

Research Article

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Factors Shaping Students' Decision to Become Teachers

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Abstract

Background/purpose. In an era marked by teacher shortages and escalating demands on educators, it is crucial to understand what motivates individuals to pursue a career in education, especially when a wide range of alternative career opportunities are available. This paper examines the main reasons university students in Kosovo choose teaching as a future profession and identifies the factors that shape their decision-making process. Given the limited research in this area, the study provides valuable insights into what encourages students in Kosovo to pursue a career in teaching.

Materials/methods. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the research surveyed 170 undergraduates from two universities, applying the FIT-Choice framework and analyzing the data with SPSS to identify key motivational drivers.

Results. The study found that students in Kosovo are primarily motivated to pursue teaching by intrinsic factors such as personal fulfillment and the desire to shape future generations, with work-life balance being important. However, concerns about job security, salary, and social status were noted, particularly among rural students who value teaching for its stability.

Conclusion. This study highlights the need for education policies that not only support intrinsic motivations, such as personal fulfillment and societal contribution, but also address external concerns, including job security and financial stability. Policy efforts should focus on improving salaries, employment conditions, and financial incentives to enhance the teaching profession's appeal. Additionally, promoting work-life balance, strengthening professional support networks, and elevating the societal status of teaching through public awareness campaigns and policy reforms can help attract and retain educators. Implementing these measures is essential for ensuring a sustainable and motivated teaching workforce in Kosovo.



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1. Introduction

The pursuit of a career is among the most significant and complex decisions an individual can make, as it serves as a predictor of future income levels and job nature and subsequently influences personality and perspective (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). According to Ran et al. (2023), selecting a profession aid in self-discovery, goal-setting, and contextual understanding of work. Consequently, many individuals choose a career to achieve their objectives, expand their knowledge, and gain experience. However, selecting an appropriate career has lasting impacts on one's life, leading individuals to invest considerable time in finding a profession that aligns with their aspirations. Various factors and reasons drive youth toward selecting a profession (Gore & Rickards, 2021). Choosing teaching as a career requires self-confidence and professionalism (Wang & Wang, 2022). Therefore, multiple motivational factors influence this decision.

Recently, research has explored the factors motivating students to choose teaching as a profession. According to Lee et al. (2019), two key reasons drive this choice: recruiting highly qualified teachers, essential for student success and societal progress, and addressing teacher shortages. Studies have confirmed that choosing teaching as a career is influenced by personal skills, interests, values, and familial influence. Furthermore, past research has shown that career orientation is also affected by policy decisions and labor market conditions (Kiliç et al., 2012). As Börü (2018) notes, individual motivation for choosing the teaching profession is quite challenging, and the extent to which various factors influence this decision may vary from person to person and depend on external life circumstances.

Despite international research addressing the motivational factors behind the selection of teaching as a profession, Kosovo lacks studies at this level. Therefore, investigating these factors is essential, as the results are expected to be beneficial for policymakers and educational institutions in recruiting young individuals to serve as teachers. This presents a positive aspect in the field of education, as it may aid in the recruitment of students who are both professional and knowledgeable about teaching.

To address this gap, the present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do university students in Kosovo perceive the teaching profession?
2. What factors influence students' decisions to pursue teaching as a career?
3. How do students' demographic characteristics relate to their motivations for choosing teaching and their perceptions of the profession?

Based on existing literature, the study hypothesizes that:

1. Demographic characteristics, particularly place of residence, will play a significant role in shaping students' motivations and perceptions of the teaching profession.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Qualities of Teaching Professionals

Teaching is one of the most challenging professions, requiring a range of interpersonal, social, and professional skills that contribute to the development and motivation of young learners (Gultom et al., 2020; Domínguez & Ospina, 2023). According to Stronge (2018), this profession demands strong communication and social skills, an open nature, and the ability to be tolerant. Individuals inclined toward social engagement and working with others often choose careers like teaching that are motivating and meaningful, despite economic or job security challenges (George & Thornby, 2023). Additionally, Gore and Rickards (2021) suggest that teaching is closely linked to individuals' traits and their preference for sharing knowledge in a social environment. This connection is evident

in recent studies indicating that teacher candidates often demonstrate a strong tendency to listen and share experiences with others, reflecting high social motivation to support students (Henoeh et al., 2015; Goller et al., 2019). This inclination further aligns with empirical research showing that those who choose teaching possess inspirational abilities that motivate their students (Nesje et al., 2018; Kang et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of teacher education can be impacted by the misapplication of external initiatives due to local conditions. A study in Kosovo highlighted that contextual factors, such as a lack of ownership and fragmented organizational culture, contribute to this misapplication (Kačaniku, 2022). The study emphasized the need for context-based collaboration and local ownership to better align European initiatives with local needs, ultimately improving teacher education quality.

