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Implementing Inclusive Education: Understanding Teachers' Wellbeing and Satisfaction in Inclusive Classrooms in Ghana

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Research Article

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Abstract

Teacher wellbeing is crucial to successful inclusive education, yet it is often overlooked, particularly in the Global South. This study examines the various dimensions of teacher wellbeing, such as professional satisfaction, work-life balance, emotional wellbeing, relationships and communication, and recognition and support, and their impact on job satisfaction in Ghanaian inclusive classrooms. Guided by Conservation of Resources theory, descriptive statistics and an ordered probit model were used to analyse a survey of 435 basic school teachers. The results revealed teacher workforce under significant strain, with critically low wellbeing issues that are systemic and uniform across gender and teaching experience. The regression model identified all wellbeing dimensions as significant predictors of job satisfaction, with professional satisfaction being the most dominant. This study provides an evidence-based blueprint for intervention, arguing that sustainable inclusion requires targeted investment in teachers' wellbeing and professional resilience.

Introduction

Inclusive education represents a significant change in modern pedagogical philosophy, emphasising the right of all children to receive a high-quality education, regardless of their abilities, background, or circumstances (De Beco, 2022; Masalesa et al., 2023). UNESCO (2017) defines it as a process that recognises and responds to learner diversity in order to increase participation and reduce exclusion (Slee & Tait, 2022). As a cornerstone of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), inclusive education aims to ensure that all children receive an inclusive, equitable and quality education by 2030. This is particularly important in developing African nations, where pre-tertiary education is a key factor in social mobility and national development (Masalesa et al., 2023). Ghana’s education sector is central to this endeavour. Given its growing pre-tertiary student population, effectively realising inclusive education is a socio-economic imperative, not just an educational objective (Appiah & Ackah-Jnr, 2025).

However, successfully implementing this policy hinges on a critical yet often overlooked factor: teachers. In Ghana, where large class sizes, limited resources and deep-rooted communal values are the norm, teacher well-being is under significant pressure and has far-reaching consequences. Teaching is an inherently demanding occupation, frequently ranked as one of the most stressful globally (Farley & Chamberlain, 2021; Maqsood et al., 2024; Nwoko et al., 2025). This stress is magnified in inclusive classrooms, where educators must address the diverse needs of learners alongside heavy workloads, complex management and inadequate institutional support. The significant emotional labour involved can result in psychological distress, including chronic stress, anxiety and burnout (Bodenheimer & Shuster, 2020; Nath & Pandey, 2025; Smith et al., 2025), which adversely affects educational quality and student care. Ultimately, the implementation of inclusive pedagogies critically depends on educator well-being and job satisfaction. Teachers who are emotionally depleted or lack recognition are unlikely to have the capacity to create the nurturing, adaptive environments that inclusive education requires.

Empirical evidence confirms that teacher effectiveness is closely linked to holistic well-being (Ozturk et al., 2024). However, the mechanisms underlying this relationship have not been examined in Ghana, where unique cultural and contextual factors, such as communal values and socioeconomic pressures, are likely to influence well-being and job satisfaction. This gap is significant because it directly affects teachers' ability to deliver inclusive education effectively. While existing Ghanaian studies have primarily examined policy gaps, attitudinal barriers and resource constraints (e.g. Abreh, 2025; Asamoah et al., 2022; Butakor et al., 2020), this body of work has overlooked the crucial link between teacher well-being and job satisfaction. While valuable, this body of work lacks an in-depth analysis of specific well-being dimensions, such as professional satisfaction, work-life balance and emotional health, including relationship and communication, as well as recognition and support and how these factors collectively predict job satisfaction in inclusive classrooms. Understanding these context-specific pathways is essential, as the influence of well-being on professional practice is filtered through Ghana's distinct socio-cultural lens and is not universal.

This study is based on Stevan Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. This theory suggests that people try to obtain, keep and protect important resources. Psychological stress can arise when these resources are threatened or lost (Hollebeek et al., 2023; Merino et al., 2021). This theory offers a dynamic framework through which to understand well-being in challenging environments such as inclusive education, which are often characterised by chronic resource depletion (Ravet & Mtika, 2024). We conceptualise the dimensions of teacher well-being: professional satisfaction, work-life balance, and emotional well-being as essential resources required for effective performance of duties. When these resources are depleted without replenishment in high-stress settings, a spiral of loss can occur, triggering burnout, reduced job satisfaction and an impaired ability to practice inclusively. The COR framework is relevant because it models this dynamic process of resource investment and loss. It moves beyond merely identifying stressors to explain the underlying mechanisms affecting teacher performance.

This study uses a quantitative methodology involving an ordered probit regression model to analyse the relationship between dimensions of teacher well-being and job satisfaction. This approach is superior to standard linear regression for ordinal data in that it provides more accurate probability estimates of a teacher's satisfaction category. The findings offer Ghanaian policymakers and school leaders critical, evidence-based insights. By identifying the well-being dimensions that most powerfully predict job satisfaction, the study provides a targeted blueprint for intervention. Empowering teachers with such evidence is ultimately a fundamental investment in achieving the inclusive, equitable and quality education mandated by SDG 4.

Literature Review

Theoretical framework

The Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory offers a dynamic framework through which to understand employees, including teachers' well-being, where demands are high and support is often limited (Geoffroy, 2022; Tuan et al., 2021; Tufue, 2024). As per Stevan Hobfoll (1989), the theory's core principle is that individuals strive to obtain, retain and protect valuable resources, ranging from personal (e.g. emotional energy), to conditional (e.g. employment) and energy (e.g. time) assets. The COR theory establishes that psychological stress arises when these resources are threatened, lost, or fail to accrue despite a significant investment (Hobfoll & Freedy, 2017; Hobfoll, Tirone, Holmgreen & Gerhart, 2016). To this end, we argued that COR is relevant in offering comprehensive explanation for wellbeing and satisfaction among teachers in inclusive classroom. The multifaceted demands of inclusive education, such as adapting curricula and managing diverse needs, pose a substantial threat of resource depletion. For instance, inadequate training can jeopardise personal resources such as perceived competence, potentially triggering a cycle of stress. Relentless demands also deplete emotional and physical energy, directly impacting well-being and disrupting work-life balance as teachers invest their own time to compensate.

While the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model categorises workplace factors, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory provides a more in-depth, process-oriented understanding of resource dynamics as Nerstad et al. (2023) clearly noted. Unarguably, it explains why the absence of replenishing resources, such as recognition, support and collaboration, can be so detrimental. From the COR theoretical perspective, teachers who experience an ongoing net loss of these resources are at high risk of burnout and reduced job satisfaction (Liu, 2024; Mvana, 2024). Consequently, the well-being dimensions examined (e.g. professional satisfaction, work-life balance, emotional wellbeing, relationship and communication, physical wellbeing, recognition and support, and job satisfaction) are not isolated outcomes, but are linked as either resources or consequences within this framework. This study uses COR theory to provide Ghanaian administrators and policymakers with actionable and diagnostic insights. Interventions can be precisely targeted by identifying the most critically depleted resources. Practical implications may include professional development to rebuild self-efficacy, establishing peer support systems to foster relationships, and revising policies to provide classroom assistance and formal recognition. This approach moves beyond identifying stressors to offer a resource-based blueprint for sustaining teachers' well-being and ensuring the success of inclusive education.

