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Workplace happiness of high school teachers across three regions of Vietnam: A cross-sectional analysis

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors associated with happiness at work among high school teachers in Vietnam. The research aimed to identify how demographic variables and work-related factors influence the well-being of educators across different regions. A cross-sectional research design was employed. Data were collected from 1,025 high school teachers in the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of Vietnam using a convenience sampling approach. The Happiness at Work scale and 11 single-item measures were used to gather data. Statistical analyses, including one-way ANOVA and hierarchical multiple regression, were performed using SPSS software to identify significant predictors. It was found that there were no significant differences in overall happiness at work between male and female teachers. However, significant differences were observed across age groups and years of teaching experience, with older and more experienced teachers reporting higher levels of happiness. Regional differences were also identified, as teachers in the Northern region reported higher well-being compared to those in other areas. Regression analysis revealed that professional recognition and teaching experience were consistent positive predictors of happiness. In contrast, collaboration was found to be negatively associated with teacher well-being. The findings suggest that teacher happiness is influenced by both personal and organizational factors. Recognition from school management is considered a vital resource for enhancing teacher well-being. Furthermore, the negative impact of collaboration suggests that administrative burdens should be reduced to prevent teacher stress. These results may provide a basis for developing policies to improve teacher retention and educational quality in Vietnam.

Keywords: High school teachers; Professional recognition; Teacher happiness; Vietnam; Workplace well-being

1. Introduction

In educational research, the terms well-being, job satisfaction, and workplace happiness are frequently used to describe the psychological state of educators. For high school teachers, happiness at work is considered a vital factor because it is closely linked to teaching quality and professional retention (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018; Toropova et al., 2021). It is suggested that when teacher well-being is maintained, positive outcomes for both students and the school environment may be observed (Dreer, 2024).

Several consistent predictors of teacher happiness have been identified in recent literature. According to the PERMA model, positive emotions, engagement, and a sense of achievement are strongly associated with job satisfaction (Dreer, 2024; Zeng et al., 2019). Furthermore, psychological resources, such as hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy, are reported to have a robust positive effect on workplace well-being (Kun & Gadanecz, 2022; Ortan et al., 2021; Wang, 2024). Interpersonal relationships with students, colleagues, and leaders also emerge as central predictors of satisfaction in secondary settings (Lopes & Oliveira, 2020; Nwoko et al., 2023). When a supportive school climate and workplace spirituality are present, teachers are more likely to find meaning in their work and experience higher levels of engagement (Wu, 2025).

However, teacher happiness can be significantly undermined by specific job demands. High workload and time pressure are recognized as the strongest predictors of lower well-being and increased burnout (Shao et al., 2025; Toropova et al., 2021). It is also observed that work stress and affective rumination can lead to chronic negative emotions, which harm the professional identity of educators (Dhungana et al., 2025; Shao et al., 2025). In summary, the happiness of high school teachers is highest when they possess strong psychological resources and work in a respectful

environment with manageable demands. When these resources are limited, teachers' morale, engagement, work performance, and teaching effectiveness may be negatively affected. Therefore, investigating the factors that influence teacher happiness is important for understanding how schools can support teacher well-being and, indirectly, the quality of educational processes (Kazemi, 2024; Mutesasira & Marongwe, 2024; Sarzhanova & Nurgabdeshov, 2025; Sohail et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2024). Research on teacher happiness has received significant attention across Asia, where both shared and context-specific patterns are observed. In China, it is found that psychological capital, including hope and resilience, strongly predicts occupational well-being and helps teachers manage work-family conflicts (Li et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2021). Similarly, evidence from Indonesia and Pakistan suggests that happiness at work is a primary predictor of mental health, often influenced by organizational support and stable working conditions (Hussain et al., 2022; Sudibjo & Manihuruk, 2022).

