

The Nexus between Prospective Teachers' Attitude towards Teaching Profession, Department Placement, and Their Academic Achievement in Ethiopia

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Abstract This study aimed to determine the relationship between prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching, department placement, and academic accomplishment at Hawassa College of Teachers' Education. Accordingly, the study used a correlational research design. To achieve the objectives of this study, 115 prospective teachers were selected using cluster sampling techniques. Based on the research aims and previous studies, a questionnaire was designed for prospective teachers. The cumulative grade point average (CGPA) results of the prospective teachers were obtained from the college's registrar's office. A one-sample t-test was used to examine prospective teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession and the college's department placement. In addition, Pearson product-moment analysis was used to measure the relationships between independent and dependent variables. The findings of this study revealed that prospective teachers have considerable negative sentiments concerning teaching and department placement. In addition, there was a negative correlation between prospective teachers' attitudes regarding teaching, their department assignment, and academic accomplishment. On the basis of these findings, it was suggested that the College of Teacher Education should revise the way that prospective teachers are assigned to departments and work with new entry trainees to build their confidence and academic achievement. The government should also

prioritise enhancing the teaching profession's prestige.

Keywords Attitude, Prospective Teachers, Teaching Profession, Academic Achievement

1. Background of the Study

Teaching is one of the prominent professions that is run by teachers [1,2]. Teachers are the basis of the educational system [3] and could not be replaced by another body in delivering a lesson [4]. Teaching is different from other professions in the social, psychological and emotional dimensions that make it complex in its implementation [5]. Teachers' full emotional attention and positive intention are mandatory in teaching [6]. Professional competence and achievement are affected by teachers' attitudes and perceptions of their profession [7]. Evans [8] argued that when professionals perform activities of the profession, their attitude towards the profession determines their success. McMillan [9] defines attitude as "the state of being ready, accepting, and acting with full intention," which can be shaped by experience through learning tendencies. Teachers' attitudes have a decisive impact on the extent to which they fulfil the requirements of their profession [10]. It is a commitment of teachers to their job and an understanding of the importance of their job to society.

Teachers' attitudes determine their beliefs about the need to develop themselves for their profession [11].

Fishbein and Ajzen [12] stated that attitudes are dispositions to respond with a certain degree of favorableness or unfavorability to an object, behaviors, person, event, or institution. Teachers with a positive attitude tend to work hard efficiently and effectively. Human attitudes are pre-judged considerations of experiences in day-to-day life. It is based on the likings and dislikings of a person towards something in the environment [13,14]. It is a personal feeling that an individual portrays in their temperament [13,14]. An attitude is a mindset that affects individual thoughts and actions in a positive or negative aspect. This means a positive attitude results in positive results and a negative one in negative results.

Similarly, Owusu-Fordjour [15] argued that attitudes could influence how teachers perceive, act, and show their commitment in lesson preparations. In line with this, [16,17] assert that one's attitude towards a behaviour is generally defined as the degree to which one has a positive versus negative evaluation of performing the behaviour. An attitude influences behaviour that can be demonstrated via certain actions. Dogan and Coban [18] also defined an attitude as a favorable or unfavourable evaluation reaction towards something exhibited in one's beliefs, feelings, or intended behavior.

Attitude relies on cognitive, affective, and behavioural processes and has cognitive, affective, and behavioral manifestations as well [19]. Effective teaching results from different inputs, among which positive attitudes are the intrinsic potential that further contributes to students' meaningful learning [20]. Thus, teachers with a positive attitude towards the teaching profession may be considered the sources of educated human power. Teachers with a positive attitude tend to work hard in an efficient and effective manner, and they also strive to enhance their professionalism [21].

On the other hand, a negative attitude towards teaching could lead to teacher burnout [22]. A professional or worker without a positive attitude towards his/her profession cannot be productive, resulting in a higher turnover. Furthermore, negative attitudes create unpleasant situations that impede the overall advancement of professionals, professions, and students. Hence, one can say that attitude is the overall teachers' attraction towards the profession.

