Research Article

The Importance of an Autonomy-Supportive Workplace and Engaged Students for Language Teachers' Self-Determination and Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Teachers often face pressures both from above and from below as they adhere to their supervisors' requirements and work with students who may be disengaged from the learning process. These interpersonal influences are argued to thwart instructors' teaching motivation and result in a more controlled teaching experience and a more controlling teaching style, whereas supportive supervisors and engaged learners could promote a self-determined motivational orientation and greater teaching engagement. Regression analyses of survey responses collected from 63 English language instructors in Canada showed that supportive supervisors helped satisfy English language teachers' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which in turn promoted self-determined motivation and teaching engagement. Student disengagement undermined the satisfaction of instructors' needs and led to more controlled teaching motivation, but student engagement enhanced teachers' self-determined motivation and/or teaching engagement. These results underscore the importance of supervisory attentiveness to instructors' psychological needs. As well, they suggest that whereas teachers might be inspired by engaged students, they might also need to find strategies to cope with the potentially negative impact of disaffected students on their own teaching motivation and engagement.

Keywords: supervisor support, student engagement, student disengagement, self-determination theory, language teaching motivation, language teaching engagement

INTRODUCTION

Language teachers are essential to language education, and second language (L2) motivation researchers have long recognized the potentially impactful role of language teachers' motivation in their students' language learning (e.g., Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Savignon, 1976). Specifically, it is believed that, compared with their less motivated colleagues, language instructors with a higher level of motivation would be better able to motivate their students and to help the students achieve better language learning outcomes (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Hence, articulating the circumstances that foster teachers' motivation to engage in their teaching practice could not only illuminate the contexts in which teachers thrive, but also help students to succeed as well.

Although attempts have been made over the years to empirically examine the relation between teaching experience, teaching engagement, and students' motivation, many studies focus on how teachers influence their students' motivation and performance (Hiver et al., 2018; Kubanyiova, 2019), and not much has been done to uncover how students may affect their language teachers. The dynamics between teachers and their students in the classroom are not the only social interactions that affect teachers' daily experience; their supervisors can also play a role in cultivating the kind of work environment where educators can do their best work. This professional relationship, too, has been understudied in the language learning context (Wyatt, 2013).

To examine the role of the social context on teachers' motivation, the present study adopted a Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020) framework. This theory clearly articulates a rationale through which significant interpersonal relationships can influence a person's motivational experience and engagement in a given domain of activity through the satisfaction of the fundamental psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. After outlining this framework and its relevance to language teaching motivation, the present study addresses the above research gaps by (1) considering whether student engagement and disengagement potentially predict language teachers' motivation, (2) examining how contextual factors (in this case supervisors' support and student engagement and disengagement) are connected to language teachers' basic psychological need satisfaction and, in turn, their teaching motivation, and (3) relating language teachers' motivational orientations back to their overall engagement in their teaching job.

LITERATURE REVIEW
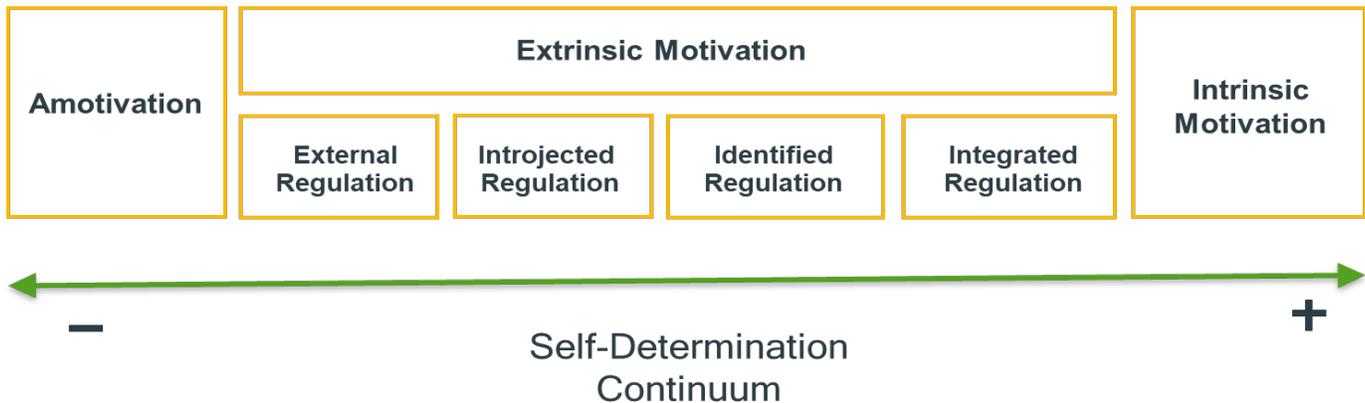
Self-Determination Theory

The theoretical framework the study draws upon is Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017). One of the main premises of SDT is that human beings have three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy (i.e., the need for agency in one's life), competence (i.e., the need to feel that one is capable and efficacious in important areas of one's life), and relatedness (i.e., the need for a sense of belonging with significant others). The extent to which these three needs are satisfied when individuals are involved in an activity or a job would affect the type of behavioral regulation (or "motivational orientation"; Noels, 2001, in press) they develop for the job or activity, and correspondingly the extent to which they will engage in a fulsome manner in that activity.