In the Vietnamese context, workplace happiness is shaped by unique cultural and structural factors. It is observed that transformational leadership styles in schools may enhance job satisfaction, whereas high workplace demands and organizational politics often increase teacher distress (Hardianto et al., 2025; Maheshwari, 2022; Tee et al., 2026; Tran et al., 2025). During periods of educational reform, significant pressures from stakeholders, such as parents and administrators, have been identified as factors that lower perceived happiness among educators (Tham et al., 2022). Furthermore, it is suggested that current state policies regarding salary and recognition may not be sufficient for teachers to feel fully secure in their roles. A recent study of 360 teachers in Da Nang and Quang Nam also reported that older teachers and female educators tend to experience higher levels of job satisfaction compared to their colleagues (Nguyen-Thi et al., 2024). The Vietnamese education system is undergoing major structural changes due to the 2018 General Education Program. This reform shifts the pedagogical focus from traditional knowledge transmission to competency-based development. Professionally, this transition grants high school teachers greater autonomy and opportunities for instructional innovation. However, it also introduces substantial occupational stress, as high workplace demands and changing institutional dynamics elevate teacher distress (Tran et al., 2025). Many educators, accustomed to rote-memorization practices, now face role ambiguity and pedagogical strain when adapting to student-centered approaches. These challenges are further intensified by mounting pressures from school administrators and demanding parents, both of which are directly linked to lower teacher happiness (Tham et al., 2022).

Furthermore, mandatory digital literacy requirements and the integration of educational technology create steep adaptation barriers, leading to cognitive overload. This pressure is compounded by heavy administrative burdens, extensive paperwork, and rigid institutional governance. When collaborative activities focus more on these administrative tasks than on professional support, teachers often perceive them as an excessive workload and a primary source of stress (Shao et al., 2025; Wang, 2024). Amid these heightened professional demands, high school teachers frequently neglect self-care and emotional regulation. Ultimately, the combination of systemic pressure, high workloads, and a lack of self-care compromises the psychological mechanisms driving workplace happiness and emotional stability (Shao et al., 2025; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Therefore, examining interventions to support teacher well-being under these reform pressures is both critical and deeply meaningful.

Despite these valuable insights, a significant research gap remains. Most existing studies in Vietnam have been limited to specific provinces or small sample sizes, which may not fully represent the diverse experiences of educators nationwide. For instance, the findings reported by Nguyen-Thi et al. (2024) were restricted to a specific geographic area in Central Vietnam. To address this limitation, the current study was designed to investigate teacher happiness on a broader scale. Data were collected from high school teachers across the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of Vietnam. It is hoped that this comprehensive approach will provide a more transparent and representative understanding of the factors influencing teacher well-being in the national context.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

A cross-sectional study was conducted among high school teachers in Vietnam. The open-access data collection approach is highly appropriate for this investigation as it facilitates the simultaneous gathering of data from a large and geographically diverse sample across three distinct regions within a specific timeframe. Consequently, it allows for an efficient, point-in-time assessment of the variance in workplace happiness and its associated predictors across different demographic segments nationwide.

2.2. Participants and Procedure

A total of 1,025 high school teachers in Vietnam participated in this study. All returned questionnaires were complete and valid; therefore, all 1,025 responses were included in the final analysis. The participants were recruited from selected high schools across the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of Vietnam. Due to accessibility and practical constraints in entering educational institutions, the sample was limited to several major urban areas, specifically including Hanoi (North), Da Nang (Central), and Ben Tre (South). A convenience sampling approach with purposive selection of these specific regions was employed to recruit the participants.

Prior to the data collection process, formal permission was obtained from school administrators, and teachers were invited to participate in the study on a completely voluntary basis. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire. Depending on their personal preference, participants could complete either a paper-based version or an online format administered via Google Forms. Throughout the administration process, the research team remained available to provide necessary clarifications to the participants. On average, the questionnaire required approximately 15 minutes to complete. The data collection period was conducted from May 2024 to October 2024.

Table 1
Sociodemographic of Participants (N = 1,025)

	n	%
Gender		
Male	331	32.3
Female	694	67.7
Age Groups		
Under 30 years	91	8.9
30–50 years	822	80.2
Over 50 years	112	10.9
Years of Teaching Experience		
Less than 10 years	195	19.0
10–20 years	482	47.0
More than 20 years	348	34.0
Teaching Region		
Northern region	306	29.9
Central region	360	35.1
Southern region	359	35.0

As shown in Table 1, the sample consisted of 331 male teachers (32.3%) and 694 female teachers (67.7%). In terms of age, the majority of participants were between 30 and 50 years old (80.2%), followed by those over 50 years (10.9%) and under 30 years (8.9%). Regarding teaching experience, 47.0% of the teachers had 10–20 years of experience, 34.0% had more than 20 years, and 19.0% had less than 10 years. In terms of geographical distribution, participants were relatively evenly drawn from the three regions, including the Central region (35.1%), Southern region (35.0%), and Northern region (29.9%).