Empirical review

Teacher Wellbeing and Job Satisfaction in Inclusive Classrooms

Inclusive education is a global agenda for equity that aims to provide all students with equitable learning opportunities within mainstream settings (Ainscow, 2020; Shaeffer, 2019). However, the successful implementation of inclusive education depends critically on teacher capacity and welfare (Ackah-Jnr et al., 2025; Andrews, Walton & Osman, 2021; Ji, 2024). International evidence reveals a complex interplay

between inclusive practices and teacher well-being, characterised by profound rewards and significant personal costs (Demir, 2024; Gray, Wilcox & Nordstokke, 2017; Ji, 2024; Lapidot-Lefler, 2025; Muhati-Nyakundi, 2023; Nwoko et al., 2024). This review synthesises findings on the multifaceted dimensions of teacher well-being, including professional satisfaction, work-life balance and emotional health, and their collective influence on job satisfaction in inclusive classrooms. The review specifically focuses on identifying critical research gaps in the Ghanaian context. Globally, the demands of inclusive education can severely impact teachers' well-being (Murtalib, 2024; Öztürk et al., 2024; Sawatske et al., 2024). Educators often report feeling unprepared to meet the needs of diverse learners, which leads to heightened stress. The need for personalised planning and adapted teaching methods often leads to overwhelming workloads, blurring the boundaries between work and personal life and disrupting work-life balance (Gautam, 2024).

Teachers working in inclusive environments consistently report higher levels of stress and burnout than those working in non-inclusive environments (Squillaci & Hofmann, 2021; Tufue, 2024). Burnout, characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced sense of accomplishment, is a direct response to chronic workplace stressors. The emotional toll of managing diverse dynamics and ensuring that every student feels valued has a direct impact on mental and physical well-being. Paradoxically, however, inclusive teaching can also yield deep professional satisfaction. When teachers feel competent and supported, they experience a strong sense of achievement. However, job satisfaction varies greatly and is influenced by factors such as specialised training, institutional support and school climate. Continual loss of personal resources (e.g. time and emotional energy) without adequate support or recognition leads to stress and burnout, thereby reducing job satisfaction (McKay, 2016).

Despite extensive international research, there is a notable absence of empirical studies investigating the comprehensive well-being of teachers within Ghana's unique socio-cultural context. While existing Ghanaian studies (e.g. Abreh, 2025; Asamoah et al., 2022; Butakor et al., 2020) have examined attitudes towards inclusion or specific pedagogical challenges, a comprehensive investigation of teacher well-being remains to be conducted. There is also a significant methodological gap, as there is a lack of robust, multivariate analyses to determine the relative influence of specific wellbeing dimensions on job satisfaction. This study is novel in that it conducts a contextualised, multi-dimensional investigation. Moving beyond attitudinal surveys, it empirically examines levels of professional satisfaction, work-life balance, emotional well-being and perceived support. Using an ordered probit regression model, which is suited to ordinal outcomes such as job satisfaction, this research quantifies the strength of the relationship between each wellbeing dimension and overall job satisfaction. This methodological rigour will identify which facets are most critical. Situated within the framework of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, the study addresses a significant empirical gap by providing vital evidence to inform the development of effective, sustainable and teacher-sensitive inclusive education policies in Ghana. To this end, the study addresses the following research question:

1. What is the level of wellbeing dimensions and job satisfaction among teachers in an inclusive classroom in Ghana?
2. Does wellbeing have an influence of job satisfaction among teachers in an inclusive classroom in Ghana?

Methods

Study Design and Sample

This study used a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the various dimensions of teacher well-being and how they influence job satisfaction when implementing inclusive education in Ghanaian primary schools. This methodological approach is highly effective in capturing perceptions and relationships between variables at a specific point in time, enabling a thorough examination of complex constructs without the need for experimental manipulation (Connelly, 2016; Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2024). The research population comprised basic school teachers in Ghana's Greater Accra Region. An online questionnaire developed using Google Forms was distributed, resulting in a final sample of 435 teachers. This sample size was considered adequate for the analytical techniques employed, ensuring the reliability and statistical power of the findings. Using an online platform enabled efficient, wide-reaching data collection and participation by a diverse group of educators across various regions.

Data Collection Procedure

To ensure a sufficient response window, data collection was conducted electronically over four weeks. The digital questionnaire was distributed via professional networks and educational forums targeting primary school teachers in Ghana. The questionnaire was designed to be both comprehensive and concise, with an estimated completion time of 20–25 minutes. This approach promoted accessibility and convenience for participants, potentially increasing the response rate and reducing the burden on respondents. Prior to participation, all respondents were presented with a detailed description and understanding of the study's purpose of the study and asked to provide informed digital consent, affirming their voluntary participation. This was done in strict adherence to established ethical principles for research.

Data Analysis Strategy

The data underwent a rigorous analytical process beginning with an initial screening and reliability analysis. Descriptive statistics summarised the composite scores for the six well-being dimensions and overall job satisfaction. Correlation analysis was used to explore the relationships between these well-being constructs and job satisfaction. The core inferential analysis employed an ordered probit regression model, a technique suited to ordinal outcomes such as the trichotomous job satisfaction measure (low, medium or high) used here (Greene, 2018). This model estimated the effects of the six well-being dimensions on the probability of a teacher reporting medium or high job satisfaction, with low

satisfaction serving as the baseline. Controlling for gender and teaching experience provided nuanced insights into how specific facets of well-being distinctly influence the likelihood of achieving different job satisfaction thresholds.

Results

The following section provides a thorough analysis of the collected data, examining the intricate relationship between teachers' multidimensional well-being and their overall job satisfaction in inclusive classrooms in Ghana. It moves from an examination of the foundational reliability and descriptive characteristics of the data to inferential analyses probing the relationships and predictive effects of key variables.

Descriptive Profile of Participants

The analysis of well-being distribution across demographic categories (see Table 4) reveals striking uniformity rather than disparity. The results indicated that there were no significant differences in mean scores across the six well-being dimensions based on gender. The almost identical mean scores for male and female teachers across all variables, ranging from professional satisfaction (M = 2.62 for both) to emotional well-being (M = 2.15 vs. M = 2.14), suggest that the challenges and rewards of teaching in inclusive classrooms are experienced in a similar way, regardless of gender. These findings challenge the assumption that these roles may disproportionately burden one gender more than another, instead pointing to systemic factors that affect the entire teaching workforce uniformly. Similarly, years of teaching experience yielded minimal significant variation in well-being scores (see Fig. 1). While there is a slight non-monotonic trend for some constructs, such as recognition and support, where more experienced teachers (15 + years; M = 3.37) report marginally higher levels than their mid-career colleagues (5–9 years; M = 3.16), these differences are not statistically significant. The overall pattern was consistent across career stages. This implies that the stressors and satisfactions of inclusive education are not merely a function of early-career adjustment, but endemic to the role itself, affecting both novices and veterans. This is further corroborated by the distribution of job satisfaction levels (Table 5), which shows a relatively stable proportion of teachers reporting high, medium and low satisfaction across all experience categories.

