

## **Elementary School Teachers' Teaching Competence as a Predictor of their Professional Commitment**

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### **Abstract**

This explanatory correlational design study mainly analyzed elementary school teachers' views to ascertain relationship between teachers' perceived level of teaching competence and their commitment to teaching profession. To achieve the main objective, all (13358) teachers currently employed in 1072 public and private elementary schools of district Vehari were considered as study population. To measure elementary school teachers' perceived teaching competencies, a scale comprising 30 items was developed keeping in view the example of Passi and Lalitha (2005) while professional commitment scale comprising 21 items developed by Prince et al. (2022) was used to collect required data about teachers' perceived commitment to their profession. Researchers approached 1356 randomly selected teachers and sought their views regarding both the variables and finally 1095 (80.75%) sample participants returned properly completed questionnaire valid for data analysis. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient method and standard multiple regression technique was used to analyze the collected data. Results set forth that sample teachers' perceived level of teaching competence and professional commitment was high. Likewise, teaching competence was found to be substantially related with professional commitment. Results also suggested that teachers' perceived competence in teaching had positive and significant effect in predicting their professional commitment. Finally, this study recommends that programs for teachers' professional development as well as their in-

service training may be organized frequently to further boost their teaching competencies.

**Keywords:** Teaching competence, Professional commitment, Elementary school, Teachers' views

## Introduction

Education is one of the most significant assets of any civilization as it shapes nations' future by beginning with its youngest citizens (Amare & Dagnew, 2020). Students' learning quality is always associated with the quality of teaching (Tufail & Farooq, 2021). Teachers, therefore, must be knowledgeable and skilled enough to deliver high quality education to their pupils and assist them in achieving their goals (Radid et al., 2020). Likewise, Ladd (2011) proclaims that a teacher's teaching competencies, working conditions in school and school leadership significantly influence teachers' professional commitment. Writing in the same vein, Hacıeminoglu (2016) affirmed that a teacher's positive attitude towards the entire teaching-learning process ensures students' constructive learning. Numerous factors including teachers' professional commitment and their teaching competence influence teachers' approaches to teaching-learning process.

The term 'competence' relates to the feeling of mastery, a sense that one can succeed and grow within environments that provide optimal challenges, positive feedback and opportunities for growth (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Wisniewski et al. (2018) described competence as an individual's need to feel effective in the world and Gupta (2011) defines the term as the qualities, inspirations, knowledge, aptitudes, mentalities, and convictions essential for human job performance. As regards teaching competence, Patel (2016) defined the term as the sum of a teacher's talents in the classroom. Blazar (2016) emphasized the instructional aspect and declared that a competent teacher must be able to understand precisely what is being taught and how it is being taught as well as have access to students' learning outcomes.

As regards the term 'commitment' it refers to the mental attachment of a teacher to the teaching profession. Commitment is a sense of adherence and a key factor that considerably influences teaching-learning process. Commitment is the foundation of all the relationships and provides basis for establishing cordial interaction in educational settings (Fernandez-Lores et al., 2016). Teacher commitment has been identified as one of the most critical factors for the future success of education and school. Compared to less committed teachers, committed teachers prove more stable and productive for their students and institutions. Commitment, according to Sumamol (2018), is closely linked with teachers' workplace performance; their innovative ability and their capacity to incorporate new ideas into their

own practice/experience along with having vital impact on students' academic achievement.

Professional commitment is influenced by various factors, one of which is proximity to one's workplace. Results of a study conducted by Mahmood (2011) show that urban instructors are more dedicated than rural ones because cities provide excellent opportunities, benefits, environments, and physical facilities such as transportation for personal and professional advancement. Affective commitment can be defined as emotional attachment, recognition of professional goals and ideals, and level of involvement. Normative commitment is a dedication to the institution's goals. Because of social pressures, they think that they must remain in the teaching profession indefinitely. The sense that one ought to remain with the organization is cultivated by the requirement that they maintain their membership (Rawat, 2011). Furthermore, Aziz (2010) asserted that compared to teachers who don't plan, those who do produce better student outcomes. The care and gathering of related materials are crucial. A good teacher must be aware of the most productive instructional strategies.

Continuous professional commitment is defined as an employee's desire to remain with a company due to financial incentives, a lack of alternatives, seniority and retirement benefits and an inability to transfer their experience elsewhere (Meyer et al., 2002). A lack of retreat and a lack of role conflicts and ambiguity characterize workplace continuity commitment (Meyer et al., 2002). Working solely for the sake of survival may endanger the team. As a result, a company's ability to retain a stable workforce is not the only indicator of its success. Being a teacher is not an easy job. A good teacher conveys the most critical information most efficiently. Teachers can influence the educational quality, according to parents, researchers, policymakers, and educators. Teachers should attend workshops and seminars regularly (Saeed et al., 2008).