2.3. Instruments

The Happiness at Work scale developed by Do and Phan (2019) was used in this study. The scale consists of 18 items, which are divided into three subscales: Positive Emotions (4 items), Negative Emotions (4 items), and Value and Satisfaction at Work (10 items). All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (always). The reliability of the subscales was found to be high, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .856 to .947. The overall scale also demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .865. Detailed results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Instrument Descriptive Statistics

	α	*Min–Max*	*Mean*	*Std. Dev.*	*Skewness*	*Kurtosis*
Positive Emotions	.856	1.75–5.00	3.99	.60	−.336	.211
Negative Emotions	.947	1.00–5.00	2.74	1.16	−.250	−.938
Value and Satisfaction at Work	.905	2.00–5.00	4.11	0.55	−.350	.032
Happiness at Work	.865	2.39–5.00	3.89	0.48	−.075	−.080

In addition, 11 single-item measures were included to assess factors that may influence teachers' perceived happiness at work. These factors covered professional competence, relationships with students, colleagues, and school leaders, readiness for work, compensation and benefits, job stability, collaboration, working conditions, recognition, and the perceived meaning of the profession. These items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (no influence) to 5 (very strong influence).

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were first conducted to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample. The reliability of the measurement scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of 0.70 indicating acceptable internal consistency. Correlation analysis was then performed to examine the relationships among the study variables. To compare differences across demographic groups, one-way analysis of variance [ANOVA] was conducted. Finally, multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the effects of independent variables on teachers' happiness at work. Statistical significance was determined at the .05 level.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki and the guidelines of the American Psychological Association. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were informed about the purpose of the study prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before they completed the questionnaire. Participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential, and no identifying information was collected. They were also informed that they had the right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or negative consequences. The study involved high school teachers who were considered a non-vulnerable population. No physical or psychological risks were anticipated during the data collection process. All data were used solely for research purposes.

3. Results

An independent samples *t*-test was performed to evaluate whether there were gender differences in Positive Emotions, Negative Emotions, Value and Satisfaction at Work, and overall Happiness at Work among high school teachers (see Table 3). The results indicated that there was no significant difference in Positive Emotions between male teachers (M = 4.01, SD = 0.65) and female teachers (M = 3.98, SD = 0.58), $t_{(585.12)} = 0.75$, $p > .05$. There was, however, a significant difference in Negative Emotions between male and female teachers. Male teachers (M = 2.61, SD = 1.18)

reported lower Negative Emotions than female teachers (M = 2.80, SD = 1.15), $t_{(1023)}$ = -2.58, p = .01. No significant difference was found in Value and Satisfaction at Work between male teachers (M = 4.10, SD = 0.59) and female teachers (M = 4.11, SD = 0.52), $t_{(579.56)}$ = −0.34, p > .05. Similarly, no significant difference was observed in overall Happiness at Work between male teachers (M = 3.92, SD = 0.53) and female teachers (M = 3.88, SD = 0.46), $t_{(574.86)}$ = 1.30, p > .05.

Table 3
Gender Differences in Happiness at Work in High school Teachers (N = 1,025)*

	Male (M±SD)	*Female (M±SD)*	*t*	*df*	*p-value*
PE	4.01±0.65	3.98±0.58	0.752	585.124	.453
NE	2.61±1.18	2.80±1.15	−2.576	1023	.010
VSW	4.10±0.59	4.11±0.52	−0.340	579.563	.734
HW	3.92±0.53	3.88±0.46	1.301	574.856	.194

Note. * Independent samples t-test; PE: Positive Emotions; NE: Negative Emotions; VSW: Value and Satisfaction at Work; HW: Happiness at Work; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to examine whether happiness at work differed across age groups among high school teachers (see Table 4). The means and standard deviations for each age group are presented in Table 4. The results showed that age group was significantly associated with Positive Emotions, $F_{(2, 1022)}$ = 4.45, p = .012; Negative Emotions, $F_{(2, 1022)}$ = 9.39, p < .001; Value and Satisfaction at Work, $F_{(2, 1022)}$ = 9.78, p < .001; and overall Happiness at Work, $F_{(2, 1022)}$ = 10.24, p < .001. These findings indicate that mean scores differed significantly across age groups for all four dimensions.