SDT distinguishes three broad types of motivation: *amotivation*, *extrinsic motivation*, and *intrinsic motivation* (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017). *Amotivation* is the lack of any motivation for a job or an activity. *Intrinsic motivation* describes the desire to engage in an activity solely due to the inherent interest and satisfying pursuit of the activity itself; for those people who find an activity intrinsically motivating, the thwarting of fundamental needs can lessen their motivation. *Extrinsic motivation* includes diverse forms that vary along a continuum of self-determination (see Figure 1). A high level of psychological need satisfaction generally corresponds with more autonomous motivational orientations, whereas a low level of psychological need satisfaction generally engenders more controlled motivational orientations. The most autonomous type of extrinsic motivation is *integrated regulation*, a motivational status in which an individual has fully internalized the value of doing an activity and has integrated it with other aspects of his/her self. *Identified regulation* is slightly less autonomous than integrated regulation, characterized by an individual realizing and endorsing the value or personal importance of an activity but may not have connected to other aspects of his/her self. *Introjected regulation* is even less autonomous than

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identified regulation and is regarded as a relatively more controlled type of extrinsic motivation. It is exemplified by an individual who is motivated to do an activity because if he/she doesn't, he/she may feel ashamed of themselves or is concerned he/she may let someone else down. The least autonomous and most controlled form of extrinsic motivation, *external regulation*, occurs when the purpose of engaging in an activity is to seek external rewards like securing a high grade.

Figure 1. *Self-Determination Continuum of Motivation (Adapted from Ryan & Deci, 2017)*

These four types of extrinsic motivation, together with amotivation and intrinsic motivation, form a self-determination continuum. Intrinsic motivation is the most self-determined type of motivation and amotivation is the least. For extrinsic motivation, autonomous types of motivation are considered more internalized into one's sense of self than controlled types of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017), and people are more likely to sustain their engagement and perform better in an activity when it corresponds with their personal values and sense of self (e.g., Roth et al., 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vallerand et al., 1993; Williams & Deci, 1996). As a result, it is important that individuals' basic psychological needs are supported by various contextual factors so that they can develop more autonomous or self-determined types of motivation and in turn more adaptive behaviors for the job or activity they are doing. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses from different domains like sports (Andrade et al., 2021), health behaviors (Sheeran et al., 2020), and education (Ryan & Deci, 2020), including language education (Noels, in press; Noels et al., 2019), have demonstrated the validity of SDT.

Teacher Motivation

As a prominent motivation theory, several researchers have adopted SDT to better understand teacher motivation in general education. Guided by Pintrich's (2003) working definition of motivation, Hiver and his colleagues (2018) has pointed out that there are four key questions that teacher motivation concerns: (1) individuals' initial motivation to choose to become a teacher, (2) the association between teacher motivation and their career development, (3) the effects of teacher motivation on their actual teaching behaviors and their students' learning, and (4) contextual factors that keep teachers motivated in their teaching job. SDT speaks to each of these four aspects of teacher motivation.

To begin with, the applicability of SDT in understanding teachers' motivation for teaching is well supported in existing studies. Roth and colleagues (2007) found that instructors distinguished three types of extrinsic motivation, external, introjected, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation according to their level of autonomy, with intrinsic motivation being most autonomous, followed by identified, introjected, and external regulation, a finding that corresponded with the original SDT propositions. Using the SDT framework, Fernet, Senécal, and their colleagues

(2008) developed The Work Tasks Motivation Scale for Teachers (WTMST) to assess teachers' intrinsic motivation, identified, introjected, and external regulations, and amotivation toward specific teaching tasks. Reeve and Su (2014) reviewed a number of studies that examined why individuals choose to become a teacher in the first place. They found that the initial motivation to become a teacher could be categorized as essentially either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation (see also, Richardson & Watt, 2016; Roth, 2014).

Adopting the SDT framework, studies about teacher motivation in general education have shown that teachers' motivational orientations are associated with both teachers' own career development, as well as their actual teaching behaviors and their students' learning outcomes (Hiver et al., 2018). Studies have generally found that compared with their less autonomously motivated colleagues, more autonomous teachers tend to put more effort into their teaching, are more likely to engage in professional development, and are less likely to leave their job (e.g., Watt & Richardson, 2008). Teachers with autonomous teaching motivation also enjoyed a higher level of sense of personal accomplishment and a lower level of job-related burnout and exhaustion (e.g., Friedman & Farber, 1992; Moller et al., 2006; Ryan & Frederick, 1997). Autonomous teaching motivation is also found to be positively correlated with teachers' self-efficacy for teaching (e.g., Fernet et al., 2008).

In terms of the relation with teaching behaviors and their students' learning outcomes, it is found that autonomous teaching motivation is related to teachers' autonomy-supportive teaching behaviors (e.g., Fernet et al., 2012; Pelletier et al., 2002; Reeve & Su, 2014; Roth, 2014; Roth et al., 2007; Taylor & Ntoumanis, 2007; Taylor et al., 2008). These autonomy-supportive teaching behaviors are in turn connected to students' autonomous learning motivation, increased engagement in their learning, and better learning outcomes (e.g., Assor et al., 2005; Reeve, 2009; Reeve & Jang, 2006; Reeve et al., 2003; Roth et al., 2007; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005). It is interesting to note that there seem to be more studies that look at the effects of teachers' motivational orientations and/or autonomy-supportive teaching behaviors on students' motivation and learning outcomes, but relatively few studies that examined how students' motivation and/or engagement in learning may influence teachers' motivation and their behaviors.

It can be seen from the above that teachers' motivation is closely connected to teachers' career development, as well as their actual teaching behaviors and their students' learning. Although the initial motive of becoming a teacher no doubt plays an important role in one's teaching career (e.g., Watt & Richardson, 2008), teaching is a highly contextualized job and teachers' motivation for teaching is constantly subjected to the effects of contextual factors in their job (Roth, 2014). Therefore, it is important to understand how various contextual factors in teaching may be associated with teachers' motivation. Studies have shown that instructors often face pressures both from above and from below (e.g., Pelletier et al., 2002; Reeve, 2009; Reeve & Su, 2014; Soenens et al., 2012). From the above, teachers are often required to meet demands from national, regional and/or school administration levels. These include conforming to certain national and/or regional curricula; being held accountable for their students' achievement and ensuring that their students' performance reach a certain standard; and aligning with their colleagues' teaching objectives and methods (e.g., Pelletier et al., 2002; Reeve & Su, 2014). From below, they need to respond to their students' academic needs, challenges and successes; support their students' motivation; and help them make progress in learning (e.g., Reeve & Su, 2014). These kinds of pressures could make teachers develop less autonomous motivational orientations and become less autonomy-supportive toward their students (e.g., Pelletier et al., 2002; Reeve, 2009; Sarrazin et al., 2006; Soenens et al., 2012; Taylor & Ntoumanis, 2007; Taylor et al., 2008). Therefore, in order for teachers to stay autonomously motivated, they need to experience support rather than constraints from the aforementioned contextual factors (Reeve & Su, 2014; Roth, 2014).