2.2. Perceptions, Motivations, and Requirements in the Teaching Profession

Teaching is often perceived as a career with a significant impact on individual and societal development (Toraman & Cakmak, 2020). Richardson and Watt (2016) note that individuals passionate about helping others frequently choose teaching over alternative careers. However, perceptions of the profession's status and rewards vary across countries. For instance, teaching may be viewed as low-status in Australia due to inadequate pay, while in Germany, teachers often receive recognition and appropriate compensation (Watt et al., 2012). This complexity illustrates that although teaching may not always offer high financial rewards, it provides other essential benefits, including flexible working hours, professional growth opportunities, and a respected role in society (Richardson & Watt, 2016; Crişan, 2018; Panakaje et al., 2024). Additionally, time for family and social contribution emerged as a key motivator, reflecting family-oriented cultural values in the Mediterranean and Balkans (Miladinov, 2022; Sultana, 2020). Respondents valued teaching for its ability to balance professional and personal commitments (Cho et al., 2023).

There are different motivational factors for choosing teaching as a career. According to Hennessy and Lynch (2017), these factors include job stability, personal satisfaction, and long-term development opportunities. These factors align with findings that suggest students are driven by their internal motivations for personal fulfillment and a desire to help and positively impact young individuals (Wang & Wang, 2022; George & Thornby, 2023). However, Gore et al. (2015) categorize the factors influencing students' choice of teaching into several types: intrinsic motivational factors, altruistic motivations, and extrinsic motivational factors. Students' motivations are primarily intrinsic, but they evolve over time due to teaching practice, as highlighted in a study conducted in Kosovo and Austria, which emphasizes the need for initial teacher education programs to strengthen practical training (Kačaniku et al., 2022). Similarly, Abotsi et al. (2019) highlight in their study in Ghana that the factors influencing the decision to pursue a teaching career are multifaceted and vary significantly, suggesting that while intrinsic motivations play a role, they are shaped by diverse cultural and contextual factors in both regions.

Understanding the key factors that influence individuals' decisions to pursue a career in teaching is crucial for recruiting highly qualified educators to the profession (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2008). To attract and retain motivated and qualified staff, global educational policies increasingly prioritize effective recruitment strategies, recognizing the importance of education in fostering positive learning environments (Balyer & Özcan, 2014). A study conducted in Kosovo highlights that teacher education programs often prioritize subject knowledge over pedagogical skills, with limited attention given to essential dispositions like adaptability and collaboration (Perolli Shehu et al., 2023). This lack of emphasis on professional development can hinder teacher effectiveness and motivation, affecting recruitment and retention. Teacher educators in Kosovo emphasized the need for improved professional development to enhance teaching methods and research and address gaps in pedagogical expertise (Perolli Shehu et al., 2023). To ensure that motivated individuals are effectively recruited and retained in the profession, future teachers must also develop advanced skills

in establishing collaborative relationships and engaging in ongoing professional development to support student progress and the educational system (Richardson & Watt, 2016; Posti-Ahokas et al., 2022). To facilitate this development, policies should ensure fair pay, suitable working conditions, and comprehensive benefits (Nesje et al., 2018).

2.3. The Fit Choice Framework

Teacher recruitment and retention are critical challenges in many educational systems, including Kosovo. Understanding the motivations behind individuals' decisions to enter the teaching profession can offer insights into developing more effective strategies to attract and retain quality teachers (Ayçiçek & Toraman, 2020). That is why it is crucial to have reliable and valid tools for assessing the motivational factors that drive individuals to choose teaching as a career (Toraman & Cakmak, 2020). In this study, the FIT Choice framework (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) by Watt and Richardson (2007), which was proven to be a reliable and valid tool (Goller et al., 2019), also provides the theoretical foundation to explore motivations and beliefs behind individuals' decisions to pursue teaching as a career. The framework is based on Eccles' Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles, 2005), Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lee et al., 2019), and significant international research on the motivations of student teachers (Watt & Richardson, 2007; Watt et al., 2012). According to the Expectancy-Value Theory, career choices and behaviors are largely driven by individuals' expectations of success and the value they place on an activity (Eccles, 2005). On the other hand, Social Cognitive Career Theory emphasizes the role of self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals in shaping career decisions (Lee et al., 2019).

Based on Eccles's Expectancy-Value Theory, the FIT-Choice model introduces three main value classes: intrinsic value, personal utility value, and social utility value (Watt & Richardson, 2007). Intrinsic value refers to the enjoyment and interest in teaching, while personal utility value includes motivations such as job security, job transferability, and time for family (Eccles, 2005). Social utility value encompasses altruistic reasons, including shaping the future of children and adolescents, promoting social equity, and contributing to society (Watt et al., 2012). Personal utility value encompasses aspects such as job security, time allocated to family, and the flexibility to transfer or adapt one's job (Eren & Tezel, 2010). Additionally, the model considers perceptions of teaching abilities, as well as task-related beliefs regarding the profession's demands and rewards (Lent et al., 1993; Watt & Richardson, 2007; Watt et al., 2012).