Descriptively, teachers aged over 50 years reported the highest mean scores for Positive Emotions (M = 4.15, SD = 0.59), Value and Satisfaction at Work (M = 4.28, SD = 0.55), and overall Happiness at Work (M = 4.00, SD = 0.47), whereas teachers under 30 years reported the highest mean score for Negative Emotions (M = 3.20, SD = 1.04). However, because post hoc comparisons were not conducted, no conclusion was made regarding which specific age groups differed significantly from one another.

Table 4
Age Groups Differences in Happiness at Work in High school Teachers (N = 1,025)*

	Under 30 years (M±SD)	*30–50 years (M±SD)*	*Over 50 years (M±SD)*	*F*	*df*	*p-value*
PE	3.97±0.62	3.97±0.60	4.15±0.59	4.454	2	.012
NE	3.20±1.04	2.67±1.14	2.87±1.30	9.386	2	< .001
VSW	3.95±0.60	4.10±0.53	4.28±0.55	9.783	2	< .001
HW	3.70±0.50	3.90±0.48	4.00±0.47	10.236	2	< .001

Note. * One-Way ANOVA; PE: Positive Emotions; NE: Negative Emotions; VSW: Value and Satisfaction at Work; HW: Happiness at Work; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to examine whether happiness at work differed across years of teaching experience among high school teachers. The means and standard deviations for each group are presented in Table 5. The results showed that years of teaching experience was not significantly associated with Positive Emotions, $F_{(2, 1022)}$ = 1.03, p > .05, or Value and Satisfaction at Work, $F_{(2, 1022)}$ = 2.90, p > .05. However, significant differences were found in Negative Emotions, $F_{(2, 1022)}$ = 27.69, p < .001, and overall Happiness at Work, $F_{(2, 1022)}$ = 13.57, p < .001.

Descriptively, teachers with less than 10 years of experience reported the highest mean score for Negative Emotions (M = 3.25, SD = 1.15), whereas teachers with more than 20 years of experience reported the highest mean score for overall Happiness at Work (M = 3.98, SD = 0.46). However, because post hoc comparisons were not conducted, no conclusion was made regarding which specific experience groups differed significantly from one another.

Table 5
Years of Teaching Experience Differences in Happiness at Work in High school Teachers (N = 1,025)*

	Less than 10 years (M±SD)	*10–20 years (M±SD)*	*More than 20 years (M±SD)*	*F*	*df*	*p-value*
PE	4.03±0.60	3.96±0.61	4.01±0.59	1.026	2	.359
NE	3.25±1.15	2.70±1.13	2.50±1.13	27.690	2	< .001
VSW	4.06±0.60	4.09±0.54	4.16±0.52	2.901	2	.055
HW	3.76±0.52	3.89±0.47	3.98±0.46	13.568	2	< .001

Note. * One-Way ANOVA; PE: Positive Emotions; NE: Negative Emotions; VSW: Value and Satisfaction at Work; HW: Happiness at Work; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to examine whether happiness at work differed across teaching regions among high school teachers. The means and standard deviations for each group are presented in Table 6. The results showed that teaching region was significantly associated with Positive Emotions, $F_{(2, 1022)} = 3.06$, $p < .05$; Negative Emotions, $F_{(2, 1022)} = 586.59$, $p < .001$; Value and Satisfaction at Work, $F_{(2, 1022)} = 3.60$, $p < .05$; and overall Happiness at Work, $F_{(2, 1022)} = 91.75$, $p < .001$. These findings indicate that mean scores differed significantly across teaching regions for all four dimensions.

Descriptively, teachers in the Northern region reported the highest mean scores for Positive Emotions ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.61$), Value and Satisfaction at Work ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.54$), and overall Happiness at Work ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.47$), whereas teachers in the Central region reported the highest mean score for Negative Emotions ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.71$). However, because post hoc comparisons were not conducted, no conclusion was made regarding which specific regional groups differed significantly from one another.

