

## Targeting Sustainability of Education Service Industry

### -- Relationship between Psychological Incentive and Subjective Well-being of Service Providers

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#### Abstract

The psychological incentive and subjective well-being of service providers are becoming more and more crucial in the sustainability of education service industry. Under the background of increasingly diversified information channels, what are the sources of subjective well-being of educational practitioners? Is it driven by economic or non-economic factors? To answer these questions, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth study for better understanding the sources of subjective well-being. Based on a representative survey of university teachers in China, this research investigates the effects of psychological incentives on subjective well-being. Our results prove that the individual subjective well-beings are significantly influenced by heterogeneous psychological incentives. Those who are motivated by positive psychological incentives will enjoy higher levels of subjective well-being in their work. Furthermore, although economic incentives still play important roles in individual well-being, non-economic factors, such as career development prospects and freedom appeal are playing increasingly critical roles in the individual subjective well-being. Therefore, economic incentive and non-economic incentive measures should be combined to enhance the subjective well-being of educational practitioners.

#### Keywords

Sustainable Development; Subjective Well-being; Psychological Incentives; Influencing Factors.

#### 1. Introduction

Subjective well-being refers to one's overall evaluation towards the quality of life based on one's own set of standard. Service providers especially the teachers' subjective well-being will not only affect their own quality of life, but also will affect their students' psychology, behavior and learning performance (Liepa, Dudkina and Sile, 2012). Moreover, with the rapidly transformative process of society and economy, as well as the enrollment expansion in schools and the deepening reform of education system in China, teachers will inevitably face with more and more new challenges. Teachers are more likely to be stressed since they have to face more

complicated teaching work, social concerns, parents' demands, and other unpredictable factors. Therefore, knowing the characteristics and the sources of teachers' subjective well-being not only helps to improve their working efficiency and provide better educational environment, but also helps to alleviate or eliminate teachers' sub-health caused by occupational stress. It is crucial for flourishing teachers' professional development, and achieving good teacher-student interactions and students' self-efficacy, which has aroused great attention within the scientific community. Thus, this paper tries to explore teachers' happiness issues, analyzes the influencing factor of teachers' subjective well-being and puts forward some countermeasures to improve teachers' sense of happiness.

The contribution of this paper to the literature including: First, the significance of our study lies in its contributions to the psychological management measures and related education and training strategies for educational administration organizations to enhance the teachers' subjective well-being. Second, the mechanisms of different dimensions of psychological incentives on teachers' subjective well-being are clarified. Third, the hypotheses are well supported, and educational administration organizations should pay more attention to the teachers' psychological incentives and intrinsic motivations.

## 2. Literature Review

Some literatures have discussed the issue of teachers' subjective well being. Yin et al.(2016) examined the relationships between teachers' work environment and teachers' well-being, and found that the trust in colleagues was beneficial to teacher's well-being. Bermejo et al.(2013) analyzed the impacts of work demands, personal resources and job resources on teachers' well-being, and found that work demands and resources showed significant effects on teachers' burnout and engagement. Moè (2016) examined the relationships between passions for teaching and teachers' well-being. From these studies we can conclude that both external environment and individual internal characteristics play an important role in teachers' sense of happiness.

Through many previous studies, it can be known that teachers' psychological incentives are closely related to their subjective well-being. However, these papers did not clarify whether and how various dimensions of psychological incentives will affect teachers' subjective well-being, especially in the context of developing countries. Thus, this paper selects two hundred and ninety-nine teachers from the educational institutions as our study objects in a random sampling investigation. We aim to explore the impacts and mechanisms of teachers' psychological incentives on teachers' subjective well-being, and then put forward some suggestions to improve the status of teachers' subjective well-being.