Reliability and Descriptive Statistics of Wellbeing and Job Satisfaction Constructs

Prior to the substantive analysis, the internal consistency of the scales used to measure the six core dimensions of teacher well-being was assessed. As shown in Table 1, the Recognition and Support scale demonstrated acceptable reliability (α = .673, 3 items). The Physical Wellbeing scale showed moderate reliability (α = .596, 3 items). The Emotional Wellbeing scale demonstrated questionable reliability (α = .666, 3 items), while the Work-Life Balance scale showed poor reliability (α = .577, 3 items). The Professional Satisfaction scale (α = .069, 3 items, N = 435) and Relationships and Communication scale

(α = .680, 3 items), while Professional Satisfaction yielded (α = .691, 3 items). Thus, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the constructs ranged from 0.577 for “Work-Life Balance' to 0.691” for “Professional Satisfaction”. Although these values, particularly for work-life balance (α = 0.577) and physical well-being (α = 0.596), are below the conventional threshold of 0.70, they are considered acceptable for nascent research scales in the social sciences, particularly given the limited number of items (three per construct in this instance) (Hair et al., 2019). These coefficients suggest a moderate level of reliability, indicating that the items for each scale are sufficiently correlated to proceed with analytical caution. This acknowledges that the constructs are measured with a reasonable, albeit not optimal, degree of internal consistency.

Table 1
Reliability Statistics for Study Variables

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	Items	N
RS	0.673	3	435
PW	0.596	3	435
EW	0.666	3	435
WLB	0.577	3	435
RC	0.680	3	435
PS	0.691	3	435

Note: RS= Recognition and Support; PW= Physical Wellbeing; EW= Emotional Wellbeing; WLB= Work Life Balance; RC=Relationship and Communication; PS=Professional Satisfaction

Examining the descriptive statistics for the composite well-being and job satisfaction scores presented in Table 2 reveals a deeply concerning picture of the teaching environment. The data paint a picture of a teaching corps operating under significant stress. The mean scores for emotional wellbeing (M = 1.93, SD = 0.60), relationships and communication (M = 1.90, SD = 0.39) and work-life balance (M = 2.00, SD = 0.53) were all low, clustering near the bottom of the measurement scale. This suggests that teachers in inclusive classrooms often feel emotionally exhausted, find it hard to separate their professional and personal lives, and feel that there are problems with communication between colleagues and management. In contrast, the scores for Physical Well-Being (M = 3.20, SD = 0.83) and Recognition and Support (M = 3.18, SD = 0.85) were relatively high, suggesting that, while teachers may not feel entirely physically depleted or wholly unrecognised, these areas represent only a moderate level of adequacy rather than robust health. Professional satisfaction was modest (M = 2.60, SD = 0.47), but job satisfaction demonstrated a moderate aggregate score (M = 6.05, SD = 2.16). This configuration of well-being, where the emotional and relational dimensions are critically low, suggests that the workforce is sustaining its professional commitment despite significant internal pressures, a phenomenon frequently observed in highly demanding educational contexts (Beltman et al., 2023).

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Composite Wellbeing and Satisfaction Scores

Variable	N	M	SD
PS	435	2.60	0.47
WLB	435	2.00	0.53
EW	435	1.93	0.60
RC	435	1.90	0.39
PW	435	3.20	0.83
RS	435	3.18	0.85
JS	435	6.05	2.16

Note: PS=Professional Satisfaction; WLB= Work Life Balance; EW= Emotional Wellbeing; RC=Relationship and Communication; PW= Physical Wellbeing; RS= Recognition and Support; JB = Job Satisfaction

Figure 3

Distribution of Overall Job Satisfaction

Interrelationships Among Wellbeing Dimensions and Job Satisfaction

The correlation matrix (Table 3) sheds light on the synergistic nature of teachers' well-being. As expected, all dimensions of well-being were positively and significantly correlated with one another, highlighting the interconnectedness of teachers' experiences. Professional satisfaction showed strong positive correlations with recognition and support ($r = 0.601$, $p < 0.001$), physical well-being ($r = 0.614$, $p < 0.001$) and emotional well-being ($r = 0.388$, $p < 0.001$). This pattern suggests that teachers' sense of professional fulfilment is closely tied to feeling valued, physically capable, and emotionally regulated. Notably, Job Satisfaction was significantly correlated with all well-being constructs, as required by the research objective. The strongest positive relationship was observed with professional satisfaction ($r = 0.597$, $p < 0.001$), which reinforces the idea that intrinsic professional fulfilment is a key factor in overall job satisfaction. There were also substantial correlations with emotional well-being ($r = 0.451$, $p < 0.001$) and relationship and communication ($r = 0.460$, $p < 0.001$). However, it is interesting that the correlation with work-life balance ($r = 0.093$, $p < 0.01$) is statistically significant but weak. This suggests that a teacher's ability to balance work and their personal life has little linear association with their overall job satisfaction. This is a counterintuitive finding that may reflect the normalization of work-life encroachment within the teaching profession in Ghana.

Table 3
Correlation matrix for dimensions of Wellbeing and Job Satisfaction

Variables	PS	WLB	EW	RC	PW	RS	JS
PS	1						
WLB	0.292***	1					
EW	0.388***	0.133***	1				
RC	0.565***	0.445***	0.339***	1			
PW	0.614***	0.240***	0.590***	0.484***	1		
RS	0.601***	0.278***	0.506***	0.464***	0.662***	1	
JS	0.597***	0.093**	0.451***	0.460***	0.283***	0.402***	1

Note: PS=Professional Satisfaction; WLB= Work Life Balance; EW= Emotional Wellbeing; RC=Relationship and Communication; PW= Physical Wellbeing; RS= Recognition and Support; JB = Job Satisfaction

Wellbeing Distribution Based on Demographics: Gender and Teaching Experience

The analysis of well-being distribution across demographic categories (see Table 4) reveals striking uniformity rather than disparity. The results indicated that there were no significant differences in mean scores across the six well-being dimensions based on gender. The almost identical mean scores for male and female teachers across all variables, ranging from professional satisfaction (M = 2.62 for both) to emotional well-being (M = 2.15 vs. M = 2.14), suggest that the challenges and rewards of teaching in inclusive classrooms are experienced in a similar way, regardless of gender. These findings challenge the assumption that these roles may disproportionately burden one gender more than another, instead pointing to systemic factors that affect the entire teaching workforce uniformly. Similarly, years of teaching experience yielded minimal significant variation in well-being scores. While there is a slight non-monotonic trend for some constructs, such as recognition and support, where more experienced teachers (15 + years; M = 3.37) report marginally higher levels than their mid-career colleagues (5–9 years; M = 3.16), these differences are not statistically significant. The overall pattern was consistent across career stages. This implies that the stressors and satisfactions of inclusive education are not merely a function of early-career adjustment, but endemic to the role itself, affecting both novices and veterans. This is further corroborated by the distribution of job satisfaction levels (Table 5), which shows a relatively stable proportion of teachers reporting high, medium and low satisfaction across all experience categories.