The FIT Choice framework has been successfully applied in various contexts to explore teacher motivations: In Australia (Richardson & Watt, 2007), Turkey (Balyer & Özcan, 2014), Ireland (Hennessy & Lynch, 2017), Norway (Nesje et al., 2018), Germany and Finland (Goller et al., 2019). However, little research has examined how these factors play out in Kosovo, revealing a gap that this study aims to address. This gap is especially significant in the context of Kosovo, where teacher recruitment plays a critical role due to the evolving educational landscape and ongoing efforts to improve the quality of schooling (Saqipi, 2023). The FIT Choice framework's comprehensive structure offers a nuanced understanding of how personal, professional, and social factors intersect to shape teaching career decisions. Building on this, the present study explores how Kosovar students perceive the teaching profession and the factors influencing their decision to pursue teaching as a career. Additionally, it examines the correlation between students' demographic characteristics and both their motivations for choosing teaching and their perceptions of the profession.

3. Methods

This study employed a quantitative research approach to gather statistical data from a large sample, providing objective, numerical insights into the factors motivating students in Kosovo to pursue a teaching career (Apuke, 2017). Specifically, a descriptive research design was used to outline characteristics and trends in underexplored areas, such as Kosovo (Elliott & Timulak, 2005).

Additionally, correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between factors influencing students' choice of teaching and their demographic characteristics, as well as the correlation between students' perceptions of teaching as a profession and their demographic characteristics. The study adopted a deductive approach, aligning with a positivist perspective that considers reality as objective and independent of beliefs (Chudleigh & Smith, 2015). This approach allowed for the systematic examination of predefined relationships within the data.

3.1. Participants and Procedure

The target population for this study consisted of first-year students enrolled in the Primary Education program at the Faculty of Education in Kosovo. A total of 170 students were selected from the Faculty of Education at the University of Prishtina and the Faculty of Education at the University of Prizren. This sample included 164 female students (96.5%) and 6 male students (3.5%), reflecting the typical gender distribution in these programs in Kosovo. Data from the self-assessment report of the Faculty of Education shows that approximately 90% of students in the faculty are female. This demographic trend highlights the gender skew within the student population, and as such, it may influence the generalizability of the study's findings, particularly about gender balance. Participants' ages ranged from 17 to over 26, with the majority (71.18%) being between 17 and 20 years old. A smaller proportion (25.29%) were aged 21-25, and 3.53% were over 26. Regarding their place of residence, 41.2% lived in urban areas, while 58.8% resided in rural areas. Although Cohen et al. (2017) suggest there is no definitive explanation for the ideal sample size, this number provided sufficient data to analyze the factors influencing their choice of teaching as a profession.

Data collection was initiated by obtaining permission from the deans of both faculties, followed by a request for the list of first-year students. Using simple random sampling, participants were selected from this list, ensuring that each student had an equal chance of participation (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016), thereby enhancing the representativeness of the quantitative research (Dawson, 2009). Selected students were then invited via email to take part in the study. The email explained the survey's purpose, assured confidentiality, and clarified that only the researcher would have access to the securely stored data. Participants were also informed that their personal information would remain anonymous and were thanked for their cooperation. After accepting the invitation, participants received individual emails containing the survey link. The surveys were administered online, with responses collected automatically.

3.2. Instrument

The data collection instrument for this study was a survey designed to examine factors influencing students in Kosovo to choose teaching as a career. The survey was based on the FIT-Choice Scale (Watt & Richardson, 2007), which assesses 12 motivation factors, such as teaching abilities, intrinsic career value, fallback career, job security, time for family, and job transferability, as well as seven teaching perception factors, including expert career, high demand, social status, and teacher morale. Participants rated each item on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Watt & Richardson, 2007; Richardson & Watt, 2016). The survey was divided into two sections: participant demographics and factors influencing their career choice.

Given its widespread use in social sciences, the survey method was chosen for its accessibility and capacity to manage large datasets, making it suitable for the participant group (Young, 2016; Vehovar & Manfreda, 2008). Administered online, the survey allowed participants to complete it privately and at their convenience (Nayak & Narayan, 2019).