Table 6
Teaching Region Differences in Happiness at Work in High school Teachers (N = 1,025)*

	Northern region (M±SD)	*Central region (M±SD)*	*Southern region (M±SD)*	*F*	*df*	*p-value*
PE	4.05±0.61	3.99±0.58	3.94±0.61	3.062	2	.047
NE	2.01±0.83	3.89±0.71	2.21±0.84	586.585	2	< .001
VSW	4.16±0.54	4.12±0.52	4.05±0.57	3.599	2	0.028
HW	4.10±0.47	3.65±0.38	3.97±0.48	91.749	2	< .001

Note. * One-Way ANOVA; PE: Positive Emotions; NE: Negative Emotions; VSW: Value and Satisfaction at Work; HW: Happiness at Work; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation.

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which demographic variables and work-related factors predicted happiness at work among high school teachers (see Table 7). In Block 1, four demographic variables, including gender, age group, years of teaching experience, and teaching region, were entered into the model. In Block 2, 11 single-item predictors were added. Three models were estimated. In Model 1, both blocks were entered using the enter method. In Model 2, Block 1 was entered using the enter method and Block 2 was entered using the stepwise method. In Model 3, both Block 1 and Block 2 were estimated using the stepwise method.

For Model 1, the overall regression model was significant, $F_{(15, 1009)} = 6.64$, $p < .001$, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.076. This result suggests that the predictors included in the model collectively accounted for approximately 7.6% of the variance in happiness at work. Within this model, years of teaching experience was positively associated with happiness at work, $B = 0.064$, $p < .05$, whereas teaching region was negatively associated with happiness at work, $B = -.057$, $p < 0.01$. Among the 11 single-item predictors, relationships with students ($B = 0.068$, $p < .05$) and recognition ($B = 0.118$, $p < .001$) were positively associated with happiness at work. The remaining predictors were not statistically significant.

Table 7
Hierarchical Regression Models (N = 1,025)

Variables	*Model 1* [a,b]	*Model 2* [a,b]	*Model 3* [a,b]
(Constant)	3.620***	3.626***	3.688***
Gender	−.017	−0.019	–
Age Groups	.080	0.078	–
Years of Teaching Experience	.064*	0.067**	0.098***
Teaching Region	−.057**	−0.061***	−0.062***
Professional Competence	.012	–	–
Relationships with Students	.068*	–	–
Relationships with Colleagues	−.019	–	–
Relationships with School Leaders	−.017	–	–
Readiness for Work	−.023	–	–
Compensation and Benefits	−.009	–	–
Job Stability	−.001	–	–
Collaboration	−.058	−0.071***	−0.069***
Working Conditions	−.053	–	–
Recognition	.118***	0.113***	0.111***
Perceived Meaning of Profession	.026	–	–
Adjusted R^2	0.076	0.076	0.074
F	6.635	14.964	21.390
df	15	6	4
p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001
VIF	< 5	< 3	< 3

Note. [a] Dependent Variable: Happiness at Work; [b] Unstandardized Coefficients; *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

For Model 2, the overall regression model was also significant, $F_{(6, 1018)} = 14.96$, $p < .001$, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.076. This indicates that the final set of predictors in Model 2 explained approximately 7.6% of the variance in happiness at work. In this model, years of teaching experience remained a significant positive predictor ($B = 0.067$, $p < .001$), whereas teaching region remained a significant negative predictor ($B = −0.061$, $p < .001$). In addition, collaboration was negatively associated with happiness at work ($B = −0.071$, $p < .001$), while recognition was positively associated with happiness at work ($B = 0.113$, $p < .001$). Gender and age group were not significant predictors.

For Model 3, the overall regression model remained significant, $F_{(4, 1020)} = 21.39$, $p < .001$, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.074. This suggests that the predictors retained in the final stepwise model explained approximately 7.4% of the variance in happiness at work. In this model, years of teaching experience continued to show a positive association with happiness at work ($B = 0.098$, $p < .001$), whereas teaching region ($B = −0.062$, $p < .001$) and collaboration ($B = −0.069$, $p < .001$) were negatively associated with happiness at work. Recognition remained a positive predictor ($B = 0.111$, $p < .001$).

Across the three models, recognition was the most consistent positive predictor of happiness at work, whereas teaching region and collaboration showed consistent negative associations. Years of teaching experience was also retained as a positive predictor across models. The variance inflation factor values were below 5 in Model 1 and below 3 in Models 2 and 3, suggesting that multicollinearity was not likely to be a serious concern.