The abilities of the teachers determine their effectiveness in the school. Teachers are the most important guides, assistants, and facilitators in this context, as children learn about their culture and environment without parental involvement (Raza et al., 2022). Fulfillment of a teacher's psychological needs at work is influenced by his/her perceived competence (Palmer, 2020). Teachers significantly influence their students' performance not only as individuals in society but also as students in the classroom. It is believed that educators should have specific abilities and experiences and that many training initiatives must be implemented to improve their teaching proficiency (Haider et al., 2015). Further, Arslan et al. (2022) declared that the rapidly changing world sets up new standards for teacher competencies and self-improvement receives major focus in this regard which always begins with self-assessment.

Many academics (i.e., Amjad et al., 2015; Fernandez-Lores et al., 2016; McInerney et al., 2015) have revealed a strong relationship between

teachers' dedication to their profession and their ability to teach, particularly regarding their attitudes toward work stress, critical/ creative thinking, level of participation and satisfaction as well as their commitment (Amjad et al., 2015). Teachers more committed to their schools' goals and objectives work harder. In many studies, good performance has been linked to higher levels of commitment, whereas low levels of responsibility have been linked to higher rates of absenteeism, burnout and turnover (McInerney et al., 2015).

Chuan (2010) concluded that professional dedication to the performance of work is correlated with the quality of education obtained by pupils which eventually translates to academic achievement on the part of students. Similarly, Day and Smethem (2009), emphasized that educational reforms can only be properly implemented if teachers are totally dedicated to the process. Professional teachers are those who have command over their subject. Teachers know the teaching standards and maintain them according to a sense of responsibility and they feel they are answerable to meet the requirements of their students. This definition explains a professional stage of teaching and discloses that it is a challenging responsibility (Aghaalkhani & Maftoon, 2018). Likewise, Raj and Verma, (2018) asserted that learning is possible practically only with competent educators.

Generally, it is perceived that teacher's teaching ability grows with time and experience. Teaching is a more fulfilling career option for experienced workers because they do not have the option of quitting their jobs and living on a lower income. Teachers must also be knowledgeable about a variety of instructional methods (Mahgoub, 2014). Kanter (2014) describes competence as having "great worth". People today require more than ever before in the soft skills of networking and information to flourish in today's linked environment. Teachers must know precisely what they bring to the table regarding skills and experience when entering the job market. Competencies in education are frequently associated with high professional performance. The professional abilities of teachers are directly related to student achievement and mastery of academic skills (Siddiqui, 2016).

Gender plays a key role in professional dedication and females are found to be more committed to a cause than male counterparts. Kniveton (2004) proclaimed that men prioritize money over work, whereas women prioritize their jobs. Social pressure plays a role in this tendency as teaching is a more secure employment option for women. They are generous and selfless (Mahmood, 2011). Marriage has enhanced a person's capacity to focus on his or her work. Those who are married are more committed than singles (Salami, 2008). A recent study by Irshad and Naz (2011) found that high-paying employees are happier and more committed to their jobs than low-paying ones. Passionate teachers are distinguished by their commitment to achievement of their students. Ladd (2011) discovered a connection between a teacher's level of dedication and teaching competency. These

findings are supported by the findings of numerous other researchers (Chan et al., 2008; Horng, 2009; Ladd, 2011).

Given the importance of teacher commitment and dedication in teaching-learning process, this study analyzed its relationship with teachers' teaching competence. Both these variables are linked to one another either directly or indirectly (Olatunde, 2009). One reason students perform poorly is that teachers have a negative attitude toward their jobs and use ineffective teaching methods. Most of the previous studies (Amjad et al., 2015; Chuan, 2010; Fernandez-Lores et al., 2016; McInerney et al., 2015) on teaching commitment and competence found a positive correlation between the two. Likewise, Topolnytsky (2002) also found that a teacher's commitment to his/her career is correlated positively and significantly with his/her teaching competence. These findings establish a robust correlation between teachers' dedication to their work and their ability to impart knowledge to students.

Previous literature puts forward that teachers' competence and their dedication to teaching have positive effect on learners and teachers overall performance. Competent teachers are more committed and ardent to teaching (Dee et al., 2006) and their professional outputs are virtually to be identical to their competency in teaching (Prince et al., 2022). Review of literature further supported that numerous previous scholars (i.e., Akinwale & Okotoni, 2019; Owusu-Fordjour, 2021; Reddappa, 2019; Siri et al., 2020) conducted studies to find out strength of relationship between teachers' level of competence, their attitude as well as commitment to teaching profession and their performance. Previous literature, however, suggests that there is hardly any research found in Pakistani context about this key area in which elementary teachers' teaching competence predict their commitment to their profession.