3.3. Analytical Procedures of the Research

SPSS software was used to analyze the data, allowing for efficient management of large datasets and flexible data presentation (Rahman & Mukhtadir, 2021). Demographic data were analyzed to

interpret frequencies and percentages. Subsequently, descriptive analysis was conducted to identify key factors motivating students in Kosovo to pursue teaching careers. This approach addressed the research questions while providing informal interpretations of the data (James & Simister, 2017). This design was chosen to offer a comprehensive view of the study's findings. In addition to descriptive analysis, inferential analysis, specifically Pearson correlation, was used to examine relationships between students' motivations for pursuing teaching and demographic factors such as residence, academic performance, preference, age, and gender. Additionally, it explored how these demographics shape perceptions of teaching. This approach enhanced the study's depth and validity. The findings were presented in both tabular and narrative forms to enhance reader comprehension (Walliman, 2017).

3.4. Ethical Considerations

This study prioritized participant anonymity due to the large sample size involved in examining factors influencing the choice of teaching as a profession (Punch, 2014). To ensure ethical integrity, key measures were implemented to protect participants from harm (Dornyei, 2007). All participants were informed about the study's purpose and data collection process, emphasizing their right to withdraw at any time, though none chose to do so. Participation was entirely voluntary, and anonymity was guaranteed, with data securely stored on a password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher. Additionally, participants were informed that all data would be destroyed upon project completion. Given that the surveys were conducted online, participants were consulted about their preferred completion method, and the online format was selected for its convenience and secure environment (Janghorban et al., 2014).

4. Results

The survey data were analyzed both descriptively and correlatively using the statistical software SPSS. Regarding the data collected from participants, a descriptive analysis was conducted for each item of the survey, with tables used to clarify each motivational factor influencing students' decision to pursue teaching as a profession. In addition to the descriptive analysis, inferential analysis was conducted, specifically Pearson correlation analysis, to examine the relationships between the factors influencing students' decision to pursue teaching and their demographic characteristics such as place of residence, academic performance, teaching preference, and age, as well as to examine how these demographic characteristics relate to students' perceptions of teaching as a profession. This additional analysis helps to further understand how these demographic characteristics interact and influence students' career choices.

Table 1. The descriptive analysis examined factors influencing students to choose teaching as a career.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ability	170	4	5	4.89	.316
Intrinsic career value	170	3	5	4.72	.464
Fallback career	170	1	5	2.86	1.469
Job security	170	1	5	2.62	1.278
Time for family	170	2	5	4.29	.694
Shape the future of children	170	3	5	4.65	.513
Enhance social equity	170	2	5	4.38	.662
Make social contribution	170	2	5	4.52	.578
Job transferability	170	1	5	2.62	1.278
Work with children and adolescents	170	2	5	4.61	.598
Prior teaching and learning experiences	170	2	5	4.31	.763
Social influences	170	2	5	4.29	.860
Valid N (listwise)	170				

The data from Table 1 highlights the diverse priorities of respondents regarding personal and career-related factors. Among the highest-rated variables, Ability stands out with a mean of 4.89, strongly emphasizing self-perceived capabilities as a crucial factor. The low standard deviation (0.316) reinforces the respondents' consensus on this variable's importance. Additionally, intrinsic motivations such as Intrinsic career value (mean = 4.72) and Shape future of children (mean = 4.65) rank highly, suggesting that respondents prioritize personal fulfillment and the opportunity to contribute to long-term societal or generational goals. This indicates a collective preference for meaningful careers aligning with personal satisfaction and broader impacts.

Other key factors include Time for family (mean = 4.29), reflecting the importance of a balanced work-life dynamic, and Social contribution (mean = 4.52) and Enhance social equity (mean = 4.38), which highlight respondents' desire to contribute positively to society and promote fairness. While these priorities exhibit moderate standard deviations (0.694, 0.578, and 0.662, respectively), they point to individual variations in how respondents weigh these aspects. Furthermore, the inclination toward educational settings is evident in the high ratings for Work with children and adolescents (mean = 4.61) and Prior teaching and learning experiences (mean = 4.31), although standard deviations (0.598 and 0.763) indicate some differences in emphasis.

In contrast, factors such as Fallback career (mean = 2.86), Job security (mean = 2.62), and Job transferability (mean = 2.62) received relatively lower ratings, suggesting that these aspects are less critical in respondents' career decision-making processes. The higher standard deviations (1.469 for fallback career and 1.278 for both job security and transferability) reveal some significant diversity of opinions, with some respondents valuing career stability and flexibility, while others prioritize different dimensions.

So, respondents prioritize intrinsic factors like personal ability, meaningful careers, and work-life balance over job security or fallback options. While broad agreement exists on these priorities, individual views vary on job flexibility, social influences, and societal contributions, reflecting diverse circumstances or beliefs. Low standard deviations highlight overall consensus, with greater variability in areas like job transferability and social influences.