Within the SDT framework, support from contextual factors specifically means support for teachers' three basic psychological needs, i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and when these three psychological needs are supported or satisfied, teachers will be able to sustain their autonomous motivational orientation for teaching (Reeve & Su, 2014; Roth, 2014). Existing research has detailed what it means to support each of the three psychological needs. Support for autonomy means that teachers have the freedom to decide different aspects of their teaching and to make decisions about specific teaching practices (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2008; Fernet et al., 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Support for autonomy also requires that teachers do not feel overloaded in their daily work. In other words, they are not asked to deal with extremely complicated work or to complete a large amount of work with a short time constraint (e.g., Fernet et al., 2013). Having someone whom they could turn to for advice is also essential for the satisfaction of autonomy. Support for competence implies that teachers need to clearly know what it is expected from them during their teaching and it also requires that teachers have control over their own teaching (e.g., Fernet et al., 2013). As for support of relatedness, teachers need to feel connected to and valued by the people they encounter during their daily work, including, but not limited to, their immediate supervisors and colleagues (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This sense of relatedness could be manifested through the fact that teachers could get suggestions from people in their work (e.g., Fernet et al., 2013).

Apart from what needs to be done to support teachers' psychological needs, an equally important question concerns who should be responsible for providing this kind of support. As pressures for teachers may come from the above, i.e., at the administrative level, and from below, i.e., from their students, support for teachers' psychological needs need to be sourced from these two fronts as well. From the administration level, teachers may get support from their school principal (e.g., Eyal & Roth, 2011) as well as from supervisors who work more closely with them (e.g., Kim et al., 2019). Supervisors' supportive behaviors, like acknowledging teachers' professional knowledge and competence (e.g., Özcan, 2020), offering constructive feedback about teaching practices (e.g., Wagner & French, 2010), communicating openly with teachers (e.g., Özcan, 2020), and being sensitive toward teachers' interests and needs (e.g., Teven, 2007), may all be regarded as the kind of support needed for teachers' psychological need satisfaction and for the maintenance of autonomous teaching motivation.

As for support from the students, research suggests that teachers' perceptions of students as lacking motivation can undermine their autonomous teaching motivation and lead to less autonomy-supportive teaching behaviors (e.g., Pelletier et al., 2002; Sarrazin et al., 2006; Taylor & Ntoumanis, 2007). Additionally, as motivational orientations may often be regarded as an antecedent or a cause of student engagement (Reeve, 2012), it follows

logically that teachers' perception of student engagement might be the critical indicator of student motivation that impacts their teaching motivation and behaviors. *Student engagement* is generally defined as "energized, directed, and sustained action, or the observable qualities of students' actual interactions with academic tasks" (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012, p. 24). Interestingly, only a few studies directly examined how student engagement predicts teachers' autonomy-supportive teaching behaviors (e.g., Furrer & Skinner, 2009; Skinner & Belmont, 1993) and even fewer have investigated how teachers' psychological need satisfaction mediates the association between teachers' perceptions of student engagement and teachers' autonomous motivation (e.g., Pelletier et al., 2002).

Language Teacher Motivation

It can be seen from the above research in the general education domain, that SDT can provide important insights concerning each of the four key aspects of teacher motivation outlined by Hiver and his colleagues (2018). There is growing interest in the psychology of language teachers (Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018), including their motivation (Hiver et al., 2018), it is not surprising that SDT has also been adopted to investigate teacher motivation in this specific domain.

Like SDT research about teacher motivation in general education, language teacher motivation studies using the SDT framework also tried to identify what kind of teaching motivation teachers possess or what motivated them to become a language teacher initially (e.g., Syamananda, 2017). There are also studies that look at pre-service language teachers' learning motivation as they learn how to become a language teacher (e.g., Arioğul, 2009; Demiroz & Yesilyurt, 2015). Although there have not yet been many SDT-informed studies that explored the relation between language teacher motivation and actual language teaching behaviors and/or students' language learning, studies of language learners' self-determined motivation and learning engagement has clearly shown how autonomy-supportive teaching behaviors, as indexed through students' perceptions, could promote students' autonomous language learning motivation, and, in turn, their engagement in language learning (e.g., Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017; Noels, 2009, 2015; Noels et al., 2019; Oga-Baldwin & Nakata,

2017; Wu, 2003). Additionally, some language teacher motivation studies using theoretical frameworks other than SDT have found that language teachers' motivation could be related to their use of motivational teaching strategies, and in turn to their students' language learning motivation and achievement (e.g., Bernaus et al., 2009).

With regard to contextual factors associated with language teacher motivational orientations, existing studies generally echo the findings in general education, both in terms of what it means to support the three basic psychological needs and who could provide this kind of support. According to Wyatt (2013), excessive workload and the requirement to comply with national curriculum and lesson plans were connected to language teachers' reduced sense of autonomy and competence, and decreased teaching motivation. Developing a positive relationship with colleagues and students and having someone to discuss their job-related problems were related to language teachers' increased sense of relatedness and in turn a higher level of teaching motivation (e.g., Syamananda, 2017; Wyatt, 2013). Open and facilitative discussions with colleagues were also linked to an increased sense of competence (Wyatt, 2013).

Similar to their colleagues in general education, language instructors may also source the above kind of support from both their supervisor (Wyatt, 2013) and their students (Syamananda, 2017; Vibulphol, 2016). It is believed that showing trust and respect during interactions with language teachers is an important way for supervisors to support teachers' sense of competence (Wyatt, 2013). Syamananda (2017) identified students' lack of motivation as an important factor associated with teacher amotivation. Vibulphol (2016) found that autonomy-supportive teaching strategies were only used in classes with highly motivated students.