Educational stakeholders in Pakistan, specifically in the context of elementary education, continuously criticize about poor quality of teaching and deficient capabilities of teachers. Critics further assert that teaching-learning process in Pakistan at elementary level of schooling seems to be poorer than expectations with regard to students' learning outcomes as well as teachers' teaching outputs. There might be a number of factors contributing to this issue including elementary teachers' level of professional attitude, their commitment to teaching as well as their teaching competences and skills. In view of this context, researchers designed this study to analyze the strength of relationship between elementary school teachers' teaching competence and their perceived level of professional commitment. This study also analyzed to what extent elementary school teachers' teaching competence predicts their commitment to teaching profession.

### **Present Study**

This study mainly analyzed relationship between elementary school teachers' perceived teaching competence scores and their perceived level of

professional commitment. Following four research questions were formulated in this study.

1. What is teachers' perception of their teaching competence at elementary level?
2. What is teachers' perception of their commitment to teaching profession at elementary level?
3. Is there any relationship between elementary school teachers' perceived teaching competence and their commitment to teaching profession?
4. To what extent does elementary school teachers' teaching competence predict their commitment to teaching profession?

### **Study Design and Methods**

The co-relational research design was used in this study. This research approach is used by researchers to identify a connection between two or more variables (Creswell, 2012) and to see if they have any effect on each other (Ketner et al., 1997). All the (4951 male + 8407 female = 13358) teachers currently employed in 1072 public and private elementary schools of district Vehari were considered as study population. With the use of the table created by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) for calculating sample size, the sample for this study was finalized. Consequently, this study included 1356 teachers (male = 48.8% and female 51.1.%) who were selected using stratified random sampling technique and in view of following population characteristics i.e., gender of teachers, school sector, location, teachers' qualification and years of their teaching experience.

One questionnaire, containing three sections, was used by the researchers to collect data from elementary school teachers. First section of the questionnaire asked participating teachers about their personal information. Second section of the questionnaire sought elementary school teachers' views about their perceived level of teaching competencies. The final and third section asked sample teachers' about their perceived level of commitment towards teaching profession. Scale for measuring elementary school teachers' perceived teaching competencies was developed keeping in view the example of Passi and Lalitha (2005). This scale has 30 items grouped in five subscales/factors i.e., 'lesson planning competencies' with 05 items, 'presentation/instructional competencies' with 10 items and 'closing competencies' having 05 items. Likewise, the subscales 'evaluative competencies' and 'classroom management competencies' comprised 05 items in each subscale.

Professional commitment scale items used in this study to collect elementary school teachers' views were developed by Prince et al. (2022). This scale has 21 items and measures exclusively elementary school teachers' views with five point rating Likert scale. Both the scales measure elementary school teachers' views with five point rating Likert scale ranging



from 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = No idea, 4 = agree and 5= strongly agree. It took nearly a month to complete the data collection process from start to finish. Finally, 1095 (80.75%) participants returned properly completed questionnaire valid for analysis purpose. Especially among all the 1095 valid responses, 60.4% were female (661) and 39.6% were male (434).

### Data Analysis and Results

In response to four research questions, this section presents the results for descriptive statistics (e.g., percentage, mean and standard deviation) Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression analyses. Table 1 to Table 6 displays the results as well as their interpretation.

**Table 1**

Descriptive analysis for teachers' perceived teaching competence

Sr. no.	Competencies	Agree %	No idea %	Disagree %	Mean	SD
1	Lesson planning competencies	90.54	6.56	1.44	4.28	.70
2	Presentation competencies	94.21	4.96	0.86	4.38	.63
3	Closing competencies	92.52	6.22	1.32	4.34	.67
4	Evaluative competencies	94.12	4.16	0.9	4.41	.65
5	Classroom management.	94.44	4.7	0.88	4.41	.63
<b>Overall teaching competencies</b>					4.36	0.66

The results of descriptive analysis in Table 1 depict that the range of mean values for each of the five sub-scales of teaching competence scale were 4.28 to 4.41. These values suggest that elementary school teachers' has highly positive perception about their teaching competence level in all the five dimensions. The overall mean value i.e., 4.36 further supports teachers' positive perception about their teaching competence level. Based on the analysis in Table 1, it can, thus, be inferred that elementary school teachers has highly positive perception about their teaching competence level.

