
**PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND THRIVING AT WORK AMONG
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS: A DESCRIPTIVE-
CORRELATIONAL AND REGRESSION STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative study examined the levels of professional identity and thriving at work among 189 elementary school teachers in District III of the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Kidapawan City, Philippines, and investigated their relationship and influence. Using a descriptive-correlational and multiple linear regression design, data were collected through validated survey questionnaires assessing four dimensions of professional identity (teaching beliefs, professional socialization, career progression, and professional competence) and seven dimensions of thriving at work (psychological well-being, emotional well-being, social well-being, work-life integration, basic needs, job design and experience, and health and physical/mental well-being). Complete enumeration was employed. Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated a strong professional identity overall ($M = 4.52$, Strongly Agree), led by teaching beliefs ($M = 4.58$) and career progression ($M = 4.52$). Thriving at work was generally high across most dimensions, with psychological well-being ($M = 4.40$) and social well-being ($M = 4.31$) rated highest, and health/physical-mental well-being ($M = 3.85$) lowest. Spearman rho correlation analysis confirmed significant positive relationships between all professional identity dimensions and most thriving dimensions. Multiple linear regression identified professional competence as the strongest predictor of psychological ($\beta = 0.521$, $p < .001$) and social well-being ($\beta = 0.392$, $p = .025$); career progression as the dominant predictor of emotional well-being ($\beta = 0.846$, $p < .001$), basic needs ($\beta = 0.527$, $p = .016$), and health well-being ($\beta = 0.519$, $p = .020$); and professional socialization as the key

predictor of work-life integration ($\beta = 0.356, p = .043$). Teaching beliefs showed a significant negative effect on basic needs ($\beta = -0.402, p = .029$) and job design ($\beta = -0.607, p < .001$). Both null hypotheses were rejected. The study advances understanding of how professional identity dimensions differentially predict specific thriving outcomes among Filipino elementary school teachers.

KEYWORDS: *professional identity, thriving at work, teacher well-being, career progression, professional competence, Philippine elementary education, Kidapawan City.*

INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional identity is widely recognized as a dynamic, socially constructed, and multifaceted construct encompassing educators' beliefs, emotions, motivations, and perceptions of their professional role (Suarez & McGrath, 2022; Rushton et al., 2023). This identity is continuously shaped by personal experiences, social interactions, and organizational contexts, and profoundly influences teachers' adaptability, commitment, and resilience in an ever-changing educational landscape. Complementary to professional identity is the concept of thriving at work—a multidimensional state of positive psychological, emotional, social, and physical well-being that enables workers to succeed not only professionally but also in their broader personal and community lives (Peters et al., 2021).

In the Philippines, elementary school teachers occupy a foundational and demanding role in the educational system. Despite national initiatives to enhance teacher competencies and address resource disparities (UNICEF, 2019), persistent systemic challenges—including inadequate professional development, overcrowded classrooms, and limited career advancement pathways—continue to strain teachers' professional identities and well-being (Frianeza et al., 2024; Sinsay-Villanueva & Orbeta Jr., 2023). Research on teacher identity and thriving has predominantly focused on secondary or tertiary educators, and Western or international contexts, leaving elementary school teachers—particularly within localized Philippine school divisions—substantially underrepresented in the literature.

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) provides the theoretical anchor for this study. The theory posits that individuals derive self-esteem and a sense of competence from their identification with a valued social group. For teachers, belonging to the teaching profession shapes their self-perception, motivates engagement, and supports psychological well-being. A strong professional identity, built upon positive teaching beliefs, collegial belonging, clear

career pathways, and a confident sense of competence, is theorized to translate into greater thriving across psychological, emotional, social, and health dimensions.

This study addresses the identified gap by quantifying the levels of professional identity and thriving at work among elementary school teachers in District III of SDO Kidapawan City, determining the significance of their relationship, and identifying which dimensions of professional identity most powerfully predict specific dimensions of thriving. The findings are intended to inform targeted policies and professional development programs in the Philippine elementary education sector.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of teachers' professional identity in terms of teaching beliefs, professional socialization, career progression, and professional competence?
2. What is the level of teachers' thriving at work in terms of psychological well-being, emotional well-being, social well-being, work-life integration, basic needs, job design and experience, and health and physical/mental well-being?
3. Is there a significant relationship between teachers' professional identity and thriving at work?
4. Do teachers' professional identity dimensions significantly influence their thriving at work?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Professional Identity of Teachers

Teacher professional identity is an evolving understanding of 'who I am' and 'what I do' as an educator, continually shaped by personal narratives, social relationships, and institutional contexts (Suarez & McGrath, 2022). Research highlights that a strong professional identity enables teachers to navigate policy shifts, institutional pressures, and disruptions such as pandemics with greater agency and resilience. Li et al. (2022), employing the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, found that beginning teachers experience significant identity erosion during their first year due to unbalanced emotional demands and limited growth resources. Groenewald and Arnold (2025) demonstrated that teacher agency, self-reflection, and proactive behavior can sustain identity formation even in challenging rural settings.