Table 4
Descriptive statistics for wellbeing based on gender and experience

Dimensions of wellbeing	Variable	Mean	SD
Gender			
PS	Female	2.62	0.59
	Male	2.62	0.54
WLB	Female	1.94	0.35
	Male	1.91	0.36
EW	Female	2.15	0.53
	Male	2.14	0.52
RC	Female	2.03	0.50
	Male	1.99	0.49
PW	Female	2.93	0.74
	Male	2.98	0.74
RS	Female	3.31	0.77
	Male	3.24	0.71
JS	Female	6.07	2.18
	Male		
Experience			
PS	< 5 years	2.67	0.56
	5–9 years	2.55	0.55
	10–14 years	2.63	0.58
	15 + years	2.70	0.56
WLB	< 5 years	1.92	0.35
	5–9 years	1.87	0.37
	10–14 years	1.97	0.34
	15 + years	1.97	0.34
EW	< 5 years	2.15	0.53

Note: PS=Professional Satisfaction; WLB= Work Life Balance; EW= Emotional Wellbeing; RC=Relationship and Communication; PW= Physical Wellbeing; RS= Recognition and Support; JB = Job Satisfaction

Dimensions of wellbeing	Variable	Mean	SD
Gender			
	5–9 years	2.07	0.49
	10–14 years	2.19	0.52
	15 + years	2.23	0.56
RC	< 5 years	2.03	0.50
	5–9 years	1.92	0.50
	10–14 years	2.05	0.50
	15 + years	2.11	0.47
PW	< 5 years	3.01	0.74
	5–9 years	2.87	0.71
	10–14 years	2.98	0.76
	15 + years	3.05	0.77
RS	< 5 years	3.31	0.71
	5–9 years	3.16	0.75
	10–14 years	3.34	0.74
	15 + years	3.37	0.72

Note: PS=Professional Satisfaction; WLB= Work Life Balance; EW= Emotional Wellbeing; RC=Relationship and Communication; PW= Physical Wellbeing; RS= Recognition and Support; JB = Job Satisfaction

Distribution of Job Satisfaction and Demographic Influences

The distribution of overall job satisfaction among teachers implementing inclusive education reveals a complex and nuanced picture. While nearly half (45.75%) reported high satisfaction levels, a significant proportion reported medium (20.69%) or low (33.56%) satisfaction. This tripartite distribution highlights that teaching in inclusive classrooms is not a uniform experience: while some teachers flourish, a significant proportion struggle, indicating a critical need for systemic intervention to enhance teachers' well-being and, consequently, the quality of inclusive practices. Additionally, a granular analysis of demographic variables provides deeper insights. As shown in Table 5, the results reveal remarkable consistency in job satisfaction levels between male and female teachers, with no significant gender-based differences. This finding is significant, as it suggests that the challenges and rewards of inclusive education are perceived similarly by both genders. This implies that support structures and well-being

initiatives can be designed to be gender-neutral. A more compelling narrative emerges when we examine the influence of teachers' experience. Contrary to the assumption that veteran teachers may be less adaptable, those with 15 or more years' experience reported the highest level of satisfaction (39.2%) and the lowest level of dissatisfaction (16.2%). This suggests that extensive classroom experience provides educators with a robust set of strategies and greater resilience, enabling them to navigate the complexities of inclusion more effectively. Conversely, teachers with 5–9 years' experience, who are often at a critical mid-career stage, exhibited the highest level of low satisfaction (24.8%). This could signal a period of burnout or 'reality shock', where initial enthusiasm meets sustained systemic challenges. These findings suggest the need for a re-evaluation of professional development, indicating that mid-career teachers require sustained and targeted support to maintain their well-being and commitment to inclusive education in the long term.

Table 5
Descriptive statistics for job satisfaction based on gender and experience

Demographic variable	**Job Satisfaction**		
	Low satisfaction	**Medium satisfaction**	**High satisfaction**
Gender			
Female	44 (22.5%)	84 (42.9%)	68 (34.7%)
Male	46 (19.3%)	115 (48.1)	78 (32.6%)
Years of teaching Experience			
< 5 years	19 (17.4%)	53 (47.7%)	38 (34.9%)
5–9 years	38 (24.8%)	70 (45.8%)	45 (29.4%)
10–14 years	21 (21.2%)	44 (44.4%)	34 (34.3%)
15 + years	12 (16.2%)	33 (44.6%)	29 (39.2%)

Effects of Wellbeing on Job Satisfaction Among Teachers in an Inclusive Classroom

To delineate the distinct effects of various well-being dimensions on overall job satisfaction, an ordered probit model was estimated while controlling for gender and teaching experience. The results, detailed in Table 6, provide compelling evidence that the factors influencing teacher satisfaction in inclusive classrooms are numerous and vary considerably in their impact. The analysis powerfully demonstrates that, while multiple factors contribute to a teacher's professional contentment, they vary considerably in their relative importance, offering critical insights for targeted interventions.

The foremost determinant is professional satisfaction, which emerges as the cornerstone of teacher job satisfaction. The analysis reveals that an increase of one unit in this dimension is associated with a significant change in probability, greatly reducing the likelihood of teachers reporting low satisfaction

(coefficient = 0.278, $p < 0.001$) and producing an even greater increase in the probability of high satisfaction (coefficient = 0.541, $p < 0.001$). This highlights a key fact: the intrinsic rewards of feeling competent, effective and intellectually stimulated in one's teaching role form the foundation of sustainable morale. In the challenging environment of inclusive education, where teachers must adapt to the diverse needs of learners, this sense of professional efficacy is essential for resilience and commitment (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Table 6
Ordered Probit results on the effects of wellbeing dimensions on job satisfaction

Variables	**Model 1**	**Model 2**
Job satisfaction (outcome variable)	Medium satisfaction	High satisfaction
Gender (Female)		
Male	-0.019	0.037
	(0.020)	(0.039)
Experience (< 5 years)		
5–9 years	0.004	-0.007
	(0.028)	(0.051)
10–14 years	0.016	-0.033
	(0.026)	(0.053)
15 + years	0.003	-0.005
	(0.032)	(0.060)
Professional satisfaction	0.278***	0.541***
	(0.054)	(0.057)
Work life balance	0.210***	0.409***
	(0.047)	(0.068)
Emotional wellbeing	0.128***	0.249***
	(0.034)	(0.052)
Relationship and communication	0.203***	0.395***
	(0.039)	(0.048)
Physical wellbeing	0.109***	0.213***
	(0.031)	(0.047)
Recognition and support	0.048**	0.093**
	(0.020)	(0.037)
Observations	435	435

Note: Baseline outcome = Low satisfaction; Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Beyond this primary driver, the model identified emotional well-being, relationships, and communication as robust and significant predictors. The positive coefficients for high satisfaction (Coeff. = 0.249, $p < 0.001$ and Coeff. = 0.395, $p < 0.001$, respectively) suggest that teachers who perceive themselves as emotionally resilient and are part of a supportive network of communication with colleagues and administrators are significantly more likely to experience high job satisfaction. These findings affirm that the socio-emotional environment of the school acts as a critical buffer against the unique stressors of inclusive teaching, a notion that is strongly supported by research on teacher well-being (Beltman et al., 2023). The comparatively modest coefficient for recognition and support (coefficient = 0.093, $p < 0.05$) suggests that this factor has a limited impact on job satisfaction. Although statistically significant (Coeff. = 0.093, $p < 0.05$), its limited potency as a primary lever for job satisfaction contrasts starkly with the profound influence of intrinsic professional fulfilment and emotional resilience. This suggests that, while external validation is appreciated, it cannot compensate for a deficit in the core experiential dimensions of the teaching role itself.

One particularly interesting finding concerns work-life balance, which has a strong positive correlation with high satisfaction (coefficient = 0.409, $p < 0.001$). While this positive association is seemingly intuitive, it warrants careful interpretation within the specific context of dedicated education. Teachers who are deeply committed to the mission of inclusion tend to be highly invested in their work, which can blur the boundaries between professional and personal life. Consequently, a high work-life balance score in this group may not universally indicate ideal well-being, but could instead suggest a level of detachment that is inconsistent with the deep engagement typically observed in highly satisfied inclusive educators. Finally, the analysis confirmed that the demographic variables of gender and teaching experience were insignificant predictors. This indicates that the determinants of job satisfaction in this context are not a function of these background characteristics, but are instead rooted in malleable day-to-day experiences and perceptions, as captured by the well-being dimensions. This finding is empowering for policymakers and school leaders, as it suggests that targeted interventions aimed at improving these specific facets of the work environment could enhance job satisfaction across the entire teaching workforce, regardless of individual demographic profiles.