Studies conducted [23,24] have shown the relationship between teachers' attitudes towards their profession and their effectiveness in teaching; positive teachers' attitudes towards teaching are central to effective teaching. This tendency has its own positive and negative effects on the overall outcome of education in general and learning in particular. Prospective teachers' attitude also matters since they are future professionals who play their role in the educational system in connection to their attitude towards

the profession. Tezci and Terzi [25] asserted that prospective teachers who have optimistic attitudes towards the teaching profession could be expected to have higher academic success during their training. On the other hand, prospective teachers with a negative attitude toward the teaching profession can be expected to show little effort, resulting in low academic achievement in their studies. Therefore, it is highly demanded that individuals with positive attitudes need to be selected based on present criteria prior to joining teachers' training colleges, as in the case of all Ethiopian teachers' training colleges. The prospective teachers are expected to sit for at least written and oral examinations that are designed to scrutinise competence, interest, and those with a positive outlook for the teaching profession.

In the Ethiopian context, prior to five years, there were complaints of relatively low salaries, housing problems in urban areas, and other social services [26]. Based on this, the Ministry of Education and Regional/City Education Bureaus have improved all teachers' salaries, and attempts have been made to solve housing problems in regions and cities where transportation has become free for teachers. However, it is not comprehensively and consistently addressed. On the other hand, due to the huge numbers of college and university graduates, there is no shortage of trained human power. As a result, unemployment becomes a great problem that may push graduates to compete for the available profession or positions. Therefore, this study was designed to investigate the attitudes of prospective teachers towards the teaching profession, department placement, and their relationship with academic achievement. This study was designed to answer the following questions.

1. What is the attitude of Hawassa College of Teachers' Education's prospective teachers towards the teaching profession?
2. How do prospective teachers perceive their department's placement in the college?
3. What is the relationship between prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching, department placement, and academic achievement?

2. Theoretical Frameworks

2.1. Teachers' Attitudes and Qualities of Teaching

The efficacy of teachers has been studied from numerous angles: input, process, and result variables. The input variables are the teachers' skills. The process factors are classroom behaviour, while the outcome variables are student achievement. Each variable impacts the others. The process and outcome factors are based on teacher knowledge. The quality and quantity of inputs affect the output. According to Nwona and Madu [27], teachers' subject knowledge, communication skills, emotional stability, interpersonal relationships, and professional

attitude influence students' academic achievement. Among the inputs, teachers' knowledge is crucial. According to Baumert, Kunter [28], teachers' subject and pedagogical knowledge contribute to students' academic achievement. Teachers help students build knowledge and increase instruction levels throughout the time period.

The abilities required for effective teaching involve more than just intellectual expertise. As Good and Brophy [29] argued, teachers should interact with students and assist them in understanding new concepts. They are organised, set clear expectations, and are sympathetic towards students. A positive attitude towards teaching is essential for good teaching and learning. The knowledge of the teacher supports students and achieves the outcome stage through positive engagement and motivation. A positive attitude towards teaching is regarded as a sign of effective teaching potential [24]. Thus, teachers' attitudes towards their professions influence students' attitudes and academic achievements. Unfavorable attitudes towards the profession are likely to negatively affect teachers' careers. According to Duatepe and Akkuş-Çıkla [30], effective teachers encourage and contribute to a collegial, teamwork environment and support students responsibly.

The scholars also stress that positive attitudes towards teaching are based on teachers' own views, pre-service training experiences, and post-service training experiences [31,32]. Positive attitudes towards teaching are required to overcome professional challenges. According to Bozdoğan, AYDIN [33], the process of teaching is as important as the material, and thus those who select it as a career should be aware that having balanced and in-depth knowledge before working enables them to teach their students. This happens when people who want to be teachers are excited about it and willing to be a part of the whole training process.

Teachers are role models for their students, eager and devoted. However, unprepared and impatient learners are more likely to be discouraged by teachers who lack enthusiasm and commitment [34]. Teaching effectiveness includes both affective and cognitive factors. Several scholars have studied this, including teacher attitudes [35], student affective outcomes [36], and teacher impact [14,37,38].