Table 2. The descriptive analysis explored students' perceptions of the teaching profession.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
High demand	170	2	5	4.54	.597
Expert career	170	3	5	4.54	.545
Social status	170	1	4	2.69	.714
Teacher morale	170	2	5	3.71	.622
Good salary	170	1	4	2.29	.774
Social dissuasion	170	1	5	3.35	.905
Satisfaction with choice	170	1	5	4.54	.722
Valid N (listwise)	170				

The data from Table 2 highlights the perspectives of students who have chosen teaching as their career path, offering insights into their priorities and perceptions of the profession. Among the highest-rated factors, both High Demand and Expert Career share a mean score of 4.54, reflecting a strong recognition of teaching as a vital and specialized profession. The low standard deviations for these variables (0.597 and 0.545, respectively) suggest widespread agreement, underscoring a collective understanding of teaching's importance and the expertise it requires.

Students also express high satisfaction levels with their decision to pursue teaching, as evidenced by the mean score of 4.54 for Satisfaction with Choice. While a standard deviation of 0.722 indicates some variability, the overall sentiment reflects confidence and enthusiasm for their chosen career. Perceptions of teacher morale are moderately positive, with a mean score of 3.71 and a standard deviation of 0.622, suggesting general optimism about the emotional climate of the profession, though there are differing views among respondents.

When considering external influences, Social Dissuasive Factors paint a more complex picture. The mean score of 3.35, paired with a relatively high standard deviation of 0.905, reveals diverse experiences regarding societal attitudes or family pressures. These results highlight how external contexts shape students' decisions, with some feeling strongly discouraged and others perceiving minimal barriers.

In contrast, lower mean scores for Social Status (2.69) and Good Salary (2.29) underscore critical views of the profession's societal prestige and financial rewards. The moderate variability in these scores (standard deviations of 0.714 and 0.774, respectively) suggests that while most students acknowledge these challenges, a minority hold more favorable views. This duality reflects a nuanced understanding of the profession: students value its demand and fulfillment but remain mindful of its social and financial limitations.

In summary, the data provides a multifaceted view of teaching as a career. Students strongly value its demand, professional expertise, and the satisfaction it brings, but their perspectives on external influences, social standing, and financial rewards reveal significant variability. This nuanced understanding highlights the interplay between shared priorities and individual experiences, offering

insights into the profession's appeal and challenges. Such findings could inform efforts to enhance the profession's attractiveness by addressing its social and financial drawbacks.

Table 3. Correlation Between Factors Influencing Students' Choice of Teaching and Demographic Characteristics

		Place of Residence	Academic Performance	Teaching Preference	Age
Ability	Pearson Correlation	.049	-.149	-.100	-.205**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.526	.053	.193	.007
	N	170	170	170	170
Intrinsic career value	Pearson Correlation	.039	-.189*	-.253**	-.036
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.611	.014	<.001	.646
	N	170	170	170	170
Fallback career	Pearson Correlation	-.031	-.055	.937**	.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.692	.475	<.001	.257
	N	170	170	170	170
Job security	Pearson Correlation	.593**	.088	-.074	-.132
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.253	.337	.087
	N	170	170	170	170
Time for family	Pearson Correlation	-.012	.087	-.080	-.104
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.874	.260	.301	.177
	N	170	170	170	170
Shape future of children	Pearson Correlation	.025	-.095	.015	-.210**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.750	.218	.841	.006
	N	170	170	170	170
Enhance social equity	Pearson Correlation	.079	.006	.065	-.103
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.303	.940	.399	.182
	N	170	170	170	170
Make social contribution	Pearson Correlation	-.039	-.030	-.095	-.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.613	.695	.216	.490
	N	170	170	170	170
Job transferability	Pearson Correlation	.593**	.088	-.074	-.132
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.253	.337	.087
	N	170	170	170	170
Work with children and adolescents	Pearson Correlation	.125	.016	-.103	-.092
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.105	.831	.183	.232
	N	170	170	170	170
Prior teaching and learning experiences	Pearson Correlation	-.023	.025	.138*	-.070
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.762	.745	.072	.365
	N	170	170	170	170
Social influences	Pearson Correlation	.026	-.001	-.194*	.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.733	.993	.011	.406
	N	170	170	170	170

The data analysis, as presented in Table 3, provides valuable insights into the complex relationships between the factors that influence students' decision to pursue teaching and their demographic characteristics, such as place of residence, academic performance, teaching preference and age.

The place of residence appears to have a notable influence on students' perceptions of their teaching career choices. Job Security is positively correlated with students' place of residence, suggesting that students from regions where teaching is seen as a stable career choice tend to value job security more highly ($r = 0.593$, $p < 0.001$). This finding may reflect broader regional differences in job market stability, where students in areas with fewer alternative career opportunities may view

teaching as a more secure and predictable choice. This aligns with existing literature, which suggests that in areas with limited job options, individuals may place a higher value on job security in their career decisions. Similarly, Job Transferability shows a strong positive correlation with place of residence, highlighting that students in regions with more diverse career opportunities see teaching as a transferable skill set.