Discussion

This study investigated the complex relationship between teachers' well-being and job satisfaction in inclusive classrooms in Ghana. The findings reveal a teaching workforce under considerable strain, but also illuminate the pathways through which well-being sustains professional commitment. The results compellingly demonstrate that, although the challenges are systemic and pervasive, the drivers of job satisfaction are specific and malleable, thus offering clear targets for intervention. This discussion interprets the findings through the theoretical lens of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, situating them within the broader empirical literature and elaborating on their theoretical and practical significance.

A key finding that underpins this discussion is the remarkable uniformity of well-being scores across different demographic groups. The absence of significant differences based on gender or years of teaching experience is highly significant. This strongly suggests that the stressors inherent in implementing inclusive education in Ghana affect the entire teaching corps equally, rather than being isolated to specific subgroups. This challenges narratives that might disproportionately attribute burnout to female teachers juggling societal roles or novice teachers struggling with classroom management. However, the data indicate a universally challenging professional environment. From the perspective of COR theory, this uniformity implies a widespread and systemic depletion of resources. The demands of inclusive education, such as large class sizes, inadequate specialised materials and insufficient training, appear to create a context of ubiquitous resource threat that transcends individual characteristics (Hobfoll, 1989). This finding is a crucial contribution to the literature because it shifts the focus from individual teacher deficits to the structural and organisational factors that define the Ghanaian inclusive education landscape.

The descriptive statistics further highlight this state of systemic stress. Critically low scores in the areas of emotional well-being, work-life balance, relationships, and communication suggest that the teaching force is emotionally exhausted and unable to disconnect from professional pressures. They also indicate that the communication infrastructures in place are perceived as ineffective. These dimensions represent the rapid depletion of key personal resources such as emotional energy, time and social support. Moderate scores in physical well-being and recognition and support do not indicate health, but rather relative adequacy; these resources are barely maintained above a critical threshold. This configuration, in which the emotional and relational core of well-being is critically depleted, is consistent with international studies that emphasise the intense emotional labour and isolation frequently encountered by teachers in inclusive settings (Beltman et al., 2023; Squillaci & Hofmann, 2021). However, the moderate level of professional and job satisfaction amidst this depletion is a notable paradox. This suggests the phenomenon of 'commitment despite cost', whereby teachers' dedication to the moral imperative of inclusion provides a countervailing resource that partially offsets chronic resource loss. This nuance merits deeper qualitative investigation.

Ordered probit regression analysis goes beyond merely describing the state of well-being, instead delineating its precise mechanistic influence on job satisfaction. This provides the most significant insight of the study. The model reveals a clear hierarchy in the potency of various well-being dimensions, offering profound theoretical and practical implications for the field. Firstly, professional satisfaction is found to be the cornerstone of job satisfaction. The sizeable coefficient of professional satisfaction highlights that the intrinsic reward derived from feeling competent, effective and intellectually stimulated in one's teaching role is the most powerful factor in preventing dissatisfaction. Within the COR framework, professional satisfaction can be conceptualised as a key personal resource and a sense of self-efficacy and accomplishment. When this resource is strong, teachers can confidently invest their energy in the challenging tasks of inclusive teaching, creating a spiral of success where the more effort they invest, the more resources they accumulate (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This finding corroborates not only the COR framework, but also the JD-R model, which emphasises motivational pathways. This aligns with

global research affirming that a sense of professional efficacy is paramount for teacher resilience (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). In the Ghanaian context, this suggests that interventions that build pedagogical skills and content mastery for inclusive practices are fundamental to sustaining the teaching workforce, rather than merely additive.

The strong predictive power of relationships, communication and emotional well-being affirms the critical role of the socio-emotional environment in schools. A supportive network of colleagues and administrators is a vital resource that provides a buffer against daily stressors. This finding strongly supports the principle of COR theory that social support is a fundamental resource that can be drawn upon in times of strain (Hobfoll, 2001). When teachers feel connected and heard, the emotional cost of their work is reduced. The significant role of emotional well-being itself indicates that the ability to manage the intense emotions associated with inclusive teaching, such as frustration, empathy and fatigue, is a crucial internal resource. Taken together, these findings suggest that the Ghanaian teaching environment involves high emotional and relational demands and limited resources to meet them, making the provision of these resources a critical lever for improvement.

One of the most intriguing findings relates to work-life balance. The model's strong positive coefficient for this construct is counterintuitive when considered alongside its very low descriptive mean. This paradox can be explained using COR theory. Teachers who are deeply committed to inclusion may view the significant investment of personal time and energy as an inevitable cost of achieving their professional objectives. In this context, a higher work-life balance score may not simply reflect healthy detachment, but could indicate a level of disengagement that is incompatible with the deep commitment required. Conversely, for the few teachers who achieve it, genuine work-life balance may be a highly valuable and rare resource, which would explain its strong association with high satisfaction. Further research is needed to unravel teachers’ motivations and coping strategies in this complex interplay.

While statistically significant, the comparatively modest effect of recognition and support is a noteworthy finding. This suggests that, although external validation and material support are valued, they are not enough to make up for deficits in the fundamental intrinsic aspects of the job. This challenges the simplistic transactional view of teacher motivation. From the COR perspective, recognition is an external resource that can replenish depleted energy. However, if fundamental teaching tasks continue to deplete personal resources such as emotional energy and self-efficacy at a rapid rate, recognition alone cannot prevent a net loss. This adds a critical nuance to existing literature which broadly advocates better teacher support (Andrews et al., 2021). Our results suggest that support must first be strategically targeted at bolstering the most potent resources: professional efficacy and emotional resilience.

Theoretical and Empirical Contributions in Ghanaian Context

This study makes several contributions. Firstly, it provides robust empirical validation of COR theory in a novel context. Ghanaian inclusive education. This shows that the theory is an explanatory framework, not just a descriptive tool, and can account for the uniform depletion of resources across demographics, as well as the hierarchical value of different resources in sustaining job satisfaction. The finding that demographic variables were insignificant predictors powerfully reinforces the COR tenet that stress is a function of resource loss rather than fixed personal characteristics. This directs intervention efforts squarely towards the malleable work environment. This study also addresses a significant gap in the literature. While previous Ghanaian studies have focused on attitudes or policy challenges (e.g. Asamoah et al., 2022; Butakor et al., 2020), this study is the first to provide a comprehensive, multivariate analysis of teacher well-being. The finding of uniform strain across gender and experience contrasts with some international studies that report variations; for instance, early career teachers are often found to have higher stress levels. This difference highlights the systemic nature of the challenges in this context, which are likely rooted in broader resource constraints within the Ghanaian education system. While the identification of professional satisfaction as the primary driver of job satisfaction aligns with global findings on teacher motivation, it is particularly pertinent in a setting where specialised inclusion skills are often scarce. The weak correlation between work-life balance and job satisfaction, yet its strong performance in the multivariate model, highlights the limitations of bivariate analyses and the value of sophisticated modelling, such as ordered probit regression. This reveals the complex, often nonlinear, relationships between well-being dimensions, suggesting that their influence must be understood together rather than in isolation.