Although the body of research is growing, it should be pointed out that language teacher motivation is still an underrepresented area compared with other topics like student motivation in L2 motivation research (Boo et al., 2015; Kubanyiova, 2019). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) argue that it is important to study the influence of contextual factors, one of them being the students, on language teachers' intrinsic motivation. They believe that "the interactive analysis of [how] autonomous or self-determined forms of motivation [are associated] with contextual factors", i.e., SDT, can provide important

insights toward the above issue (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 191).

Despite SDT's promising potential to help understand language teacher motivation, there are many more studies of language students' self-determined or autonomous motivational orientation than those of language teachers' (Noels, in press; Noels et al., 2019). Although a few studies have indicated the potential connection between students' motivation and/or behaviors and language teachers' motivational orientations and autonomy-supportive teaching behaviors (e.g., Kubanyiova, 2019; Vibulphol, 2016), most SDT-informed language teacher motivation studies still frame student motivation and/or behaviors as outcomes resulting from teacher motivational orientations and teaching behaviors (Hiver et al., 2018; Kubanyiova, 2019). The reciprocal nature of language teacher motivation and/or behaviors and their students' motivation and/or behaviors remains unclear (Hiver et al., 2018). Much of the aforementioned SDT-informed teacher motivation studies have been descriptive in nature and do not provide conclusions about the relation among supportive behaviors from supervisors and students, language teachers' psychological need satisfaction, and language teachers' motivational orientations. Besides, many of these studies failed to connect their findings to a broader scope of issues that language teachers encounter in their teaching, and were thus less helpful for addressing language teachers' various actual concerns (e.g., Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). Given these research gaps, the present study focuses on some contextual factors that reasonably seem to be related to language teachers' motivation.

Objectives of the Present Study

Specifically, the present study has three research objectives: (1) to explore how student engagement and disengagement in learning may support or erode language teachers' psychological need satisfaction, and in turn affect their teaching motivation, (2) to examine how supervisors' support, as well as students' engagement and disengagement in their learning may predict language teachers' teaching motivational orientation through teachers' psychological need satisfaction, and (3) to see how well the hypothesized chain of mediated relations predicts language teachers' overall engagement in their job. We hypothesized

the following relations (see Figure 2 for a schematic of the hypothesized relations).

> H1. Greater perceived support from supervisors and greater perceived student engagement (and conversely disengagement) directly and positively predict teachers' need satisfaction.

> H2. Teachers' psychological need satisfaction directly predicts a more autonomous motivational orientation with regards to teaching.

> H3. A more autonomous motivational orientation directly and positively predicts greater teaching engagement.

Perceived support denotes the extent to which English language teachers view their supervisors as supportive of their basic psychological needs, and perceived engagement/disengagement is about to what extent these teachers viewed their students as engaged and/or disengaged in their English language learning. Ryan and Deci (2017) have argued that "it is the perceived satisfactions...that drive action" (p. 3). Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) also suggested that learners' observed motivated behaviors had a low correlation with their self-reported motivation, and teachers' motivational practice had a higher correlation with perceived motivated behaviors

of their students than with their students' self-reported motivation. In this case, teachers' perception of support and engagement/disengagement may be as important as their supervisors' reported level of support and their students' reported engagement/disengagement.

In addition, we operationalized student engagement and disengagement as two different variables, as they are two demonstrably different, albeit related, constructs (Wang et al., 2017). In other words, a disaffected learner not only lacks engagement in learning, but demonstrates maladaptive learning behaviors like boredom or rushing through schoolwork without trying to grasp the actual content (Wang et al., 2017). Moreover, student engagement is a better predictor of positive academic outcomes than disengagement (Wang et al., 2017). Accordingly, the influence of student engagement and disengagement on teachers may need to be investigated separately. In addition, we operationalized supervisors' support and student engagement and disengagement as perceived support and perceived engagement and disengagement. Namely, we assessed to what extent English language teachers in our study viewed their supervisors as supportive of their basic psychological needs, and to what extent these teachers viewed their students as engaged and/or disengaged in their English language learning.