## 3. Theories and Hypotheses

Teachers' subjective well-beings were often influenced by varied factors. The psychological incentives are one of the most important influencing factors. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, teachers are motivated to achieve certain needs, ranging from deficiency needs to growth needs(Maslow,1943). Parkash (2015) discussed the relationship of socio-economic status and well-being of teacher or educators, and found that there was a significant difference between the well-being of teachers with high or low socio-economic status. Ryff & Singer (1996) thought that autonomy, personal growth, purpose in life, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and positive relations with others are the decisive factors of individual's subjective well-being. Lopez-Sanchez et al.(2017) studied teachers' well-being and their possibilities for improvement in the educational context, and emphasized the value of teachers' opinions. Ozu et al.(2017) compared the levels of psychological well-being among teachers from United States of America, Turkey, and Pakistan, and found that positive psychology is crucial for the

variations in teachers' well-being between them. A plenty of studies found that being highly motivated, having social needs met in the school environment, having sufficient skills, and having positive relationships with others were major influencing factors of well-being of teachers (Bentea, 2015; Gozzoli et al., 2015; Roffey, 2012).

Based on all above the theoretical basis and empirical evidences, this study selected incentive dimensions of income, occupational safety, working environment, working time, chance of promotion, task attractiveness, job collaboration, usage of ability and skills, respective from others and opportunity to express opinions to measure one's own psychological incentives. And the following hypotheses can be asserted.

H1. Teachers' psychological incentives are related to their subjective well-being.

H2-H11. Teachers' incentives for income, occupational safety, working environment, working time, chance of promotion, task attractiveness, job collaboration, usage of ability and skills, respective from others and opportunity to express opinions are positively related to subjective well-being.

Theoretical model is shown in Figure 1.

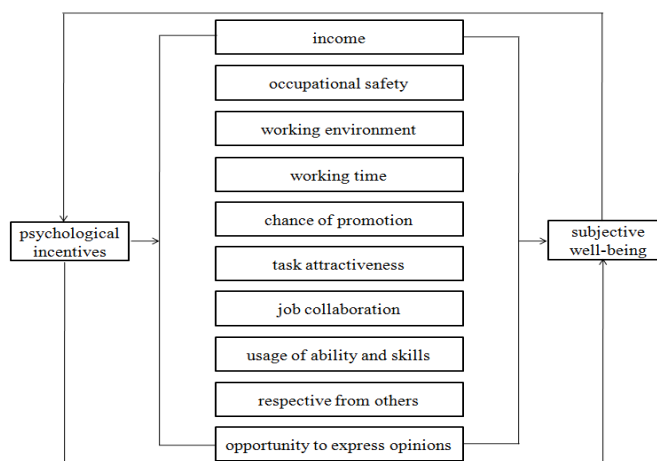


Figure 1. Theoretical model

#### 4. Research Methodology

In order to measure the relationship between psychological incentives and subjective well-being of teachers, this study use a comprehensive database of labor, the China Labor-force Dynamic Survey (short for CLDS) conducted by Sun Yat-sen University in 2014. The CLDS takes 15-64 years of working population as research sample and covers 29 provinces and major cities in China, which is nationally representative. This survey adopts multi-stage, multi-level and proportional sampling method with labor scale. After deleting the non teacher samples, we finally selected 299 samples from this database as our research object, including teachers with different demographic characteristics and family background.

According to the questionnaire, teachers' psychological incentives contained eleven dimensions, namely incentives of income, occupational safety, working environment, working time, chance of promotion, task attractiveness, job collaboration, usage of ability and skills, respective from others and opportunity to express opinions. The subjective well-being was measured through the question based on their happiness scale. Teachers' psychological incentives scale adopted Likert 5-point scoring method. The answer to each question was divided into five levels, including absolutely disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree, totally agree, and scored from 1 to 5 points respectively. Teachers' subjective well-being scale also adopted

Likert 5-point scoring method. In order to facilitate the analysis, 4 and 5 are defined as 1, and the other is defined as 0.

## 5. Data Source and Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis is shown in table 1. We can see that the incentive of usage of ability and skills rank the first, following by respective from others and occupational safety. We can judge that teachers' non-economic incentives and mental health are becoming more and more important.