**Table 2**

Descriptive analysis for teachers' perceived professional commitment

Sr. no.	Statement/Theme	Agree %	No idea %	Disagr ee %	Mea n	SD
1	Adore teaching	80.9	11.1	8.0	4.16	1.01
2	Teaching good choice	80.5	10.2	9.2	4.13	1.02
3	Like giving homework	81.0	11.1	7.8	4.14	.99
4	I enjoy teaching	79.8	13.1	7.2	4.12	.95
5	Love helping students	81.9	11.6	6.5	4.18	.93

6	Teaching never bores	80.2	11.5	8.3	4.11	.97
7	Love lesson planning	81.1	10.7	8.2	4.09	.96
8	Teaching never tires	79.3	11.1	9.7	4.06	1.03
9	Grading class work	83.7	8.9	7.4	4.16	.98
10	Happy when teach	86.2	8.2	5.6	4.24	.91
11	Adore taking notes	86.0	9.8	4.3	4.20	.84
12	Upset by student failure	86.9	9.6	3.5	4.22	.79
13	Respected as a teacher	89.7	8.0	2.3	4.30	.75
14	Teaching self-esteem	89.8	7.3	2.9	4.20	.76
15	Satisfied being a teacher	91.4	6.3	2.3	4.35	.73
16	Improve courses	90.6	7.0	2.4	4.32	.73
17	Punctuality in teaching	89.9	7.3	.7	4.30	.76
18	Support to head teacher	89.5	7.9	2.5	4.32	.76
19	Like helping students	93.5	1.7	1.0	4.32	.78
20	Providing comments	92.0	6.0	2.0	4.36	.72
21	Enjoy co-curricular activities	89.9	8.2	1.8	4.36	.74
<b>Overall professional commitment</b>					4.22	0.86

Table 2 exhibits the analysis of participating teachers' views about their perceived level of commitment to teaching profession. Table 2 further portrays that sample elementary school teachers rated their level of professional commitment as highly positive on all the 21 indicators (Mean between 4.06 - 4.36). Likewise, overall teachers' self-perceived level of their professional commitment was highly positive (Mean = 4.22) with moderate level of agreement (SD= 0.86). It can, thus, be established that sample elementary school teachers believed that level of their commitment to teaching profession was highly positive.

**Table 3**

Relationship between teachers' perceived professional commitment and teaching competence

	PC	TTC	LPC	IC	CC	EC	MC
Professional commitment (PC) Sig.(2-tailed)	1						
Total Teaching competence (TTC) Sig.(2-tailed)	.560** .000	1					
Lesson planning competence (LPC) Sig.(2-tailed)	.476** .000	.750** .000	1				
Presentation competence (IC) Sig.(2-tailed)	.441** .000	.829** .000	.507** .000	1			
Closing competence (CC) Sig.(2-tailed)	.398** .000	.691** .000	.411** .000	.410** .000	1		



Sig.(2-tailed)							
Evaluative competence (EC)	.382**	.724**	.492**	.465**	.416**	1	
Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
Management competence (MC)	.384**	.697**	.411**	.442**	.433**	.413**	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

Table 3 exhibits that the Pearson correlation coefficient method was used to find out the relation between teachers' perception of professional commitment and their teaching competencies. Table 3 indicated that the value of 'r' .560\*\* between teachers' perceived professional commitment score and teaching competence score exhibits moderately positive and significant relationship. Likewise, the values of 'r' between teachers' perception of their teaching competence with lesson planning, instructional competencies, closing competencies, evaluative competencies and management competence are .750\*\*, .829\*\*, .691\*\*, .724\*\* and .697\*\* respectively which also show a moderately to highly positive/and significant relationship. This means that all the independent variables included in teaching competence dimension i.e., lesson planning competencies, instructional competencies, closing competencies, evaluative competencies and classroom management competencies were found to be substantially related to each other and also that of with professional commitment (dependent variable). It can, therefore, be concluded that elementary school teachers' teaching competence have a substantial influence on teachers' commitment to teaching profession. This means that enriched teachers' teaching competence leads them to a better level of professional commitment.

**Table 4**

Model Summary for teachers' teaching competence and professional commitment

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.568 <sup>a</sup>	.322	.319	10.82

Table 4 unveils the results of simultaneous backward standard multiple regression performed to assess the linear relationship between teachers' teaching competencies (independent/predictor variable) and professional commitment (dependent variable). Table 4 further demonstrates the values of R Square (i.e., .322) and Adjusted R Square (i.e., .319). In a multiple regression, the R Square values represent total explained variance contributed to all the predictors in a progression. These values, in this model, indicate that the model (which includes total teaching competence and its five dimensions) explained 31.9 percent of the variance in teachers' perceived level of professional commitment.