Figure 2. *Hypothesized Model*
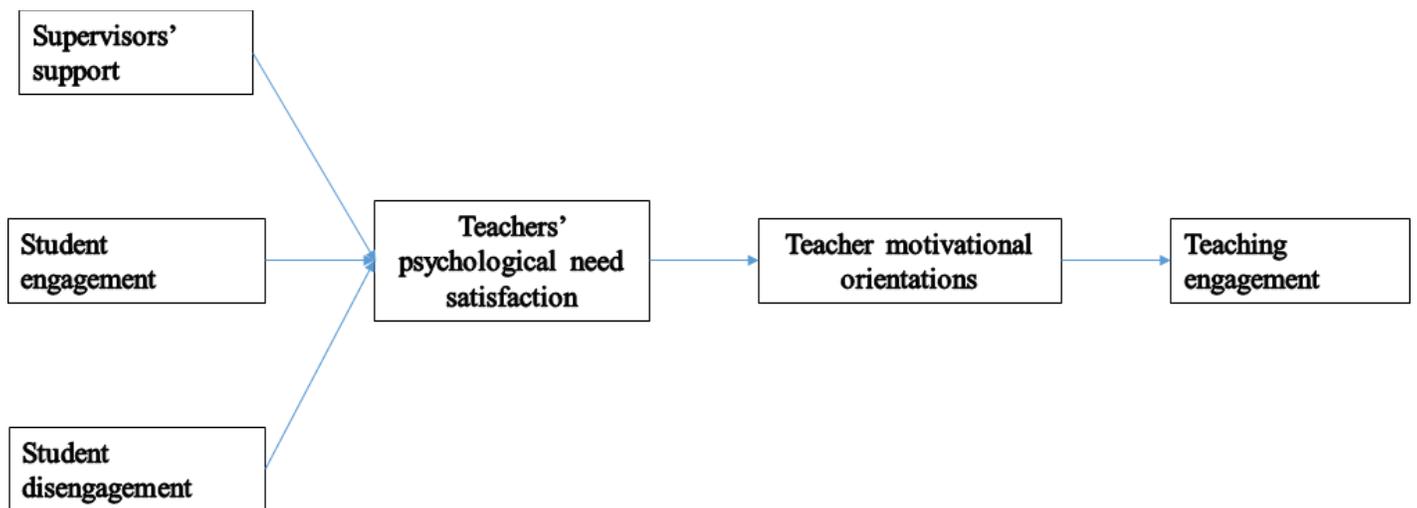
METHOD

Participants

A total of 65 English language teachers participated in the study, of which 63 were retained in the final data analysis (66.7% females, *M*age = 46.31, *SD*age = 11.01; 1 did not provide age information). More than 50% of these teachers (40 out of 63) were born in Canada, and the rest were born in Algeria, Australia, China, Colombia, UK, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Nigeria, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, and the USA. Most teachers (57 out of 63) identified themselves as Canadian citizens. This diversity of the participants' ethnic background is consistent with the demographics of the diversity of the province, which has a culturally diverse population. Most (73%) indicated English as their native language, 9.5% indicated English and another language, and 15.9% self-identified as native speakers of another language (1 did not specify.). Most (63.5%) had a master's degree in Education, and nearly half of them (44.4%) held some kind of English language teaching certificates. Their average years of teaching experience was 13.9 years (*SD* = 9.12). Most of these teachers taught English within Canada; only five of them worked in a foreign language context. Most (81%) had between 10 to 20 students in their classes. About one-third of them were teaching English language learners with mixed proficiency levels. Nearly two-thirds had worked with adult language learners and 47.6% had taught post-secondary learners. Only a few had experience working with students under the age of 18 (1 with preschool and primary school children, 1 with primary and secondary school students, and 2 with secondary school students).

In addition to this demographic information, we also asked the participants to identify their immediate supervisor, as we were going to assess their perception of their supervisors' support for their psychological needs. Most teachers identified a course coordinator (55.5%) or a departmental chair (19%) as their immediate supervisor. Other titles of immediate supervisors listed were principal, board of directors, campus director (similar to school principal), department manager, director of programs, education coordinator, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada coordinator, manager and program manager.

Instruments

The questionnaire items were adapted to the English language teaching context from psychometrically sound instruments used in earlier studies in educational psychology and applied linguistics. A description of each instrument follows, with the coefficient alpha index of internal consistency in parentheses. A complete list of the items is available in the Appendix. A high mean score for each index indicates a strong endorsement of that construct.

Perceived Supervisor Support

Three subscales were adapted from the Work Climate Questionnaire (Baard et al., 2004) to assess the extent to which teachers perceived their supervisor or course coordinator as providing psychological support using a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The subscales included 3 items to assess perceived autonomy support (e.g., "My supervisor/course coordinator listens to how I would like to do things," α = .93), 4 items to measure perceived competence support/informational feedback (e.g., "My supervisor/course coordinator makes sure I really understand the goals of my job and what I need to do," α = .92), and 8 items to index relatedness support ("I feel that my supervisor/course coordinator accepts me," α = .95).

Perceived Student Engagement and Disengagement

Adapted from Skinner et al.'s (2009) instrument of engagement and disaffection, two subscales assessed perceived student engagement (10 items; "In my class, students work as hard as they can," α = .89) and perceived student disengagement (10 items; "Students seem distracted when we begin new topics in class," α = .91), with a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Student engagement and disengagement were treated as separate constructs in this study as prior research has indicated that student engagement and disengagement are two related yet distinct constructs that account for learning behaviors and outcomes independently (e.g., Wang et al., 2017).

Teachers' Psychological Need Satisfaction

The three psychological needs subscales were adapted to the language teaching context from the Basic Need Satisfaction at Work Scale (Deci et al., 2001). Using a scale with 1 indicating the item was not at all true for the participant and 7 indicating it was very true, the participants indicated their feelings of: autonomy (6 items; "I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to teach," $\alpha = .74$), competence (6 items; "Often I do not feel very competent as a teacher," $\alpha = .70$), and relatedness (9 items; "People at work care about me," $\alpha = .89$).

Teachers' Motivational Orientations

The following subscales were adapted from Pelletier et al. (2002): intrinsic motivation (4 items; e.g., "for the satisfaction that I feel when I overcome interesting challenges at work," $\alpha = .61$), integrated regulation (5 items; e.g., "because this job is a fundamental part of who I am," $\alpha = .84$), identified regulation (5 items; e.g., "because it is the kind of work that I chose and that I prefer to have as a lifestyle." $\alpha = .74$), introjected regulation (3 items; e.g., "because I want to be very good at this work, otherwise I will be disappointed," $\alpha = .69$), and external regulation (4 items; e.g., because it helps me to earn money," $\alpha = .76$). Participants used a scale from 1 (indicating the item does not correspond with the teacher's reason for teaching languages) and 7 (indicating the item corresponds exactly with the participants' reasons). For the major analysis, the scores for intrinsic motivation, integrated regulation, and identified regulation were averaged to create a mean score for autonomous motivational orientation. The means of introjected regulation and external regulation were used to create the mean score for controlled motivational orientation.

Teaching Engagement

Three subscales adapted from the Schoolwork Engagement Inventory (Salmela-Aro & Upadaya, 2012) indexed teaching engagement, including energy (3 items; e.g., "At school I am bursting with energy," $\alpha = .72$), dedication (3 items; e.g., "I find teaching full of meaning and purpose," $\alpha = .84$), and absorption (3 items; e.g., "Time flies when I am teaching," $\alpha = .79$). The items were answered on a scale that ranged from 1 (never) to 7 (daily), reflecting how well the items described the participants' energy, dedication and absorption in teaching.

