and commitment.

2.3. Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using R-project 4.3.1 software with the Jamovi 2.4.8 graphical user interface. The internal reliability of the measurement instruments was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. The assumption of normality was evaluated using the Shapiro–Wilk W-test, while the homogeneity of variances was tested with Levene’s F-test. To estimate differences between pre-service and in-service teachers in the evaluated dimensions, the non-parametric equivalent of the independent samples *t*-test (Mann–Whitney U-test) was applied. Spearman’s bivariate correlation tests were used to identify the most significant correlations between Satisfaction with Career Choice and other variables for both pre-service and in-service teachers. Additionally, multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (Satisfaction with Career Choice) explained by the other evaluated variables. The research process is shown in Figure 2.

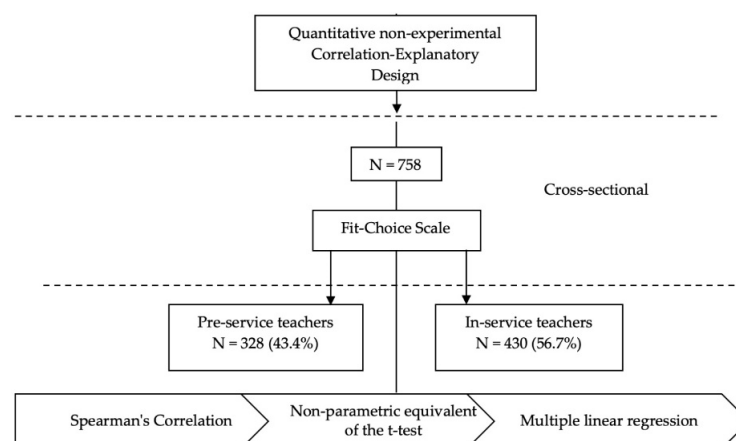


Figure 2. Research process flowchart.

3. Results

3.1. Preliminary Analysis

The reliability estimates for the instruments used to measure the analyzed dimensions showed adequate values (see Table 1), indicating good internal consistency for the measurement tools.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations (SDs), and Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each dimension.

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Alpha
Satisfaction with Career Choice	6.34	0.82	0.74
Job Security	5.26	1.17	0.70
Shaping the Future of Children/Adolescents	6.55	0.66	0.77
Making a Social Contribution	6.34	0.72	0.67
Working with Children/Adolescents	6.28	0.95	0.80
Prior Teaching and Learning Experiences	6.05	1.14	0.81
Social Influences	5.47	1.46	0.78
Expertise	6.02	0.84	0.80
Social Status	4.45	1.20	0.83
Social Deterrence	3.98	1.72	0.77

Note: pre-service teachers N = 328; in-service teachers N = 430.

3.2. Similarities and Differences Between In-Service and Pre-Service Teachers Across Evaluated Dimensions

Significant differences were found between in-service and pre-service teachers across all dimensions (see Table 2), except for Shaping the Future of Children/Adolescents ($p = 0.366$) and Social Influences ($p = 0.082$). In the former, in-service teachers scored higher, while in the latter, pre-service teachers achieved better scores.

Table 2. Non-parametric equivalents of the independent sample *t*-test results for differences between in-service and pre-service teachers.

Dimensions	Pre-Service Teachers	In-Service Teachers	Statistic	Sig.
Satisfaction with Career Choice	6.21	6.43	62,464	0.005
Job Security	5.40	5.15	63,184	0.014
Shaping the Future of Children/Adolescents	6.51	6.59	68,044	0.366
Making a Social Contribution	6.15	6.49	51,383	<0.001
Working with Children/Adolescents	6.37	6.21	60,626	<0.001
Prior Teaching and Learning Experiences	5.89	6.18	63,365	0.014
Social Influences	5.57	5.39	65,372	0.082
Expertise	5.87	6.13	56,863	<0.001
Social Status	4.54	4.38	64,239	0.035
Social Deterrence	3.75	4.16	59,499	<0.001

Note: pre-service teachers N = 328; in-service teachers N = 430. No significant value < 0.05.

Regarding the dimensions with significant differences, in-service teachers scored higher in most dimensions, except for Job Security, Working with Children/Adolescents, and Social Status, where pre-service teachers had higher scores.

3.3. Bivariate Correlations

Significant correlations were observed between Satisfaction with Career Choice and the other evaluated dimensions for both in-service and pre-service teachers (see Table 3). All correlations were positive, except for Social Deterrence, which had a negative correlation for pre-service teachers.

Table 3. Spearman’s bivariate correlations (rs) between Satisfaction with Career Choice and other evaluated dimensions for pre-service and in-service teachers.