Academic performance also plays a significant role in shaping students' career decisions. Students who perform well academically are more likely to value Intrinsic Career Value, as indicated by the negative correlation between Academic Performance and Intrinsic Career Value ($r = -0.189$, $p = 0.014$). This could suggest that academically successful students are more likely to seek careers that provide personal fulfillment and intrinsic satisfaction, perhaps due to their confidence in their abilities and their desire to engage in work that aligns with their values. However, academic performance does not show a strong correlation with the perception of teaching as a Fallback Career, suggesting that students with better academic results are still likely to consider teaching, even if other career paths are seen as more desirable. This could be explained by the fact that teaching offers a range of intrinsic rewards, such as contributing to the development of future generations, which some academically successful students might find appealing.

The relationship between teaching preference and intrinsic career value shows a negative correlation of -0.253 ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that students who prefer teaching as a career may not place as much value on the intrinsic rewards typically associated with the profession, such as personal fulfillment or passion. These students may view teaching more as a stable and practical career choice rather than a profession driven by intrinsic satisfaction. This finding indicates that those who choose teaching might be influenced more by extrinsic factors, such as job security, rather than a deep personal passion for the field. Moreover, the negative correlation of -0.194 ($p = 0.011$) between teaching preference and social influences suggests that as social pressures, such as family expectations or societal norms, increase, students are less likely to view teaching as their primary career choice. This finding implies that students who are more influenced by external factors may not choose teaching out of passion but rather because of societal expectations, which could impact their long-term commitment to the profession. Understanding the role of social influences is important for ensuring that students who enter the teaching profession are genuinely motivated rather than being driven solely by external pressures. On the other hand, a strong positive correlation (0.937 , $p < 0.001$) between teaching preference and fallback career suggests that students who see teaching as a fallback career are more likely to prefer it as a secondary career option rather than their primary career choice. This indicates that when teaching is viewed as a backup option or safety net, it is less likely to be considered a first-choice career. These findings highlight the potential challenges in teacher recruitment and retention, as individuals who view teaching as a fallback career may not be fully committed to the profession, which could affect their long-term job satisfaction and performance.

Age, another critical demographic factor, reveals some interesting trends. A negative correlation between Age and Ability ($r = -0.205$, $p = 0.007$) suggests that younger students tend to have higher self-perceived ability or confidence in their teaching potential, possibly due to recent academic exposure or training. Older students, on the other hand, may develop a more critical perspective on their abilities as they gain practical experience, leading to more cautious self-assessments. Similarly, it appears to be more pronounced for younger students, as indicated by the negative correlation between Age and Social Influences ($r = -0.194$, $p = 0.011$). This suggests that as students get older, they may be less affected by external pressures, such as societal expectations or family opinions when choosing their career paths. Additionally, Shaping the Future of Children correlates negatively with Age ($r = -0.210$, $p = 0.006$), indicating that older students might be less motivated by the ideal of shaping future generations, potentially due to more pragmatic views or different life priorities at later

stages. This trend may reflect a shift in values over time, where older students are more likely to weigh the practical aspects of a career, such as financial stability and work-life balance, over idealistic motivations. Furthermore, Age exhibits a weak negative correlation with Job Security ($r = -0.132$, $p = 0.087$), suggesting that younger individuals may place greater emphasis on job stability when considering a teaching career. In contrast, older individuals may have already established a level of job security or financial stability, making this factor less important in their decision-making process. As career priorities evolve, older individuals may place more value on aspects like work-life balance or intrinsic career values rather than job security.

Overall, the data shows that place of residence and academic performance significantly shape students' perceptions of teaching as a stable career. Age and teaching preference also influence views on the emotional and intrinsic rewards of teaching, with older students and those viewing teaching as an alternative showing more pragmatic views. These findings emphasize the complexity of career decision-making and suggest that addressing students' specific concerns based on demographic factors could help attract more individuals to teaching.