**Table 1.** Statistical analysis results

	<b>Obs</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
subjective well-being	299	0.736	0.442
income	299	0.368	0.483
occupational safety	299	0.719	0.450
working environment	299	0.635	0.482
working time	299	0.592	0.492
chance of promotion	299	0.291	0.455
task attractiveness	299	0.562	0.497
job collaboration	299	0.662	0.474
usage of ability and skills	299	0.742	0.438
respective from others	299	0.729	0.445
opportunity to express opinions	299	0.565	0.497

Statistical differences between psychological incentives and subjective well-being are shown in Table 2. Significance test of mean differences are shown in the last column. Results show that there are significant differences among the opposing groups of all dimensions of psychological incentives. For example, the mean value between higher income group and lower income group is significantly different, and this difference is 0.173. These results indicate that different psychological incentives may be the causes of heterogeneity of teachers' subjective well-being. Correlation test was used to inspect the relationship between those dimensions of psychological incentives and teachers' subjective well-being. And the correlation coefficients are shown in Table 3. The calculation results show that income incentive is significantly positive correlated with subjective well-being ( $P < 0.001$ ), occupational safety incentive has a significant positive correlation to subjective well-being ( $P < 0.01$ ), and working environment is significantly positive correlated with subjective well-being ( $P < 0.05$ ). Moreover, other dimensions of teachers' psychological incentives such as working time, chance of promotion, task attractiveness, job collaboration, usage of ability and skills, respective from others, opportunity to express opinions are also significantly positive correlated with teachers' subjective well-being. Therefore, teachers' psychological incentives are related to subjective well-being in some ways, but it isn't confirmed that if there is a causal relationship between them. Thus, regression analysis is used to further investigate the impact and mechanism of teachers' psychological incentives on well-being.

**Table 2.** Statistical differences between psychological incentives and subjective well-being

	Group	Obs	Mean	Percent	SE	SD	diff
income	0	189	0.672	63.21	0.034	0.471	-0.173***
	1	110	0.845	36.79	0.035	0.363	0.052
occupational safety	0	84	0.631	28.09	0.053	0.485	-0.146***
	1	215	0.777	71.91	0.028	0.417	0.056
working environment	0	109	0.661	36.45	0.046	0.476	-0.118***
	1	190	0.779	63.55	0.031	0.416	0.053
working time	0	122	0.631	40.80	0.044	0.484	-0.177***
	1	177	0.808	59.20	0.030	0.395	0.051
chance of promotion	0	212	0.703	70.90	0.031	0.458	-0.113***
	1	87	0.816	29.10	0.042	0.390	0.056
task attractiveness	0	131	0.611	43.81	0.043	0.489	-0.223***
	1	168	0.833	56.19	0.029	0.374	0.050
job collaboration	0	101	0.634	33.78	0.048	0.484	-0.154***
	1	198	0.788	66.22	0.029	0.410	0.053
usage of ability and skills	0	77	0.532	25.75	0.057	0.502	-0.274***
	1	222	0.806	74.25	0.027	0.396	0.056
respective from others	0	81	0.556	27.09	0.056	0.500	-0.247***
	1	218	0.803	72.91	0.027	0.399	0.056
opportunity to express opinions	0	130	0.662	43.48	0.042	0.475	-0.131***
	1	169	0.793	56.52	0.031	0.406	0.051

**Table 3.** Correlation test of psychological incentives and subjective well-being

	subjective well-being		
	Pearson correlation	Sig.	N
income	0.190	0.001	299
occupational safety	0.149	0.010	299
working environment	0.129	0.025	299
working time	0.197	0.000	299
chance of promotion	0.117	0.043	299
task attractiveness	0.250	0.000	299
job collaboration	0.165	0.004	299
usage of ability and skills	0.272	0.000	299
respective from others	0.249	0.000	299
opportunity to express opinions	0.148	0.010	299

The regression analysis results of teachers' psychological incentives and subjective well-being are shown in Table 4. It can be seen that there are strong linear relationship between teachers' psychological incentives and subjective well-being. The coefficients of various dimensions of psychological incentives are significantly positive, indicating that the higher levels of teachers' psychological incentives, the higher probability of their subjective well-being.

**Table 4.** Regression analysis results of psychological incentives and subjective well-being

	<b>coefficient</b>	<b>Robust SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
income	0.173	0.048	3.56	0.000
occupational safety	0.146	0.060	2.43	0.016
working environment	0.118	0.055	2.17	0.031
working time	0.177	0.053	3.34	0.001
chance of promotion	0.113	0.052	2.17	0.031
task attractiveness	0.223	0.052	4.32	0.000
job collaboration	0.154	0.056	2.74	0.006
usage of ability and skills	0.274	0.063	4.35	0.000
respective from others	0.247	0.062	4.01	0.000
opportunity to express opinions	0.131	0.052	2.52	0.012

It is drawn from the coefficients of the linear model that teachers' psychological incentives of usage of ability and skills has the greatest influence on their subjective well-being, followed by respective from others, task attractiveness, working time, income, job collaboration, occupational safety, opportunity to express opinions, working environment and chance of promotion. From the above results, we know that economic factors such as income incentive are not the only source of happiness for the teachers with the improvement of their economic and social status. Non-economic factors such as the needs of self realization and harmonious interpersonal relationship are playing an increasingly important role in teachers' subjective well-being.