Today's teachers should be competent in more than just content understanding and instructional practices [39]. Some studies suggest that desirable affective outcomes of education are independence, curiosity, and positive attitudes towards school, teachers, and self-seem to result in teaching behaviours that are different from those prescribed for increasing student achievement [40-42]. Furthermore, Kyriakides [37] stated that teachers' own beliefs and attitudes towards teaching and the subject they teach are more important than directly observable behaviours. Kyriakides, Campbell [38] found that teacher behaviour affects student achievement. Darling-Hammond, Hyler [43] concluded that teacher quality is the primary predictor of student achievement.

2.2. Teachers' Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviors

Teachers teaching beliefs have been found to guide teacher practices that contribute to desirable student outcomes [44]. Studies have established relationships between teacher attitudes and beliefs, conduct, and student achievements [45,46]. As defined by Putman [44], an attitude is a person's inclination to respond positively or negatively to a stimulus. Fishbein and Ajzen [12] stated that attitudes contribute to behaviour. The same author further explained that teacher beliefs influence teacher behaviour, which influences student behaviour, and ultimately impacts student achievement. According to Leitão and Waugh [47], beliefs drive attitudes, attitudes influence intentions, and intentions influence behaviour. As the OECD [48] indicated, teachers' beliefs, practises, and attitudes shape students' learning environments and influence their motivation and achievement. The studies above clearly indicate that beliefs may impact attitudes, which form intentions, which create behaviours. According to the research, instructors' attitudes are significantly related to their intents, which may be seen in students' academic accomplishments.

2.3. The Status of the Teaching Profession in Ethiopia

Teachers are the frontlines of pedagogy who can influence the school system. The contentment of teachers with their careers promotes students, parents, and most importantly the attainment of quality education in general. It is hard to make a significant change in schools without the dedication and initiative of teachers [49]. The Ethiopian education system suffered from lack of quality that is exposed by the state, policymakers, and stakeholders [50]. The success or failure of the education system is largely determined by teachers and other educators at all levels. The amount of time that teachers spend directly interacting with students in the classroom has a substantial effect on the academic development of those students [51].

Teachers' job satisfaction substantially impacts their efficacy, quality instruction, and education [52]. Teacher work satisfaction is a predictor of teacher retention, a determinant of teacher commitment, and a contributor to school effectiveness [53]. According to Hongying [54], teacher job satisfaction affects teaching, school administration effectiveness, and school quality. Thus, job satisfaction affects teachers' work and affects their mental health. Various studies showed that teachers do not get paid enough, have low status, and live in poor living conditions [55-58].

Among the factors identified as low teacher job satisfaction in Ethiopia, the most frequently cited is low respect for and status of teachers [55]. Teaching was once one of the most prestigious professions in Ethiopia, but it seems to have lost its lustre in recent years [55]. The status of teaching and increased student enrolment at all levels of education contradict each other. Poor working conditions

in Ethiopian schools may have encouraged the majority of high school graduates to view teaching as a low-status profession that fails to attract competent individuals. However, in the last five years, efforts have been made to improve teacher housing circumstances.

Generally, teaching is a foundation for all professions and is not a simple job. According to Brady [59], teaching is a complex process that requires a committed individual. Akiri and Ugborugbo [60] argued that professionalism is defined as the knowledge, skill, behaviour, and attitude required by profession. To improve student academic progress, prospective teachers must have a positive teaching attitude.

2.4. Recruitment and Placement of Prospective Teachers

College student recruiting, retention, and graduation is a lengthy and intricate process that universities must go through with their future professionals. Heaton-Shrestha, May [61] noted that higher education students in general, and college students in particular, have their own set of criteria for placement. As this is a college study, regional Education Bureaus are responsible for prospective graduates' recruitment, placement, retention, graduation, and deployment. Recruiting guidelines have been prepared, and competitive high school graduates have been invited to apply, focusing on the demand for human power at the grassroots level. Similarly, the Education Bureau of the Southern Nations and Nationalities Region develops guidelines for recruiting qualified prospective teachers. Colleges recruit teachers based on the rules and administer written and oral examinations with highly specific criteria in order to find competent individuals and enroll them in colleges. After enrolling, prospective teachers choose fields of interest and are assigned to various departments where they will be teaching professionals. Finally, colleges are required to retain and educate them in order to prepare them for teaching careers in the cognitive, skill, and affective domains. This guideline specifies that prospective teachers must be positive about teaching in order for their

college education to be successful, but this was not true for everyone.