Procedure

The participants were recruited from a provincial TESL organization in Canada. Those who agreed to participate were asked to complete an online questionnaire at their convenience. They received $40 as an honorarium. The study protocol was reviewed by the university's research ethics board and conformed to the ethical guidelines of the Canadian and American Psychological Associations.

Analytical Plan

Our first step in data analysis was to look at the pattern of missing data in each variable. Preliminary analysis also examined descriptive statistics of these variables and correlations among them. Regression analyses were conducted to examine the hypothesized relations among supervisors' support, students' engagement and disengagement in language learning, teachers' psychological need satisfaction, their motivational orientations for teaching, and their teaching engagement (see Figure 1). Both the preliminary analyses and data modeling were conducted using SPSS version 24, and the mediated relations were examined using Hayes (2018) Process macro in SPSS.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Missing Data and Correlation Analysis

There were 2 participants (from the initial 65) who missed significant parts of the questionnaire and they were excluded from our final analysis. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and the bivariate correlations for the remaining participants. The means indicate that this sample of teachers perceived a moderately high level of support from their supervisors, and they thought their students were more engaged than disengaged ($t(62) = 35.07$, $p < .001$). They reported that they experienced a more autonomous than controlled motivational orientation ($t(62) = 13.22$, p

< .001) and high levels of engagement. The skewness and kurtosis statistics of all the variables were within the acceptable range for assuming normal distribution of the data (Kline, 2016).

The bivariate correlations indicated that perceived supervisor support and student engagement and disengagement were unrelated, indicating these interpersonal relationships represent two distinct possible influences on teachers' motivation. Although student engagement and student disengagement were negatively correlated, they were not so highly correlated as to suggest that they were opposite ends of a single continuum. Both supervisors' support and student engagement /disengagement were related to teachers' need satisfaction, and need satisfaction was correlated with autonomous motivational orientation and teacher engagement. Controlled motivational orientation had a small positive correlation with autonomous motivational orientation (consistent with the premise that these represent distinct types of motivation), but no relation with teaching engagement.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics and Correlations*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Supervisors' support	-	.025	−.034	.557**	.033	−.092	.117
2. Student engagement		-	−.468**	.338**	.408**	.074	.492**
3. Student disengagement			-	−.478**	−.179	.234	−.318*
4. Teachers' psychological need satisfaction				-	.423**	−.066	.450**
5. Autonomous motivational orientation					-	.292*	.694**
6. Controlled motivational orientation						-	.014
7. Teaching engagement							-
Mean	5.27	5.60	2.47	5.50	5.38	3.95	6.02
SD	1.49	0.71	1.01	0.86	0.86	1.25	0.74
Skewness	−1.01	−0.49	1.24	−0.72	−0.87	0.24	−0.92
Kurtosis	0.29	0.17	2.32	−0.61	1.29	−0.40	1.46

Note. **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$.

The Mediated Path Analysis

Because the relatively low sample size precluded the use of more complex analytical techniques such as structural equation modeling, the hypothesized relations among supervisors' support, student engagement and disengagement, teachers' psychological need satisfaction, motivational orientations for teaching, and teaching engagement were tested using Hayes (2018) PROCESS macro (Model 6). To simplify the analyses, separate analyses were conducted for autonomous and controlled motivational orientations; these two kinds of motivation are posited to have distinctive associations with teaching practices (Ryan & Deci, 2017), and the correlational analyses showed only a small, positive correlation between the two orientations ($r = .292$, $p = .020$).

Autonomous Motivational Orientation

The results of the regression analysis showed that the equation accounted for a large proportion of the variance in teaching engagement ($R^2 = .56$, $F (5, 57) = 14.24$, $p < .001$). Tables 2 and 3 show the direct, indirect and total effects of the model predictors on the outcome variables. As depicted in Figure 3, neither supervisors' support nor student engagement/disengagement had a significant direct effect on teaching engagement when teachers' psychological need satisfaction and autonomous motivational orientation were

controlled, but supervisors' support and student disengagement significantly predicted teachers' psychological need satisfaction. Teachers' psychological need satisfaction significantly and positively predicted an autonomous motivational orientation, as did student engagement. Unexpectedly, there was also a negative relation between supervisors' support and an autonomous motivational orientation, suggesting that after the variance accounted for by need satisfaction was accounted for, supervisors' support undermined teachers' autonomous motivational orientation. An autonomous motivational orientation significantly and positively predicted teaching engagement.

Figure 3. *Schematized Results of Regression Analyses for the Autonomous Motivational Orientation Model*
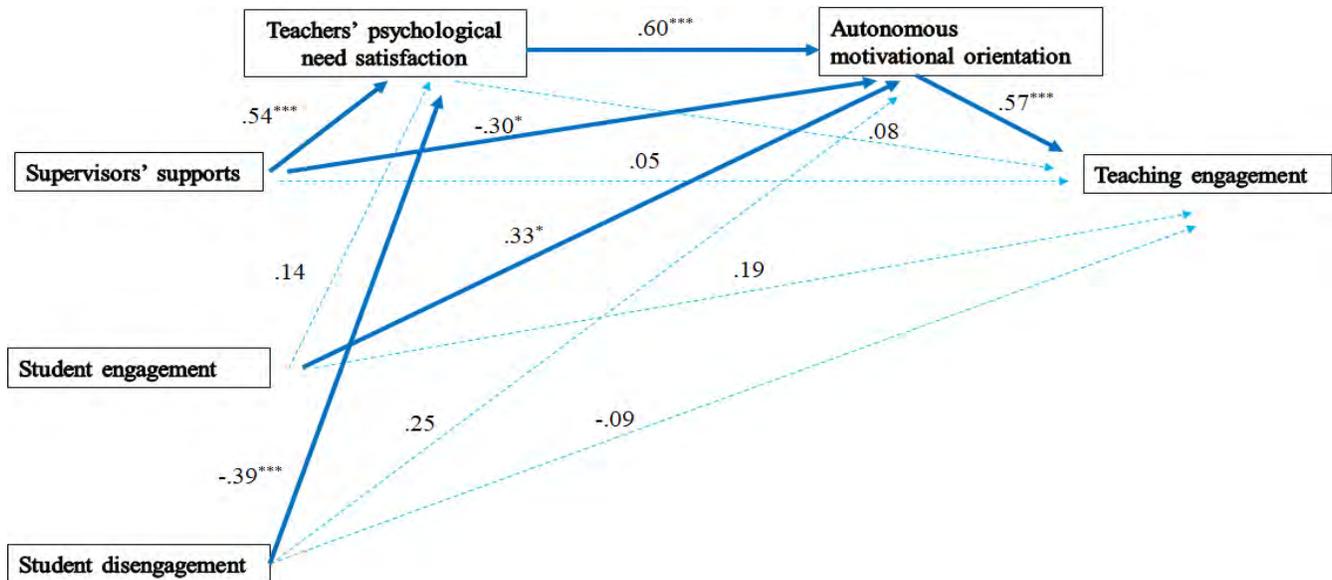
Note. ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$. The coefficients shown in the figure are standardized. Solid lines represent significant paths and dash lines are non-significant paths.