Practical Implications

This study makes a valuable, context-specific contribution to the discourse on inclusive education. It does this by providing empirical evidence of the precise mechanisms through which teachers' well-being influences their professional commitment in Ghana's basic schools, which have limited resources. These findings compellingly shift the focus from individual teacher deficits to the systemic and organisational factors that govern the landscape of inclusive education. The practical implications for policymakers, educational managers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and teachers are therefore profound, demanding a strategic reorientation of future intervention efforts. The evidence suggests that enhancing job satisfaction, and therefore the effectiveness of inclusive practice, depends not on generic support, but on a targeted, resource-based approach that strengthens the most important aspects of teachers' well-being.

For the Ministry of Education (MoE) and leaders in the Ghana Education Service (GES), the universal depletion of well-being resources among all teachers is a clarion call for systemic reform. The absence of variation by gender or experience suggests that these challenges are endemic to the environment rather than isolated incidents. Therefore, macro-level policies must move beyond one-off training workshops and establish sustainable support ecosystems. The regression analysis identified the enhancement of professional satisfaction as the most potent lever for change. This requires a significant investment in ongoing, practical professional development to equip teachers with advanced

pedagogical skills for diverse learning environments. Policymakers should therefore mandate and fund specialised training in differentiated instruction, adaptive assessment and behavioural management. This would create a cascade model in which master trainers would empower lead teachers within each district. Furthermore, the critical state of emotional well-being, relationships, and communication requires structural changes. The Ghana Education Service should make routine, structured peer collaboration sessions part of the institutional culture and establish protected time for teachers to plan with special needs coordinators. These sessions would create social support networks that would act as vital buffers against daily stressors.

For key stakeholders, such as NGOs and international development partners, this study provides a clear blueprint for maximising the impact of programmes. The findings suggest that the provision of resources must be sophisticated and multidimensional. While donating physical materials is necessary, this alone is insufficient. NGOs should co-design their interventions with teachers to directly address the identified resource drain. This should include funding for classroom assistants to reduce overwhelming teacher-pupil ratios, which erode work-life balance and emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, given the important role of relationships and communication, NGOs should invest in and facilitate the formation of professional learning communities (PLCs) across circuit schools. These PLCs would provide a formalised platform for sharing challenges and solutions, thereby transforming isolated practitioners into a collaborative community of practice. Such initiatives would replenish the social and emotional resources that are currently critically lacking. The paradoxical finding regarding work-life balance further suggests that, rather than importing Western models of detachment, NGOs should support research into contextually appropriate coping strategies to develop interventions that align with the deep commitment that Ghanaian teachers exhibit.

Finally, this study validates the experiences of individual teachers and highlights the need for school leaders to empower them to advocate for strategic change. Head teachers must recognise that their leadership directly influences the socio-emotional environment. They can implement low-cost, high-impact practices immediately, such as establishing transparent communication channels and fostering a culture of appreciation. While this is not a panacea, it contributes to a supportive atmosphere. Armed with the knowledge that professional satisfaction is key to job satisfaction, teachers can proactively seek peer mentoring and form small study groups to collectively build their instructional capacity for inclusion. Viewing their challenges through the lens of wellbeing and job satisfaction can help teachers reframe their situation as a systemic resource deficit rather than personal failure. This reduces stigma and fosters a collective voice to demand the structural changes and targeted support that are essential for their success, as well as for the success of inclusive education in Ghana.

Limitation and Future Research Direction

This study offers a novel, theory-driven analysis of the systemic resource dynamics that impact teacher well-being within Ghana's inclusive education system. A key strength of the study is its application of the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which reframes the universal depletion of well-being as a structural issue rather than an individual one. Methodologically, the use of ordered probit model provides

the insights into the hierarchical influence of well-being dimensions. This identified professional satisfaction as the cornerstone of job satisfaction and offered an actionable blueprint for interventions. However, this study has some limitations. The cross-sectional design precluded causal inference or longitudinal analysis of resource loss. Self-reported data may be subject to bias, and focusing on the Greater Accra Region only limits the generalisability of the findings to more rural, resource-deprived areas. Furthermore, while the digital data collection method enabled a robust sample, it likely excluded teachers in digitally impoverished areas. This potentially silenced those most affected by the resource gaps under investigation. Future research should build upon these findings. A longitudinal study is needed to trace the causal pathways of teacher resource depletion and regeneration. Qualitative methods should also be employed to explore the lived experiences behind statistical patterns, such as the complex role of work-life balance. Geographically expanded and comparative studies of Ghana's diverse regions are also essential. Finally, the efficacy of theory-driven interventions, such as professional learning communities or classroom assistants, in replenishing critical resources, such as emotional energy, should be tested. This multi-method approach is vital for developing the sustainable support systems that inclusive education demands.

Conclusion

This study conclusively demonstrates that the successful implementation of inclusive education in Ghana hinges on the systemic well-being of its teaching staff. The findings reveal that the teaching corps is experiencing uniform well-being depletion across all demographics, which is a powerful indication that the challenges are structural rather than individual. Crucially, the analysis establishes a clear hierarchy of influence, identifying professional satisfaction as the main factor influencing overall job satisfaction. This highlights that the intrinsic reward of feeling effective is the most vital resource for teachers, more so than external recognition or support. The significant roles of emotional well-being and supportive relationships further affirm that the socio-emotional environment acts as a critical buffer against the demands of inclusive practices. These findings demand a strategic reorientation of policies and support. Interventions must be precisely targeted, moving beyond generic workshops to build sustainable ecosystems that bolster professional efficacy through advanced, ongoing pedagogical training, and foster collaborative school cultures. If Ghana is to realise its ambitions for inclusive education, it must first invest in replenishing its teachers' most critical resources: their professional competence, emotional resilience and community support networks. Thus, this study's findings show that the future of the implementation of inclusive education depends not on asking teachers to do more with less, but on providing them with the necessary resources to thrive.

Declarations

Ethics approval:

This study was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Limpopo.

Consent to participate

or informed consent: All participants involved in this study provided informed consent to participate prior to participation

Consent to publish:

Not Applicable

Clinical trial number

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests

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Author Contribution

Both authors contributed equally to the writing of the manuscript.