3. Research Materials and Methods

This study employed a correlational research design. According to Cohen, Manion [62], the correlational research design is appropriate for obtaining factual, attitudinal, or behavioural information from selected samples.

3.1. Study Site and Population

Hawassa College of Teacher Education only trains third-year diploma candidates for teaching positions. Because of ongoing curriculum changes, no first year and second-year prospective teachers were able to enrol. As a result, third-year prospective teachers were purposively selected as the target of the study. The most significant drawback associated with the use of purposive sampling is that it does not accurately represent the general population from which it draws its samples [63]. The results of a sample obtained through purposive sampling can only be inferred from the (sub)population from which the sample was drawn and not from the entire population [63], which is the limitation of this study.

3.2. Sampling and Sampling Procedure

According to Langdrige and Hagger-Johnson [64], stratified sampling is appropriate for identifying samples from a grouped population. As a result, stratified sampling was used in this research. Thirty percent of the population was included in the sample as per the suggestion of Cohen, Manion [65]. Of 12 departments providing training to prospective teachers found in the college that offers training for prospective teachers, 33% of them (4) departments were selected. These are Chemistry, English, mathematics and physics departments, as indicated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. A summary of the HCTE sample departments and the number of prospective teachers chosen from each department

Sample departments taken from the college	Number of prospective teachers in each department			Number of prospective teachers selected from in each department		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
Chemistry	74	8	82	22	3	25
English	97	18	115	30	6	36
Mathematics	103	7	110	30	3	33
Physics	66	2	68	19	2	21
Total	340	35	375	101	14	115

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

A closed-ended questionnaire with a 5-point likert scale (5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=agree to some extent, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree) was used to collect the data.

3.5. Methods of Data Analysis

Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) 24 was used to analyse the quantitative data collected through a questionnaire. The results of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient, t-test, and ANOVA were analysed. The total academic achievements (CGPA) of prospective teachers were also obtained from the college registrar. As a dependent variable, cumulative academic achievements were evaluated. As independent variables, prospective teachers' attitudes about teaching and prospective teachers' attitudes about where they should be placed in a department were included.

3.5. Validity and Reliability

Three colleagues checked the validity of the instrument (questionnaire), and some changes were made to the final version of the questionnaire before it was presented for reliability testing. The questionnaires were given to 30 prospective teachers who were not part of the sample size identified in order to test the instrument's reliability. The questionnaire was administered, and the reliability coefficient was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha formula. The study's reliability coefficient was 0.88, indicating that it was reliable. After obtaining permission from the college and providing them with a letter from Hawassa University, the researchers continued with data collection. The questionnaire was given to a sample of

identified prospective teachers who were selected randomly from the class.

4. Results and Discussion

The average achievement scores were used to achieve the study questionnaire's objective. The participants filled out a questionnaire about prospective teachers' attitudes regarding the teaching profession and attitudes towards their department placement. The prospective teachers' Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) scores were obtained from the college registrar's office. SPSS software version 24 was used to analyse the data because all of the data is numeric. The two-tailed correlation coefficients were computed for the entire sample to address the research questions. The results and discussions were presented in the following sections

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of the scores calculated for prospective teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession (ProAttiT), the attitude of prospective teachers towards department placement (Attidepla), and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of prospective teachers' collected from the registrar.