Dimensions	Satisfaction with Career Choice	
	Pre-Service Teachers	In-Service Teachers
Job Security	0.41 ***	0.31 ***
Shaping the Future of Children/ Adolescents	0.42 ***	0.50 ***
Making a Social Contribution	0.53 ***	0.31 ***
Working with Children/ Adolescents	0.46 ***	0.59 ***
Prior Teaching and Learning Experiences	0.20 ***	0.55 ***
Social Influences	0.42 ***	0.32 ***
Expertise	0.17 **	0.31 ***
Social Status	0.18 **	0.14 **
Social Deterrence	−0.12 *	0.11 *

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

The highest correlations ($rs \geq 0.5$) for pre-service teachers were found with Making a Social Contribution ($rs = 0.53$). For in-service teachers, the strongest correlations were observed with Shaping the Future of Children/Adolescents ($rs = 0.50$), Working with Children/Adolescents ($rs = 0.59$), and Prior Teaching and Learning Experiences ($rs = 0.55$).

3.4. Explanatory Variables for Satisfaction with the Choice of Teaching Among Practicing and Pre-Service Teachers

The significance of the explanatory variables for Satisfaction with the Choice of teaching among pre-service and practicing teachers was assessed through a linear regression model (see Table 4).

Table 4. Linear regression of “Satisfaction with the Choice of Teaching” with explanatory variables for pre-service and practicing teachers.

Covariates	Satisfaction with the Choice of Teaching			
	Pre-Service Teachers		Practicing Teachers	
	β	t	β	t
	0.22	5.83 ***	−0.01	−0.4
Job Security	−0.09	−1.16	−0.22	−2.47 *
Making a Social Contribution	0.21	3.09 **	0.02	0.38
Working with Children/Adolescents	0.45	8.06 ***	0.29	7.05 ***
Previous Teaching and Learning Experiences	−0.04	−1.35	0.3	7.58 ***
Social Influences	0.09	2.83 **	0.04	1.69
Expertise	0.03	0.56	0.12	3.26 **
Social Status	0.02	1.28	0.01	0.7
Social Deterrence	−0.05	−2.11 *	−0.4	−2.40 *
F	34.5 ***		26.9 ***	
R ²	0.494 ***		0.365 ***	

Note: pre-service teachers N = 328; in-service teachers N = 430. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

For pre-service teachers, Satisfaction with their Choice was explained at 49.4% by the explanatory variables, particularly the variables Job Security and Working with Children/Adolescents, which were the most significant. These were followed by Making a Social Contribution, Social Influences, and Social Deterrence; the latter being the least significant and negatively affecting the dependent variable. For practicing teachers, Satisfaction with their Choice was explained at 36.5% by the explanatory variables, particularly the

variables Working with Children/Adolescents and Previous Teaching and Learning Experiences, which were the most significant. These were followed by Social Influences, Shaping the Future of Children/Adolescents, and Social Deterrence. The last two variables were the least significant and negatively affected the dependent variable. The explanatory variables Working with Children/Adolescents and Social Deterrence significantly explained Satisfaction with the Choice of Teaching for both pre-service and practicing teachers.

The weight of significant explanatory variables contributing to the variance in Satisfaction with the Choice of Teaching was estimated. For pre-service teachers (see Table 5), the most significant variables explained 43% of the variation in Satisfaction, where the variable Job Security contributed 18%, and the remaining 25% resulted from its interaction with the variable Working with Children/Adolescents. The variable Social Influences added 4% to the explanation of the dependent variable, and the remaining variables, Making a Social Contribution and Social Deterrence, contributed an additional 2%.

Table 5. Summary of models for pre-service teachers (N = 328).

Model	Covariates	R ²	F
1	Working with children/adolescents	0.22	122.7
2	Working with children/adolescents + Previous teaching and learning experiences	0.32	102.1
3	Working with children/adolescents + Previous teaching and learning experiences + Expertise	0.34	72.3
4	Working with children/adolescents + Previous teaching and learning experiences + Expertise + Shaping the future of children/adolescents	0.35	57.8
5	Working with children/adolescents + Previous teaching and learning experiences + Expertise + Shaping the future of children/adolescents + Social deterrence	0.36	47.7

For practicing teachers (see Table 6), the most significant variables accounted for 32% of the variation in the dependent variable. Specifically, Working with Children/Adolescents contributed 22%, and the variable Previous Teaching and Learning Experiences added an additional 10%. The remaining variables—Expertise, Shaping the Future of Children/Adolescents, and Social Deterrence—collectively provided an additional 4%. For both pre-service and practicing teachers, the variable Working with Children/Adolescents contributed the most to explaining the variation in Satisfaction with the Choice of Teaching. In both cases, the variable Social Deterrence contributed the least to explaining the variation in the dependent variable.