Professional identity is typically organized around dimensions of beliefs about teaching, socialization into the profession, pathways of career growth, and perceptions of competence (Noi et al., 2016). Gong and Wang (2023) established that a robust professional identity and

positive emotions significantly enhance work engagement and career satisfaction, with work engagement serving as a mediating mechanism. Mahmoodarabi et al. (2022) emphasized the dynamic and multifaceted nature of professional identity construction within teacher education programs, highlighting identity negotiation through learning communities and practical experiences.

Thriving from Work

Peters et al. (2021) defined thriving from work as a multifaceted state of positive well-being across seven key dimensions: psychological, emotional, social, work-life integration, basic needs fulfillment, job design and experience, and physical/mental health. Their Thriving from Work Questionnaire operationalizes these dimensions across 37 attributes including meaningful work, job satisfaction, supportive relationships, work-life balance, job security, autonomy, and physical safety. Anjum et al. (2021) demonstrated that psychological capital—comprising self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience—negatively correlates with burnout and turnover, underscoring its role in sustaining teacher thriving. Nguyen et al. (2024) found that intrinsic motivation, teaching passion, and collegial support enable educators in remote and disadvantaged settings to overcome substantial barriers and experience personal growth.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Participants

This study employed a descriptive-correlational and multiple linear regression design. Complete enumeration was used, resulting in 189 Grade I–VI elementary school teachers from 10 schools in District III–Elementary, SDO Kidapawan City. The sample included teachers from Bangsamoro ES, Isidoro Lonzaga MES, Kalasuyan ES, Lanao CES, Luvimin ES, Marbel ES, Marciano Mancera IS, Mateo ES, Sibawan ES, and Singao IS. The study was conducted during School Year 2025–2026.

Research Instruments

Two validated survey questionnaires were used. The first measured professional identity across four dimensions (teaching beliefs: 10 items; professional socialization: 7 items; career progression: 8 items; professional competence: 15 items), adapted from Noi et al. (2016). The second measured thriving from work across seven dimensions (37 total items), adapted from Peters et al. (2021). Both instruments used a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to

5 = Strongly Agree). Scale interpretation followed: 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 2.61–3.40 = Moderately Agree; 1.81–2.60 = Slightly Agree; 1.00–1.80 = Very Slightly Agree.

Statistical Analysis

Weighted means described the levels of professional identity and thriving at work. Spearman rho correlation tested the significance of relationships between dimensions. Multiple linear regression (OLS) determined the influence of the four professional identity dimensions on each of the seven thriving dimensions. Significance was evaluated at $p < .01$ (highly significant) and $p < .05$ (significant).

RESULTS

Level of Professional Identity

Table 1 presents the weighted means for each professional identity dimension. Teaching beliefs ($M = 4.58$) received the highest rating, reflecting teachers' strong endorsement of student-centered philosophies, including safe learning environments, active participation, individual recognition, genuine student care, and technology integration. Professional socialization ($M = 4.49$) demonstrated deep collegial belonging, collaborative practice, and commitment to continuous professional learning. Career progression ($M = 4.52$) captured pride in the teaching profession, clarity of institutional career tracks, and high perceived societal respect. Professional competence ($M = 4.48$) encompassed strong subject mastery, effective pedagogy, technology integration, curriculum contributions, and holistic student support. All dimensions were rated Strongly Agree, yielding an overall professional identity mean of 4.52.

Table 1: *Level of Teachers' Professional Identity by Dimension.*

Dimension	Weighted Mean	Description
Teaching Beliefs	4.58	Strongly Agree
Career Progression	4.52	Strongly Agree
Professional Socialization	4.49	Strongly Agree
Professional Competence	4.48	Strongly Agree
Overall Professional Identity	4.52	Strongly Agree

Note. Scale: 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree; 3.41–4.20 = Agree; 2.61–3.40 = Moderately Agree. Instruments adapted from Noi et al. (2016). $n = 189$.