The mean value of prospective teachers' attitude scores towards the teaching profession (M=3.19), attitudes of prospective teachers about department placement (M=3.15), and the mean of their academic achievement (M=2.71) were presented in Table 2. The standard deviations and variances of the three variables were 0.5 and 0.2, respectively. The standard deviation (0.5) indicated that scores on attitudes towards teaching, department placement, and academic achievement achievements were spread out from the mean.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the variables considered in the study (n=115)

Statistics	Variables		
	ProAttiT	Attidepla	Academic Achievement (CGPA)
Mean	3.19	3.15	2.71
SD	0.478	0.501	0.457
Variance	0.228	0.251	0.209

Table 3. Results of one-sample t-test analysis

Variables	N	Mean	Expected mean	Sta. de	T	P
ProAttiT.	115	3.19	3.14	0.478	1.067	0.288
Attidepla.	115	3.15	2.24	0.501	19.502	0.000
Academic Achievement (CGPA)	115	2.71	2.61	0.457	2.375	0.019

4.2. Prospective Teachers' Attitudes towards the Teaching Profession, Department Placement, and Academic Achievement

A one-sample t-test was used to test prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching and department placement. The calculated mean scores of prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession ($M=3.19$) and that of department placement ($M=3.15$) for the sample group of 115 respondents. The participants' average academic achievement (CGPA) was 2.71.

As can be seen from Table 3, prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession have a calculated value of $t(1.067)$ which is less than the critical t value (1.97), whereas prospective teachers' attitudes towards department placement have a calculated value of $t(19.502)$ that is greater than the critical t -value (1.97). This indicated a statistically significant difference between prospective teachers' attitudes towards department placement and prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession.

Furthermore, the p -values for the independent variables (prospective teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession and department placement) were 0.288 and 0.000, respectively; the p -value for the independent variable, prospective teachers' attitudes towards department placement, was greater than 0.05. Therefore, the independent variable (prospective teachers' attitudes about department placement) is significant, but the independent variable (prospective teachers' views towards the teaching profession) is not.

4.3. Relationship between Prospective Teachers' Attitude towards the Teaching Profession, Department Placement, and Academic Achievement (CGPA)

Prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching and department placement were negatively associated with academic achievement ($r=-0.216$, $p, 0.05$) and ($r=-0.2643$, $p, 0.01$), respectively, as indicated in Table 4. The findings of this study revealed that prospective teachers had a negative view of the teaching profession. This shows that they do not hold a favourable opinion of the profession. Similarly, the result obtained from the prospective teachers' attitude towards their department placement was negative.

Table 4. Results of the correlation analysis

Variables	ProAttiT.	Attidepla.	Academic Ach. (CGPA)
ProAttiT.	1		
Attidepla.	0.434**	1	
Academic Ach.(CGPA)	-0.216*	-0.264**	1

5. Discussion

The computed means of the sample group of ($n=115$) respondents' item scores of prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession ($M=3.19$) and department placement ($M=3.15$) were determined using one sample t -test analysis. The calculated t -value (1.067) of prospective teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession is less than the critical t -value (1.97) at the 0.05 level of significance. In contrast, the calculated t -value (19.502) of prospective teachers' attitudes towards department placement is greater than the critical t -value (1.97).

The findings of this study indicate that there is a negative and weak relationship between prospective teachers' attitudes about teaching, department placement, and academic achievement. They were, nevertheless, not far from the neutral value of 0. This could be due to the demanding nature of the teaching profession, low pay for teachers, poor working conditions, and lack of recognition of the profession in the society they live in. The findings were consistent with those of Smithers and Robinson [66], who stated that teaching is a demanding job that pays less when compared to other professions. Kane, Mallon [67] supported this by stating that the workload that teachers face at school, as well as the preparation of lessons and other tasks at home, has caused many to dislike their jobs. Apart from the nature of the profession, the remuneration is not as attractive as it is in other professions to compensate teachers for their constant efforts. Tok [68] also supported the argument by stating that the attitude of teacher candidates investigated at Pamukkale University in Turkey was extremely negative. Furthermore, Egwu [69] noted that prospective teachers have a negative attitude towards teaching because they believe it is a difficult task and that teachers are underpaid. Learners' attitudes may have an impact on their academic performance. According to Davis and Rimm [13], teachers with a positive attitude work hard and are dedicated to their careers. Sölpük [70] used a meta-analysis approach to look at the influence of attitude on student achievement in 90 research studies and revealed that attitude had a medium-level beneficial effect on student achievement. The prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching were also relatively low in this study, and their academic achievement was moderate.