4. Discussion

The present study examined differences in happiness at work among high school teachers and identified key factors associated with this outcome. The findings suggest that teacher happiness at work may vary across demographic groups and is associated with several work-related factors. In particular, no significant gender differences were observed, whereas differences were found across age groups, years of teaching experience, and teaching regions. In addition, hierarchical regression analysis indicated that recognition, years of teaching experience, teaching region, and collaboration

were significant predictors of happiness at work.

First, the results showed no significant difference in happiness at work between male and female teachers. This finding may suggest that, within the teaching profession, both genders experience similar working conditions, expectations, and professional roles, and other school conditions, such as workload, colleague cooperation, and management style, may be stronger predictors of job satisfaction than gender (Ghavifekr & Pillai, 2016; Lopes & Oliveira, 2020; Ma & MacMillan, 1999; Nwoko et al., 2023; Toropova et al., 2021). When educators are provided with similar administrative support, student behavior, and promotion structures, their average happiness levels tend to converge (Tosun & Bozkurt Bostancı, 2024). Furthermore, it is noted that gender effects on well-being are often small or dependent on the specific context (Bian & Jiang, 2026; Ghavifekr & Pillai, 2016). While some literature shows mixed results, it is possible that individual traits and career stages have a more significant influence on happiness than gender (Ayan & Kocacik, 2010; L. Li et al., 2025; Nguyen-Thi et al., 2024; Topchyan & Woehler, 2021). Therefore, similar levels of engagement and happiness are likely to be observed when both genders have comparable access to professional resources and autonomy (Chen et al., 2025; Kavgacı, 2023; Wu, 2025).

In contrast, significant differences were observed across age groups and years of teaching experience. It was found that older or more experienced teachers reported higher levels of overall happiness and lower negative emotions. This pattern may be explained by higher teaching self-efficacy and better classroom management skills developed over time (Burić et al., 2020; Dulay, 2023; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Sadeghi et al., 2021). Experienced teachers are likely to use more adaptive emotion regulation strategies, which is associated with reduced burnout and emotional exhaustion (Anastasiou & Belios, 2020; Messineo & Tosto, 2023; Tarman & Filiz, 2023; Sánchez-Pujalte et al., 2021). Furthermore, professional stability and greater job security among senior teachers are linked to better mental health and satisfaction (Capone & Petrillo, 2020; Pedditzi et al., 2021). Higher well-being might also be supported by a stronger sense of meaning and trusting relationships built within the school community (Niu et al., 2023; van Maele & van Houtte, 2012; Wu, 2025). Additionally, the "survivor" effect suggests that teachers who remain in the profession often have a better fit with their environment (Admiraal et al., 2023; Wartenberg et al., 2023). Conversely, higher levels of negative emotions in early-career teachers may be related to workload pressure and limited professional support (Donker et al., 2020).

The findings also indicated that happiness at work differed significantly across teaching regions. Teachers in the Northern region reported higher levels of overall happiness and lower levels of negative emotions, whereas teachers in the Central region reported relatively higher negative emotions. These differences may reflect variations in working conditions, access to resources, and local educational contexts across regions. For example, differences in school infrastructure, administrative support, or student-related challenges may influence teachers' experiences (Katmer & Ertek, 2025; Kazemi, 2024). However, because contextual variables were not directly measured in this study, these explanations remain tentative and should be interpreted cautiously.

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis provide further insight into the factors associated with teacher happiness at work. Among the predictors, recognition emerged as the most consistent and strongest positive factor across all models. It is suggested that recognition serves as a signal of organizational support, which helps teachers feel valued and respected within their institution (Y. Li et al., 2025). Furthermore, the fulfillment of basic psychological needs, such as competence and autonomy, may be supported through regular feedback and acknowledgment (Jentsch et al., 2023; Slemp et al., 2020). Consequently, a stronger sense of meaning and professional pride is often developed, which is associated with higher work engagement and lower emotional exhaustion (Bagdžiūnienė et al., 2023; Fitzsimons et al., 2025; Zeng et al., 2024). Additionally, recognition is linked to the building of psychological capital, including optimism and resilience, which helps educators cope with demanding situations (Kun & Gadanecz, 2022). Finally, supportive environments where achievements are recognized are associated with reduced

levels of stress and negative emotions (Jentsch et al., 2023; Rahm & Heise, 2019).