Table 4. Correlation Between Students' Perceptions of Teaching as a Profession and Demographic Characteristics

		Place of Residence	Academic Performance	Teaching Preference	Age
High demand	Pearson	.059	.034	-.051	.033
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.444	.661	.510	.666
	N	170	170	170	170
Expert career	Pearson	.109	-.048	.008	.027
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.158	.533	.915	.728
	N	170	170	170	170
Social status	Pearson	.066	.006	-.022	-.108
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.396	.937	.774	.159
	N	170	170	170	170
Teacher morale	Pearson	.110	-.067	-.079	-.122
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.152	.386	.305	.112
	N	170	170	170	170
Good salary	Pearson	-.058	-.054	-.057	-.109
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.456	.481	.464	.157
	N	170	170	170	170
Social dissuasion	Pearson	.066	-.049	.055	.066
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.395	.526	.473	.390
	N	170	170	170	170
Satisfaction with choice	Pearson	-.077	-.030	-.306**	.120
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.315	.702	<.001	.119
	N	170	170	170	170

The data analysis from Table 4 reveals that demographic factors such as place of residence, academic performance, and age have minimal influence on students' perceptions of teaching as a profession. Specifically, the correlations between these variables and perceptions of teaching (e.g., high demand, expert career, social status) are weak and statistically insignificant (e.g., Place of Residence and High Demand, $r = 0.059$, $p = 0.444$). This suggests that external factors like where students live, or their academic performance does not significantly alter how they perceive the teaching profession in terms of demand, prestige, or expertise.

However, the most notable correlation is the negative relationship between teaching preference and satisfaction with choice ($r = -0.306$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that students who see teaching as a backup career are less satisfied with their decision, possibly due to unmet expectations or a lack of enthusiasm for the profession. This is further reinforced by the negative correlation between academic performance and satisfaction ($r = -0.306$, $p < 0.001$), which implies that lower-performing students may have more reservations about their choice of teaching. This could be due to a lack of confidence in their academic abilities or doubts about their future success in the teaching profession.

Age also shows weak correlations with most variables, though it does have a slightly negative relationship with satisfaction with choice ($r = -0.122$, $p = 0.112$). While the correlation is weak, this suggests that older students may experience some dissatisfaction with their choice of teaching, possibly because they bring different life experiences, such as established career goals or alternative priorities, which influence their view of teaching as a profession.

Overall, the findings suggest that career satisfaction is heavily influenced by the students' perception of teaching as a first-choice career path. Students who are more committed to teaching as a primary career tend to have higher levels of satisfaction, while those who see it as a fallback option tend to express dissatisfaction. This highlights the importance of career counseling and mentorship, as well as aligning students' interests and abilities with their career choices early in their educational journeys.

5. Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to identify the factors influencing students of Kosovo in choosing teaching as a career and their perceptions of it as a career path option. Considering the factorial structure of the FIT-Choice Scale, the results indicate that various factors contribute to this decision, including intrinsic factors, extrinsic factors, and social influences, each playing a distinct role in the decision-making process.

Intrinsic factors, such as Ability and Intrinsic Career Value, were identified as key influences among respondents. This aligns with global research emphasizing the role of personal fulfillment in the decision to pursue teaching. Studies conducted in the UK reflect similar trends, showing that intrinsic career values, including a passion for teaching and a sense of purpose, are the strongest motivators for individuals entering the profession (George & Thornby, 2023). Similarly, in Finland, teaching ability is a crucial factor in career choice, as students perceive themselves as having the necessary skills and qualities to be effective teachers (Kang et al., 2024). Given the strong role of intrinsic motivators in career choice, it is essential for Kosovo, as it transitions towards European integration, to strengthen policies that nurture and support these values, ensuring that teaching remains an attractive and fulfilling profession. The prioritization of Shaping the Future of Children by respondents further underscores the universal appeal of teaching as a way to influence future generations positively. Moreover, the importance of Time for Family and Social Contribution emerged as significant motivators in this study. These findings resonate with research from the Mediterranean and Balkan regions, where family-oriented cultural values strongly influence career choices. Miladinov (2022) emphasizes the role of family social capital in shaping career decisions in the Balkans, while Sultana (2020) highlights how cultural values, including family orientation, affect

career trajectories across the Mediterranean. Respondents' emphasis on work-life balance suggests that teaching is valued not only for its professional rewards but also for its potential to harmonize professional and personal commitments. Such perspectives align with broader global discussions about the increasing importance of careers that accommodate work-life balance, particularly in cultures that place a high value on family life (Cho et al., 2023).

Additionally, the data highlights students' strong recognition of teaching as a high-demand, specialized profession, as evidenced by the high mean scores for High Demand and Expert Career. These results reflect a broad consensus on the importance of teaching and the expertise it requires. Students also express general satisfaction with their career choice, although some variation suggests differing levels of confidence. While teacher morale is seen positively overall, perceptions vary, indicating diverse emotional experiences within the profession. External influences, such as societal attitudes and family pressures, show mixed responses, with some students feeling discouraged and others facing minimal barriers. Given these external influences, strengthening education policies that enhance the attractiveness of teaching, such as financial incentives, career development opportunities, and improved working conditions, could be essential in ensuring a sustainable and motivated teaching workforce.