Figure 4. *Schematized Results of Path Analyses for the Controlled Motivational Orientation Model*
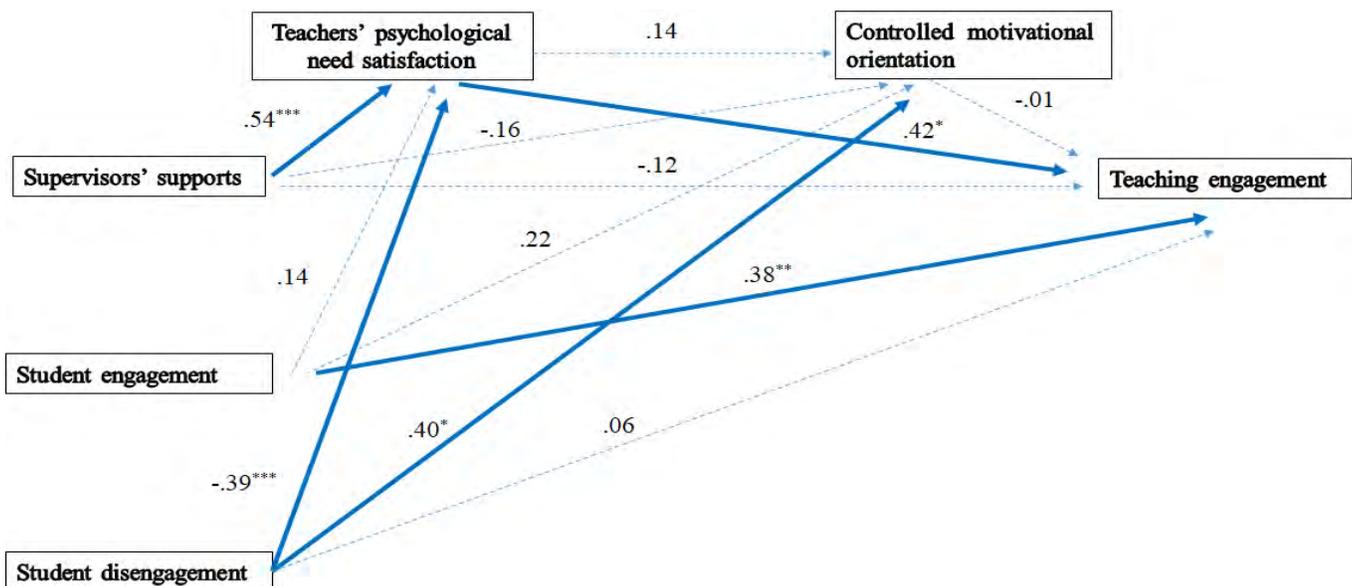
Note. ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$. The coefficients shown in the figure are standardized. Solid lines represent significant paths and dash lines are non-significant paths.

Table 2. *Autonomous Motivational Orientation Model Direct Effect Estimates*

Outcome Variable	Predictor	b	SE	t	p	R²
Teaching engagement	Supervisors' support	.05	0.058	0.409	.684	.56***
	Student engagement	.19	0.113	1.790	.079	
	Student disengagement	−.09	0.085	−0.760	.450	
	Teachers' psychological need satisfaction	.08	0.125	0.529	.600	
	Autonomous motivational orientation	.57***	0.093	5.234	< .001	
Autonomous motivational orientation	Supervisors' support	−.30*	0.079	−2.186	.033	.33***
	Student engagement	.33*	0.150	2.677	.010	
	Student disengagement	.25	0.116	1.835	.072	
	Teachers' psychological need satisfaction	.60***	0.157	3.792	< .001	
Teachers' psychological need satisfaction	Supervisors' support	.54***	0.051	6.080	< .001	.54***
	Student engagement	.14	0.122	1.404	.166	
	Student disengagement	−.39***	0.085	−3.918	< .001	

Note. ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$.

Controlled Motivational Orientation

Figure 4 shows the direct and indirect effects of supervisors' support, student engagement and disengagement on controlled motivational orientation and teaching engagement ($R^2 = .34$, $F(5, 57) = 5.92$, $p < .001$; see Tables 4 and 5 for details regarding the direct, indirect and total effects of the regression model). As with autonomous motivational orientation, neither supervisors' support nor student disengagement had a significant direct effect on teaching engagement, but supervisors' support and student disengagement significantly predicted teachers' psychological need satisfaction. Student engagement, however, did have a direct and positive effect on teaching engagement, as did teachers' psychological need satisfaction. Teachers' psychological need satisfaction was unrelated to controlled motivational orientation, and there was no relation between a controlled orientation and

teaching engagement. Perceived student disengagement was directly associated with teachers expressing a more controlled motivational orientation.