Level of Thriving from Work

Table 2 summarizes thriving from work across all seven dimensions. Psychological well-being received the highest rating ($M = 4.40$, Strongly Agree), reflecting teachers' strong sense of purpose, societal contribution, skill development, and value alignment. Social well-being ($M = 4.31$) and work-life integration ($M = 3.97$) indicated strong collegial and supervisory support and moderate work-personal life balance. Emotional well-being ($M = 4.08$) and basic needs ($M = 4.09$) were rated Agree, reflecting general engagement, job satisfaction, job security, and fair compensation with some noted concerns. Job design and experience ($M = 4.05$) indicated general satisfaction with autonomy and workload management, while health and physical/mental well-being ($M = 3.85$) was the lowest-rated dimension, reflecting manageable yet notable fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and stress.

Table 2: Level of Teachers' Thriving from Work by Dimension.

Thriving Dimension	Weighted Mean	Description
Psychological Well-being	4.40	Strongly Agree
Social Well-being	4.31	Strongly Agree
Basic Needs for Thriving	4.09	Agree
Emotional Well-being	4.08	Agree
Job Design and Experience	4.05	Agree
Work-Life Integration	3.97	Agree
Health and Physical/Mental Well-being	3.85	Agree

Note. Scale: 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree; 3.41–4.20 = Agree. Instruments adapted from Peters et al. (2021). $n = 189$.

Relationship Between Professional Identity and Thriving

Spearman rho correlation analysis confirmed significant positive relationships between professional identity dimensions and most thriving dimensions (Table 3), leading to rejection of the first null hypothesis. Professional competence demonstrated the most extensive correlations across all seven thriving dimensions ($r = 0.143$ to 0.614 , all significant). Career progression produced the strongest correlation with psychological well-being ($r = 0.599$, $p < .01$) and extended significantly to emotional, social, work-life, job design, and health dimensions. Professional socialization was significantly associated with all seven thriving dimensions ($r = 0.210$ to 0.549 , all $p < .01$). Teaching beliefs correlated significantly only

with psychological ($r = 0.455, p < .01$), emotional ($r = 0.179, p < .05$), and social well-being ($r = 0.188, p < .01$).

Table 3: Spearman Rho Correlation Matrix: Professional Identity Dimensions and Thriving from Work Dimensions.

PI Dimension	Psych WB	Emot WB	Social WB	Work-Life	Basic Needs	Job Design	Health WB
Teaching Beliefs	.455**	.179*	.188**	.067	-.040	.041	.029
Prof. Socialization	.549**	.316**	.374**	.341**	.210**	.307**	.228**
Career Progression	.599**	.351**	.337**	.255**	.137	.224**	.189**
Prof. Competence	.614**	.279**	.375**	.259**	.143*	.266**	.170*

Note. ** $p < .01$ (highly significant); * $p < .05$ (significant). PI = Professional Identity; Psych WB = Psychological Well-being; Emot WB = Emotional Well-being; WB = Well-being. $n = 189$.

Influence of Professional Identity on Thriving from Work

Multiple linear regression analyses (Table 4) confirmed that professional identity dimensions significantly influence all seven thriving dimensions, rejecting the second null hypothesis across all models. The models explained between 20.1% (health well-being, $R^2 = .201$) and 72.5% (psychological well-being, $R^2 = .725$) of the variance in thriving outcomes.

For psychological well-being ($R^2 = .725, F = 121.960, p < .001$), professional competence was the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.521, p < .001$) followed by career progression ($\beta = 0.343, p = .009$). For emotional well-being ($R^2 = .366, F = 26.728, p < .001$), career progression was the sole significant predictor ($\beta = 0.846, p < .001$). For social well-being ($R^2 = .454, F = 38.523, p < .001$), professional competence significantly predicted the outcome ($\beta = 0.392, p = .025$). For work-life integration ($R^2 = .327, F = 22.515, p < .001$), professional socialization was the key predictor ($\beta = 0.356, p = .043$). For basic needs ($R^2 = .231, F = 13.875, p < .001$), career progression significantly and positively predicted outcomes ($\beta = 0.527, p = .016$), while teaching beliefs showed a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.402, p = .029$). For job design and experience ($R^2 = .370, F = 27.129, p < .001$), professional socialization ($\beta = 0.335, p = .049$) and career progression ($\beta = 0.503, p = .011$) were positive predictors, while teaching beliefs again exerted a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.607, p < .001$). For health

and physical/mental well-being ($R^2 = .201$, $F = 11.665$, $p < .001$), career progression was the sole significant predictor ($\beta = 0.519$, $p = .020$).

Table 4: Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Results: Influence of Professional Identity on Thriving from Work Dimensions.