According to all above the analysis results, our hypotheses were strongly verified. They are shown in Table 5. It can be known from Table 5 that the hypotheses are all supported through the statistical analysis of the random survey data.

**Table 5.** Hypotheses testing results

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Test results</b>
H1	Teachers' psychological incentives are related to their subjective well-being.	Support
H2	Teachers' incentives for income are positively related to their subjective well-being.	Support
H3	Teachers' incentives for occupational safety are positively related to their subjective well-being.	Support
H4	Teachers' incentives for working environment are positively related to their subjective well-being.	Support
H5	Teachers' incentives for working time are positively related to their subjective well-being.	Support
H6	Teachers' incentives for chance of promotion are positively related to their subjective well-being.	Support
H7	Teachers' incentives for task attractiveness are positively related to their subjective well-being.	Support
H8	Teachers' incentives for job collaboration are positively related to their subjective well-being.	Support
H9	Teachers' incentives for usage of ability and skills are positively related to their subjective well-being.	Support
H10	Teachers' incentives for respective from others for the job are positively related to their subjective well-being.	Support
H11	Teachers' incentives for opportunity to express opinions are positively related to their subjective well-being.	Support

## 6. Conclusion and Implications

This study was carried out to the teachers in the context of China's educational reform, which enhanced the practicality of the subjective well-being research. The targeted measures of this research by improving teachers' psychological incentives can ensure the positive subjective well-being of China's more than 1578 millions teachers. These conclusions are consistent with the previous research achievements. Our main conclusions are as following. Firstly, teachers' psychological incentives can be divided into eleven dimensions, namely the incentives of income, occupational safety, working environment, working time, chance of promotion, task attractiveness, job collaboration, usage of ability and skills, respective from others and opportunity to express opinions. And the impacts of each dimension on teachers' subjective well-being are different. It is very important to develop targeted psychological management measures and give more relative education and training according to the different impacts of these dimensions. Secondly, as the teachers' psychological incentives has a significant impact on subjective well-being, different motivation measures should be a top priority to ensure teachers' mental health construction, and to actively understand the individual needs of each teacher. And then, teachers' subjective well-being could be satisfied by meeting different psychological incentives. Thirdly, we also find that non-economic factors, such as personal career development prospects and personal freedom space, are playing an increasingly critical role in the improvement of individual subjective well-being.

According to the results of data analysis, there are some scientific advices for educational administrative organizations, schools and teachers to enhance subjective well-being of teachers. First of all, teachers' psychological incentives should be guided through all methods. For the educational administrative organizations, it is necessary to provide adequate fiscal investment in education system and optimize the structure of educational expenditure. Therefore, it can guarantee adequate financial support and harmonious working environment to motivate positive and healthy attitude of teachers. For the school management department and educational administrators, rebuilding management system and optimizing evaluation and incentive system is crucial to reduce teachers' heavy burden and provide loose and democratic social environment. Reform the original evaluation institution, and build up comprehensive evaluation system including the formative evaluation, diagnostic evaluation and summative evaluation to evaluate teachers' performance by diversified evaluation criteria. Moreover, scientific management and incentive system should be established. Teachers' motivation for both deficiency needs and growth needs should be distinguished and guided during different stages of career development.

Secondly, provide help and guidance based on the actual physical and psychological needs of teachers to improve their life satisfaction. Educational administrators could communicate with teachers timely in the office meeting or informal situations, find out and overcome the potential negative thoughts of teachers, remove their psychological pressures, and eliminate their possible displeasure. Encourage teachers to improve their own mental quality, establish good interpersonal relationships and coordinate contradictions with colleagues. Thus, teachers would obtain healthy mentality and happier living conditions through psychological counseling and humanistic care.

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