In contrast, collaboration was found to be negatively associated with happiness at work. This finding should be interpreted with caution. It is suggested that when collaboration is mainly focused on administrative tasks or paperwork, it may be perceived as an additional workload rather than professional support (Kuwato & Hirano, 2020; Rechsteiner et al., 2025; Shao et al., 2025; Wang, 2024). Furthermore, mandated collaboration within high-accountability systems might reduce teacher autonomy, which is often linked to lower job satisfaction (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2020). The quality of relationships also plays a significant role; collaboration involving conflict or a lack of trust may lead to more negative affect and lower morale (Dreer, 2024; Meredith et al., 2023; Nwoko et al., 2023). Lastly, collaborative activities that are perceived as ineffective or irrelevant to professional development may result in a "time cost" without clear benefits (Bükki & Fehérvári, 2021; Rechsteiner et al., 2025). Because this study used a single-item measure, further research is needed to better understand how the quality and nature of collaboration influence teacher well-being.

Years of teaching experience also showed a positive association with happiness at work in the regression models, which is consistent with the group comparison results. This convergence of findings strengthens the interpretation that experience plays a meaningful role in teacher well-being. As noted earlier, experienced teachers may benefit from accumulated skills and greater confidence in their professional roles, which may contribute to more positive work experiences. Teaching region also remained a significant predictor in the regression models, indicating that contextual factors may continue to influence teacher happiness even after controlling for other variables. This result highlights the importance of considering broader environmental and institutional conditions when examining teacher well-being. Differences across regions may be linked to structural inequalities or variations in educational resources, although these factors were not directly assessed in the current study.

Several other variables, including professional competence, relationships with colleagues and school leaders, readiness for work, compensation and benefits, job stability, working conditions, and perceived meaning of the profession, were not found to be significant predictors in the regression models. These results may suggest that their effects are either indirect, context-dependent, or overlapping with other variables in the model. It is also possible that the use of single-item measures limited the ability to capture the full complexity of these constructs.

5. Implications

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study may have implications for school management and educational policy. The consistent role of recognition suggests that efforts to acknowledge teachers' contributions may be important for enhancing their well-being. Schools may consider developing systems that provide regular feedback, appreciation, and professional acknowledgment. In addition, support for early-career teachers may be beneficial, as less experienced teachers appear to be more vulnerable to negative emotional experiences. Finally, attention should be given to contextual differences across regions, as these may influence teachers' work experiences in meaningful ways.

6. Limitations and Recommendations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. The observed associations should not be interpreted as causal relationships. Second, the use of self-report data may introduce common method bias. Third, the sampling approach was based on accessibility, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Fourth, the use of single-item measures for the predictors may reduce measurement precision. Future research may consider longitudinal designs, more representative sampling strategies, and multi-item scales to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teacher happiness at work. In conclusion, this study provides evidence that teacher happiness at work is associated with both individual and contextual factors. Recognition and teaching experience appear to play important

roles, while regional differences also warrant further attention. Although the findings should be interpreted with caution, they may contribute to a better understanding of teacher well-being and inform future research and practice in educational settings.

7. Conclusion

The present study was performed to investigate the factors influencing happiness at work among 1,025 high school teachers across the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of Vietnam. The findings indicate that teacher happiness is a complex construct shaped by both individual characteristics and organizational factors. It was observed that years of teaching experience and professional recognition are the most consistent positive predictors of well-being. Older and more experienced educators reported higher levels of happiness, which may be attributed to the development of higher self-efficacy and better emotional regulation strategies over time. This research provides a transparent and representative overview of teacher well-being in Vietnam. The strongest practical implication of the results is the vital role of professional recognition. It is recommended that school administrators and policy makers develop effective systems to acknowledge teacher contributions to foster a more positive work environment. Although the study is limited by its cross-sectional design and the use of convenience sampling, the results offer valuable insights for improving teacher retention and educational quality. Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal designs and multi-item scales to further explore the qualitative nature of teacher collaboration and the long-term changes in workplace happiness.

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Data availability: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The data are not publicly available due to privacy and ethical considerations to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Declaration of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethics declaration: This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and the guidelines of the American Psychological Association. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. All responses were kept anonymous and confidential, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The study was considered to involve no physical or psychological risks to the participants.

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