Thriving Dimension	Key Significant Predictor(s) (β)	R ²	F-value
Psychological Well-being	Prof. Competence (0.521**); Career Prog. (0.343**)	.725	121.960**
Emotional Well-being	Career Progression (0.846**)	.366	26.728**
Social Well-being	Prof. Competence (0.392*)	.454	38.523**
Work-Life Integration	Prof. Socialization (0.356*)	.327	22.515**
Basic Needs	Career Progression (0.527*); Teaching Beliefs (-0.402*)	.231	13.875**
Job Design & Experience	Career Prog. (0.503*); Prof. Soc. (0.335*); Teaching Beliefs (-0.607**)	.370	27.129**
Health & Physical/Mental WB	Career Progression (0.519*)	.201	11.665**

Note. ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. All F-values significant at $p < .001$. Prof. = Professional; Prog. = Progression; Soc. = Socialization; WB = Well-being. $n = 189$.

DISCUSSION

The finding that teachers in District III of SDO Kidapawan City demonstrate a strong professional identity across all four dimensions is consistent with research on teacher professional identity in contexts characterized by clear institutional structures and strong professional community. The exceptionally high rating for teaching beliefs ($M = 4.58$) aligns with Bhardwaj et al.'s (2025) documentation of student-centered philosophy as the dominant paradigm among Filipino educators, reflecting the profession's deep moral and relational orientation. Career progression's high rating ($M = 4.52$) resonates with Pawlowska's (2020) finding that perceived societal respect and institutional career clarity significantly elevate professional pride and the meaningfulness of advancement within the teaching profession.

The dominance of psychological well-being ($M = 4.40$) as the highest-rated thriving dimension—alongside the finding that professional competence ($\beta = 0.521$) and career progression ($\beta = 0.343$) are its strongest predictors—extends the work of Dreer (2024) and Shu (2022), who established that purpose-driven work, value alignment, and opportunities for mastery are central to teachers' psychological well-being. The regression model for psychological well-being explained 72.5% of variance, the highest across all seven

dimensions, indicating that professional identity is a particularly powerful explanatory framework for this dimension.

The finding that career progression is the sole significant predictor of emotional well-being ($\beta = 0.846$) is among the study's most striking results. McCullough Hedelin (2024) documented that visible and meaningful career advancement serves as a crucial emotional buffer, generating hope, positive affect, and a sense of progress that sustains teachers' enthusiasm even amid daily workload pressures. This effect is especially salient in the Philippine context, where the Expanded Career Progression framework provides structured advancement pathways that teachers can actively navigate.

Professional socialization's role as the key predictor of work-life integration ($\beta = 0.356$) aligns with Blair et al.'s (2024) finding that collegial integration and shared professional norms facilitate smoother role boundary management, reducing spillover of work stress into personal life. The significant negative effects of teaching beliefs on basic needs ($\beta = -0.402$) and job design ($\beta = -0.607$) represent a theoretically important and practically significant finding. As Muha (2025) cautioned, idealized or demanding conceptions of 'good teaching' may create a form of belief-reality misalignment: when teachers hold strongly idealized standards for instructional quality, resource access, or autonomy, the gap between these standards and actual institutional constraints may intensify dissatisfaction with compensation, working conditions, and structural design.

The lowest-rated thriving dimension—health and physical/mental well-being ($M = 3.85$)—is consistent with the extensive literature on occupational fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and stress in the teaching profession (Yadav & Pandita, 2025). Career progression's role as the sole significant predictor of this dimension ($\beta = 0.519$) suggests that when teachers perceive tangible advancement opportunities and professional recognition, these structural conditions act as a protective buffer against work-related physical and mental strain.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that elementary school teachers in SDO Kidapawan City's District III possess a strong professional identity and generally high thriving at work, with health and physical/mental well-being as the area most in need of targeted support. Professional identity significantly relates to and influences all dimensions of thriving, with professional competence and career progression emerging as the most powerful and broadly influential predictors. Teaching beliefs, paradoxically, exert significant negative effects on basic needs

and job design, suggesting that strong ideological commitments to teaching excellence can amplify dissatisfaction when institutional realities fall short.

These findings call for differentiated policy responses. Career advancement initiatives—clear promotion tracks, merit-based recognition, and milestone-linked professional development—address the broadest range of thriving dimensions simultaneously. Competence-building programs targeting pedagogy, technology integration, and assessment design directly enhance psychological and social well-being. Professional socialization structures, including mentoring networks and collaborative learning communities, support work-life integration and job design satisfaction. Belief-reframing workshops may help teachers align high professional standards with the structural realities of Philippine public schools, potentially converting belief-related tensions into adaptive pedagogical resilience rather than sources of dissatisfaction.

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