Data Availability

Data are available, but however upon request due to privacy/ethical restrictions

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Figures

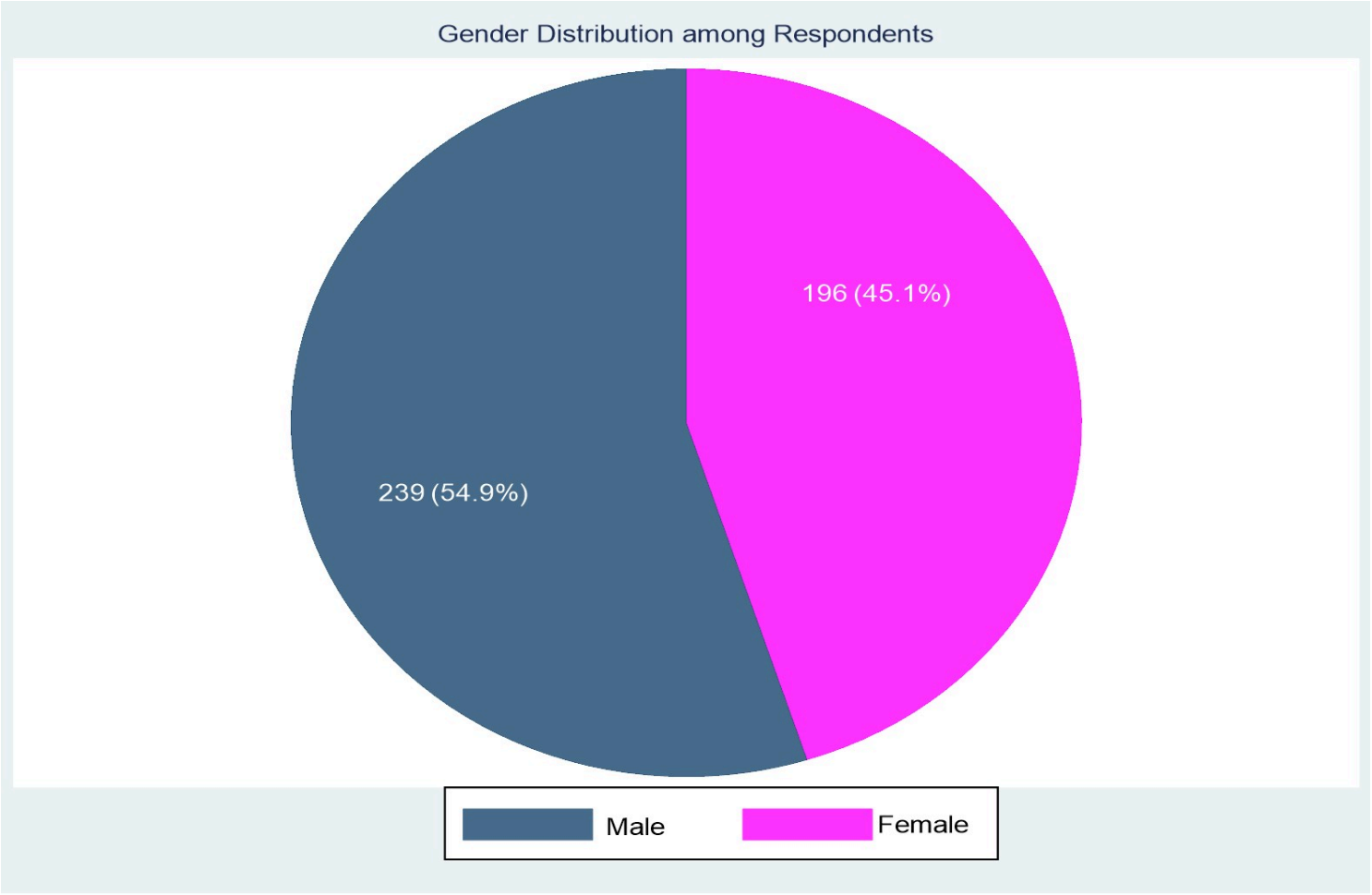


Figure 1

Distribution of Gender