**Table 5**

ANOVA for teachers' teaching competence and professional commitment

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	60595.293	5	12119.059	103.51	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	127502.323	1089	117.082		
Total	188097.616	1094			

Table 5 displays the results of ANOVA calculated to estimate the statistical significance of the result in this model. In standard multiple regression analysis, ANOVA tests the null hypothesis that multiple R in the population equals 0. The results in Table 5 reveal that this model ( $F=103.51$ ,  $Sig=.000$ ,  $p<.05$ ) reaches statistical significance.

**Table 6**

Summary of relative contribution of predictor variables on professional commitment

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t. value	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	12.091	3.54		3.41	.001
Lesson planning competencies	1.067	.14	.247	7.82	.000
Presentation competencies	.454	.08	.172	5.47	.000
Closing competencies	.669	.13	.147	4.93	.000
Evaluative competencies	.347	.15	.073	2.37	.018
Classroom Management	.531	.14	.111	3.70	.000

Table 6 presents the summary of the relative contribution of predictor variables (five dimensions of teaching competencies) on elementary school teachers' professional commitment. Analysis in Table 4 shows that a multiple R of .319 explained 31.9% of the variance in professional commitment scores. In the same way, the Standardized Coefficients Beta values in Table 6 put forward that all the five dimensions of teaching competencies ( $\beta = .247, .172, .147, .073, .111$  respectively and  $p<0.05$ ) were significant in predicting elementary school teachers' professional commitment. This result set forth that teachers' teaching competence made significant contribution in predicting their commitment to teaching profession at elementary level. Elementary school teachers' teaching

competence, therefore, has a significant effect on their professional commitment. Overall, the analysis results in Table 3 to Table 6 unveil that the effect of elementary school teachers' teaching competencies as a predictor of their professional commitment is moderately positive and significant.

## Discussion

This quantitative correlational design study mainly focused on examining the relationship between elementary school teachers' teaching competence and their commitment to teaching profession in Pakistani context. Findings demonstrated that Pakistani elementary school teachers have highly positive perception about their level of teaching competence. Furthermore, this study found that teachers' perceived degree of commitment to teaching profession was also highly positive. These are encouraging findings in Pakistani educational context. Literature also supports the fact that committed teachers add novel tint to the teaching profession (Prince et al., 2022) and ensure opportunities for improvement of students' achievement as well as school performance (Jeynes, 2004). These findings support those of Owusu-Fordjour (2021), Prince et al. (2022) and Reddappa (2019) who found that perceived level of school teachers' commitment to teaching profession was high. These findings, however, contrast a number of previous studies (i.e., Akinwale & Okotoni, 2019; Odiye & Kingsley, 2018) whose studies concluded that the level of teachers' commitment to their profession was low and their attitude was negative.

This study also found a moderately positive relationship between teachers' perceived level of their teaching competency with teachers' commitment to their profession. This finding is aligned well with numerous previous studies (i.e., Cabigao, 2019; Siri et al., 2020; Taylor & Pearson, 2004). Their studies also revealed that teachers' degree of professional commitment and devotion was positively related with their teaching competence and classroom proficiency. Finally, findings in this study established that elementary school teachers' perceived teaching competence contributes significantly in predicting their commitment to teaching profession. This contribution seems to be logical as teachers' competence in teaching enhances their interest, motivation and dedication level towards their profession (Hulpia & Devos, 2010) and makes them more attentive to students' needs. Competent teachers prepare their lessons more thoughtfully, become more regular and punctual in performing school assignments and consequently more committed and ardent to teaching (Dee et al., 2006). These teaching competencies eventually transform them into more committed teachers in their profession and improve their performance (Jeynes, 2004). This finding supports those of Ahmad et al. (2013), Reddappa (2019) and Owusu-Fordjour (2021) who also found that teaching

competencies has significant influence on teachers' professional commitment.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Teachers' competencies and their commitment are decisive teachers' variables that might be beneficial to determine and direct students' achievement as well as school performance at all educational levels. The findings of this study evidently set forth that elementary school teachers' teaching competencies made significant contribution and influence in predicting their commitment to teaching profession. This study concluded that sample teachers' perceived level of teaching competence and professional commitment was high. This study further concluded that elementary school teachers' competence in teaching was substantially related with their professional commitment. This means that enriched teachers' teaching competence leads them to a better level of professional commitment. Finally, this study recommends that educational policy makers should provide even more incentives to enhance teachers' teaching capabilities and their professional commitment. Programs for teachers' professional development as well as teachers' in-service training programs may be organized frequently to further boost their teaching competencies.

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