Besides, teachers' attitudes towards teaching and department placement were other factors that could influence academic achievement. The findings of this study indicated that respondents' attitudes towards department placement were negatively associated with academic achievement. This suggests that the prospective teachers were dissatisfied with their department placements. On this point, Dejenie [71] research finding conducted at Mekelle University stands the opposite. Dejenie [71] stated that assigning the prospective teachers to different departments with/without considering their

first choice has no statistically significant impact on students' academic achievement. However, departments of teacher education colleges lack trainees based on gaps identified at workplaces, and prospective teachers' department choice and the demand for human power at the school level may not be consistent, resulting in situations where trainees are assigned to fields that are not their first priority. Therefore, the impact of placing students in their first choice of department versus not placing them in their first choice of department requires more investigation at various levels and in various scenarios.

5.1. Correlation between Prospective Teachers' Attitude towards the Teaching Profession, Department Placement and Academic Achievement (CGPA)

The t-tests for prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching and department placement were ($t=1.067$) and ($t=19.502$), respectively (see Table 3). The p-value obtained from the correlation of the independent variables and academic achievement were (prospective teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession (0.288) and department placement (0.000). When the p-values obtained were compared to the probability error (0.05), the prospective teachers' attitude towards department placement had a lower p-value than the probability error, but their attitude towards teaching had a higher p-value than the probability error.

The correlation results revealed that prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching and department placement were both negatively correlated with academic achievement ($r = -0.216$, $p, 0.05$) and ($r = -0.2643$, $p, 0.01$), respectively. The results of the two tests were both negative. These findings indicated that the prospective teachers were dissatisfied with their department and negatively toward the teaching profession. The findings of the study showed that prospective teachers' attitudes towards department placement revealed a significant difference, although prospective teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession were insignificant. As a result, prospective teachers' attitudes about teaching and department placement were only weakly correlated with their academic achievement (CGPA). Academic achievement is known to be influenced by one's attitude. However, it was found in the current study that the relationship between prospective teachers' attitudes about teaching, department placement, and academic achievement has a low negative value. According to Das, Halder [72], there are times when attitude and academic achievement are negatively related, implying that there are some underlying factors involved. Therefore, based on the findings of this study, it can be inferred that some other important factors influence prospective teachers' school

achievement beyond attitude.

6. Conclusions and Implications

Attitude, being a vibrant entity, gets disposed of by age, previous experience, beliefs, gender, and department of education. It has the ability to influence an individual's thoughts and actions. Prospective teachers enrolled in the field with a variety of beliefs, experiences, and backgrounds that could have a significant impact on their current and future careers. From the findings of the study, prospective teachers have a negative attitude towards teaching and department placement. A number of factors may contribute to prospective teachers' negative attitudes towards teaching and their department placement. Teachers' low status, excessive workload, inadequate remuneration, and poor living conditions are all influencing factors. However, the quest for high-quality education for citizens continues to be a worry. Therefore, quality education will be impossible to achieve unless the factors surrounding the teaching profession are addressed. The following recommendations are suggested based on the findings of the study.

- It would be prudent for colleges of teacher education to respect prospective teachers' department selections when assigning them to different departments to preserve their intrinsic motivation, which may impact their subsequent academic progress.
- Colleges should handle new prospective teachers who arrive with pre-existing attitudes about teaching that should be modified by pre-service teacher training programmes that include a sequence of experiences in their curriculum and co-curricular activities. Having a positive attitude or reasonable beliefs about teaching can help improve the quality of education by giving teachers a sense of responsibility, professional skills, and an understanding of the needs and issues of their students, which can help them teach better.
- The Ministry of Education and the Regional Education Bureau should work together to improve the teaching profession's reputation by making it more appealing and merit-based. Furthermore, systematic initiatives to promote the teaching profession should be devised and implemented, beginning in elementary schools.
- College professors should focus on improving prospective teachers' academic achievement by creating a positive environment, establishing clear standards for excellent work, regularly refining their students' work, and maximising trainees' engagement time in the material.

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