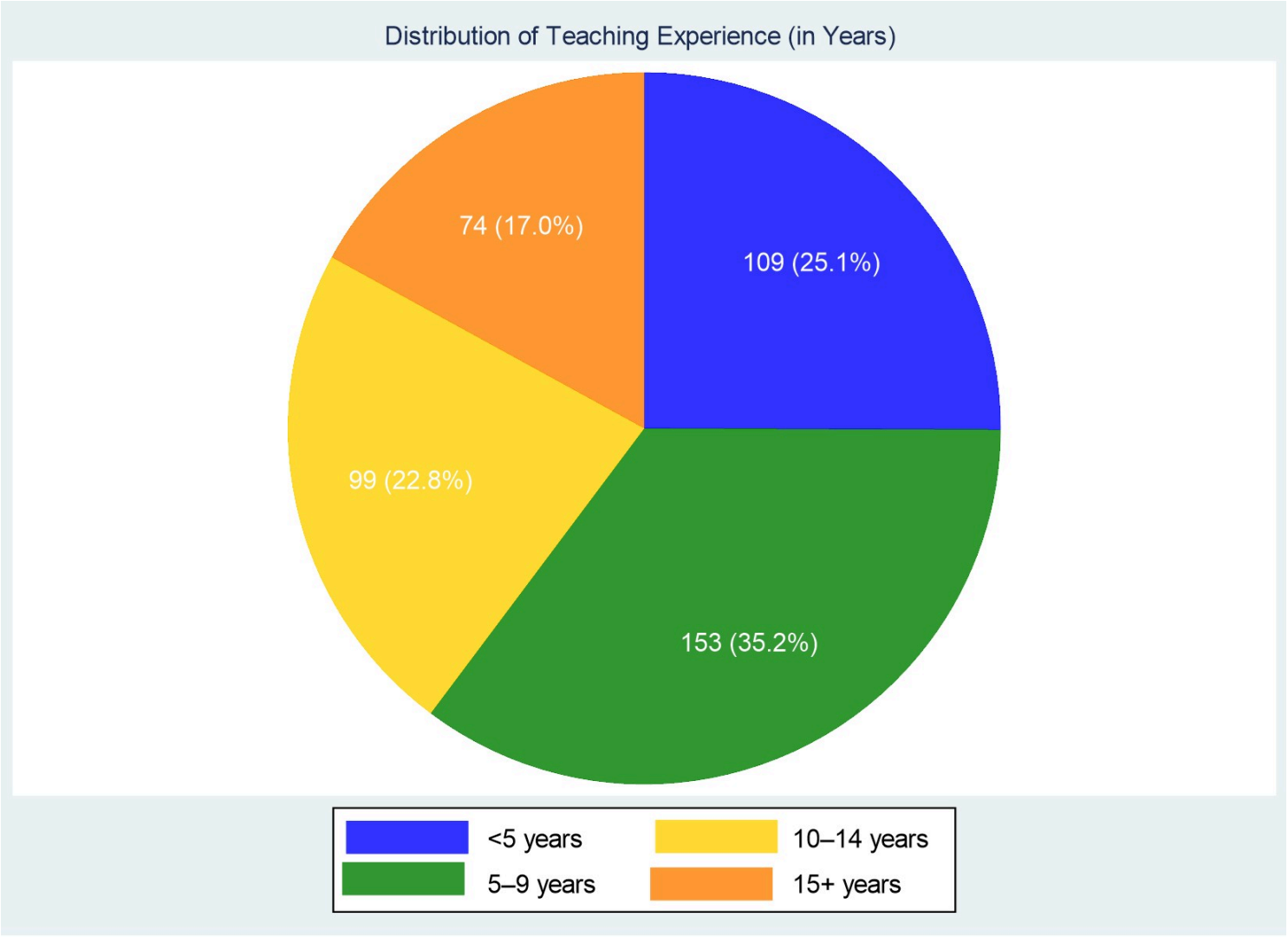


Figure 2

Distribution of teaching experience

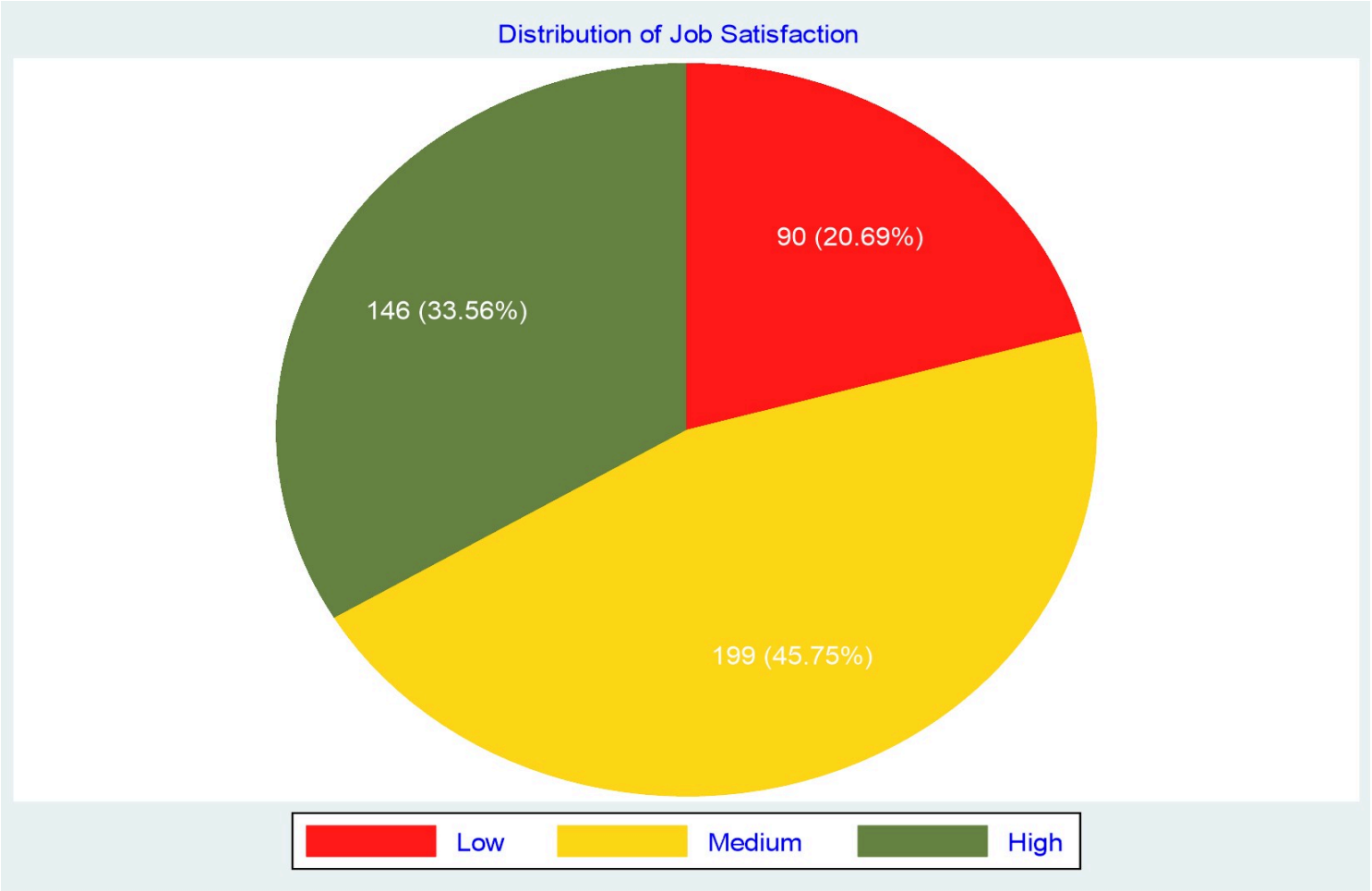


Figure 3

Distribution of Overall Job Satisfaction

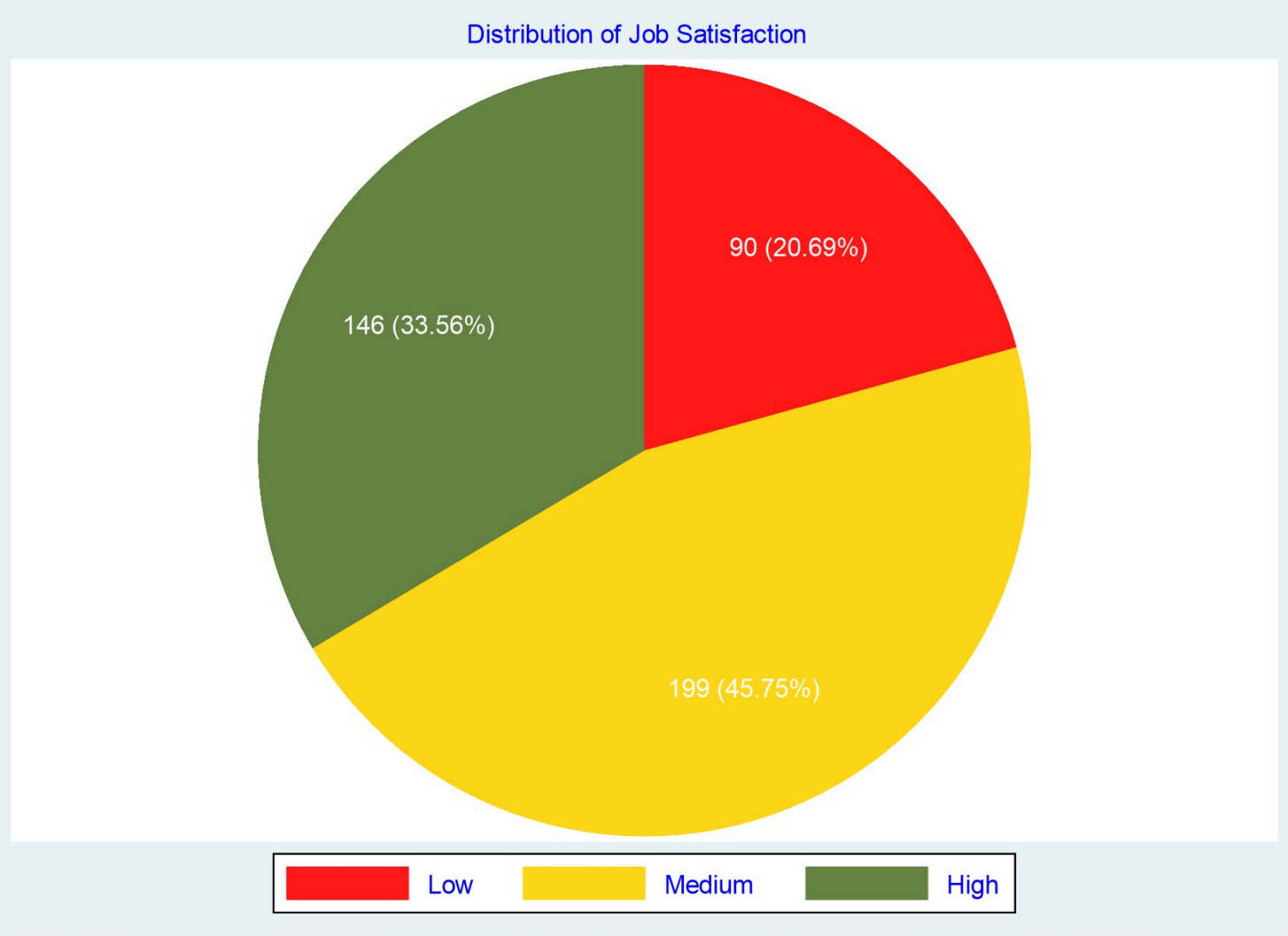


Figure 4

Distribution of Job Satisfaction