Table 6. Summary of models for in-service teachers N = 430.

Model	Covariates	R ²	F
1	Job security	0.18	70.1
2	Job security + Working with children/adolescents	0.43	125.0
3	Job security + Working with children/adolescents + Social influences	0.47	94.9
4	Job security + Working with children/adolescents + Social influences + Making a social contribution	0.48	73.8
5	Job security + Working with children/adolescents + Social influences + Making a social contribution + Social deterrence	0.49	61.4

4. Discussion

The data from this study highlight several important findings. The variables “Working with Children/Adolescents” and “Previous Teaching and Learning Experiences” show a strong positive correlation with Satisfaction in both groups studied. These findings are consistent with prior literature (Hench et al., 2015; Tang et al., 2015), which emphasizes that practical experiences are crucial for a fulfilling teaching career. Indeed, the linear regression

analysis revealed that “Working with Children/Adolescents” is one of the significant explanatory variables for Career Choice Satisfaction in both groups. This reinforces the idea that direct and meaningful contact with students is a central component of professional satisfaction in teaching. This finding aligns with research demonstrating that positive classroom experiences can solidify professional identity and enhance commitment to the teaching career (Richardson & Watt, 2006).

On the other hand, the variable “Job Security” showed significant differences between in-service and pre-service teachers. Future teachers appear to value Job Security more highly, suggesting that expectations about job stability are a motivational factor to consider during initial teacher training. In contrast, in-service teachers seem more focused on intrinsic aspects and personal fulfillment in their work. This aligns with studies indicating that extrinsic motivations, such as Job Security, tend to be more relevant in the early stages of a professional career (Jungert et al., 2014).

Furthermore, the variable “Making a Social Contribution” was significant for pre-service teachers but less relevant for in-service teachers. This can be interpreted as an indication that future teachers are more driven by altruistic ideals and the desire to make a societal impact at the beginning of their careers. As they gain experience, these ideals may evolve or integrate with other motivations centered on self-efficacy and personal satisfaction, suggesting a shift in motivations throughout the teaching career (Acosta-García & Navarro-Ibañez, 2025; Reeves & Lowenhaupt, 2016).

Finally, the variables “Social Deterrence” and “Expertise” also showed significance, though with differentiated effects between the groups. Social deterrence had a negative impact on Satisfaction, particularly among pre-service teachers, indicating that negative influences can diminish enthusiasm and motivation during initial training. In contrast, the perception of expertise or competence had a positive effect, especially among in-service teachers, highlighting the importance of feeling competent and valued in daily professional practice. These results underscore the need to support both future and current teachers through mentoring and professional development programs that strengthen their skills and counteract external negative influences.

Moreover, these findings highlight the importance of strengthening practical experiences in initial teacher training, as they play a crucial role in shaping long-term professional satisfaction and commitment (Vanegas-Ortega & Fuentealba-Jara, 2019). Similarly, for in-service teachers, prioritizing student interaction over administrative tasks is essential, as continuous classroom engagement can enhance their professional fulfillment and reinforce their teaching vocation (Assaf & Antoun, 2024).

However, the results of this study should be interpreted with caution due to its limitations. The exclusive reliance on self-reported data through the FIT-Choice questionnaire may introduce biases. Future research could consider longitudinal and experimental designs, as well as tracking teacher trajectories to validate and expand these findings.

From a practical perspective, the authors of this study recommend enhancing pedagogical practices during initial teacher training to ensure that future teachers have ample opportunities to interact directly with children and adolescents in real teaching contexts. This could be achieved by integrating more extensive and varied practicum programs. In this regard, the findings of this study contribute to the field of educational research by expanding the understanding of the FIT-Choice model. The evolution of motivations from more extrinsic to intrinsic as teachers gain practical experience offers valuable insight into how professional motivations may shift over time.

5. Conclusions

Working with children and adolescents emerges as a key factor that positively influences professional satisfaction among both pre-service and in-service teachers. The findings of this study underscore the importance of pedagogical practices in career satisfaction for both pre-service and in-service teachers. This suggests that teacher training institutions could prioritize and/or extend practicum experiences, as also recommended by [García-Lázaro et al. \(2024\)](#).

The creation of practical experiences involving direct work and interaction with children and adolescents is essential to enhance satisfaction and, consequently, the professional practice of teaching. Moreover, the comparison between pre-service and in-service teachers reveals significant differences in the valuation of extrinsic factors, such as job security, and intrinsic factors, such as social contribution. Pre-service teachers exhibit greater concern for job stability, while in-service teachers place higher value on the social impact and intrinsic satisfaction of their work. These findings highlight the need to design training and professional development programs that address these differences, offering tailored support at each stage of the teaching career.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

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