On the other hand, the lower scores for Job Security, Good Salary, and Social Status suggest that while students value the fulfillment teaching offers, they are also aware of its financial and societal limitations. This highlights a nuanced perspective on teaching, where its demand and personal satisfaction are recognized, yet its challenges are not overlooked. Addressing the social and financial concerns raised could improve the profession's appeal. Interestingly, this study rated these extrinsic motivators lower than similar studies in international contexts. For instance, research in Romania emphasizes teaching's appeal due to its financial stability and job security (Crişan, 2018). The lower emphasis on these factors among participants in Kosovo may reflect the country's unique socioeconomic conditions, where teaching is not always seen as a lucrative or prestigious profession (Salihu et al., 2019).

Given Kosovo's broader economic and social challenges, which have directly affected the education system, addressing these concerns should be a priority for policymakers (Bicaj & Berisha, 2013). Due to the declining interest in choosing this profession, enhancing job security, increasing salaries, and improving the social status of teachers could help shift perceptions and encourage more young people to enter the profession. Additionally, targeted initiatives such as scholarships and financial incentives for aspiring teachers could serve as strategic interventions to counter the declining interest in teaching. By strengthening both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, education policies can better support the sustainability of the teaching workforce.

Another noteworthy finding was the role of demographic factors in shaping perceptions of teaching. The positive correlation between Job Security and place of residence suggests that students in rural and semi-urban areas are more likely to value teaching for its stability. This finding aligns with international studies that report similar patterns, where socio-economic challenges in rural areas heighten the appeal of stable and reliable professions like teaching (Panakaje et al., 2024).

By comparing these findings with international literature, it becomes evident that while certain motivators, such as intrinsic rewards and societal contributions, are universal, others, such as perceptions of job security, vary significantly depending on the socio-economic and cultural context. This underscores the importance of understanding teaching motivations not just through a global lens but also with sensitivity to local nuances. For Kosovo, this means that policies should go beyond standard reforms and focus on tailored strategies that address the specific challenges within the country. For instance, revising compensation structures, improving teacher professional development, and fostering a culture of respect and recognition could be pivotal in elevating the

profession's standing. Therefore, this study's findings contribute to a growing body of research that emphasizes the interplay between individual, cultural, and economic factors in shaping career decisions, offering valuable implications for education policy and teacher recruitment strategies in Kosovo and beyond.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study contributes valuable insights into the factors influencing students of Kosovo's decision to pursue teaching as a career. The findings underscore the importance of intrinsic motivations in driving students toward the profession, such as the desire to shape future generations and find personal fulfillment. Additionally, the emphasis on work-life balance reflects deep-rooted cultural values of family and social contribution, highlighting a holistic view of career satisfaction. However, despite recognizing teaching as a high-demand and fulfilling career, students expressed concerns about job security, salary, and social status, signaling awareness of the profession's financial and societal limitations. Demographic factors, particularly place of residence, also shaped perceptions, with rural students valuing teaching for its stability. These findings carry significant implications for Kosovo's education policy and teacher recruitment strategies. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for shaping future policies and initiatives that support teacher recruitment and retention, ultimately strengthening the education system in Kosovo.

7. Suggestion

Several key measures should be considered to enhance the appeal of the teaching profession in Kosovo. Addressing concerns about job security and financial stability by advocating for better salaries, employment conditions, and financial incentives, such as scholarships or loan forgiveness programs, could further encourage students, particularly those from rural areas, to pursue teaching. Promoting work-life balance through flexible working arrangements, reduced workload, and stronger professional support networks can align with cultural values that emphasize family and social contribution. Targeted recruitment strategies should highlight both the intrinsic rewards of teaching and efforts to improve working conditions, focusing on students from rural and semi-urban areas by emphasizing teaching stability. Additionally, increasing public awareness and advocating for policy reforms can help elevate the profession's status by shifting societal attitudes and promoting teaching's impact and prestige. Collaborating with policymakers to develop long-term strategies that enhance the sustainability of the teaching profession is essential for ensuring a stronger educational workforce in Kosovo. Implementing these recommendations can help attract and retain dedicated teachers, ultimately improving the quality of education in the country.

8. Limitations

This study has several limitations. The sample included only primary education students (grades 1-5), excluding teachers from other levels, such as secondary or higher education. Additionally, participants were drawn from only two universities in Kosovo, the University of "Hasan Prishtina" and the University of "Ukshin Hoti", limiting the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the FIT-Choice survey was translated into Albanian for the first time, and while efforts were made to ensure accuracy, some adaptations to fit Kosovo's cultural context may have influenced the results. Lastly, the sample was predominantly female (96.5% women, 3.5% men), which may have affected the representativeness of the findings.

Declarations

Author Contributions. (F.K.: Literature review, conceptualization. M.GJ &F.K.: methodology, data analysis. M.GJ.: Review-editing and F.K.: Writing and preparing the original manuscript. All authors have read and approved the published final version of the article)

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