DISCUSSION

This study had the general purpose of exploring the association between contextual factors and language teachers' teaching motivation and their overall engagement in their job. It adds to the existing language teacher motivation research with three specific objectives: (1) to find out how student engagement and disengagement are related to English language teacher motivation, (2) to see how English language teachers' perception of their supervisors' support and their students' engagement and disengagement may predict their psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, and their

motivational orientation for teaching, and (3) to connect English language teachers' motivation to their overall teaching engagement. The study tested two mediational models of these relations, one focused on the autonomous motivational orientation and the other on the controlled motivational orientation.

Table 3. *Autonomous Motivational Orientation Model Total and Indirect Effect Estimates*

Total Effect					
Outcome variable	Predictor	*b (SE)*	*t*	*p*	*R²*
Teaching engagement	Supervisors' support	.10 (0.056)	0.914	.365	.26***
	Student engagement	.44** (0.132)	3.462	.001	
	Student disengagement	−.11 (0.093)	-0.863	.392	
Indirect Effects		Estimates (SE)	95%CI		
Supervisors' support → Teachers' psychological need satisfaction → Teaching engagement		.04 (0.100)	[−0.131, 0.274]		
Supervisors' support → Autonomous motivational orientation → Teaching engagement		−.17 (0.105)	[−0.391, 0.015]		
Supervisors' support → Teachers' psychological need satisfaction → Autonomous motivational orientation → Teaching engagement		.18* (0.072)	[0.052, 0.329]		
Student engagement → Teachers' psychological need satisfaction → Teaching engagement		.01 (0.032)	[−0.052, 0.083]		
Student engagement → Autonomous motivational orientation → Teaching engagement		.19* (0.085)	[0.032, 0.364]		
Student engagement → Teachers' psychological need satisfaction → Autonomous motivational orientation → Teaching engagement		.05 (0.038)	[−0.013, 0.130]		
Student disengagement → Teachers' psychological need satisfaction → Teaching engagement		−.03 (0.074)	[−0.203, 0.097]		
Student disengagement → Autonomous motivational orientation → Teaching engagement		.14 (0.091)	[−0.035, 0.324]		
Student disengagement → Teachers' psychological need satisfaction → Autonomous motivational orientation → Teaching engagement		−.13* (0.057)	[−0.241, −0.021]		

Note. ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$.

Autonomous Motivation

The analysis of the autonomous motivation model supported the hypothesis that when teachers perceive their supervisors as supporting their sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, they have a greater sense that they are teaching the language because of a strong sense of value for language teaching, language teacher identification, and intrinsic interest in teaching, which in turn is linked to greater engagement in teaching. This finding is consistent with previous empirical evidence that experiencing support for one's basic psychological needs from the teaching context, in this case from the supervisors, contributes to instructors' autonomous motivational orientation for

teaching (e.g., Pelletier et al., 2002; Reeve & Su, 2014; Roth, 2014; Taylor & Ntoumanis, 2007; Wyatt, 2013). It also suggests that autonomous teaching motivation not only contributes to specific teaching behaviors, such as the use of autonomy-supportive teaching strategies or increased effort in teaching, but it also enhances language instructors' overall engagement with their teaching job. As teaching

engagement may be viewed as the antithesis of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2017; Maslach et al., 2001), the above finding also echoes the established proposition that teachers with autonomous motivational orientation are less likely to experience job-related burnout (Friedman & Farber, 1992; Moller et al., 2006; Ryan & Frederick, 1997).

Table 4. *Controlled Motivational Orientation Model Direct Effect Estimates*

Outcome Variable	Predictor	b	SE	t	p	R^2
Teaching engagement	Supervisors' support	−.12	0.069	−0.890	.377	.34***
	Student engagement	.38**	0.132	3.031	.004	
	Student disengagement	.06	0.106	0.404	.688	
	Teachers' psychological need satisfaction	.42*	0.137	2.624	.011	
	Controlled motivational orientation	−.01	0.068	-0.097	.923	
Controlled motivational orientation	Supervisors' support	−.16	0.132	−1.025	.310	.11
	Student engagement	.22	0.251	1.515	.135	
	Student disengagement	.40*	0.194	2.518	.015	
	Teachers' psychological need satisfaction	.14	0.264	0.770	.445	
Teachers' psychological need satisfaction	Supervisors' support	.54***	0.051	6.080	< .001	.54***
	Student engagement	.14	0.122	1.404	.166	
	Student disengagement	−.39***	0.085	-3.918	< .001	

Note. ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.

One puzzling finding was the unexpected negative association between supervisory support and an autonomous motivational orientation, which was evident in the multiple regression but not the bivariate analyses. Because the bivariate correlation between supervisors' support and autonomous orientation is virtually zero, this negative association in the regression analysis suggests the existence of the suppressor effect. Hence, once the portion of the shared covariation between supervisors' support and teachers' autonomous orientation that was due to need satisfaction was taken into account, the more supervisors

were perceived to be supportive, the less teachers reported an autonomous orientation. One possible explanation for this effect, drawing from the SDT theoretical framework, could be that, when supervisors exceed a certain level of support for teachers' sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness, teachers construe such behavior as absent leadership, micro-management, and/or intrusiveness. Providing too much independence (i.e., "laissez-faire" management), too much structure (i.e., "helicoptering"), and/or extreme levels of intimacy (i.e., disrespecting boundaries) could undermine instructors' sense of

identification as a teacher and their intrinsic motivation for teaching. Studies have shown that language teachers may feel irritated and less motivated when their supervisors observe their classes too often (Pourtoussi et al., 2018). They may also feel uneasy if their supervisors try to "impose" a sense of belonging to the school on them, especially when they themselves do not genuinely feel this way (Pourtoussi et al., 2018, p. 182). Future research may consider exploring whether there is an optimum level of autonomy support that supervisors should strive for beyond which the effect may be deleterious.

Students can also affect their teachers' need satisfaction: the more teachers feel their students are disengaged, the less teachers feel autonomous, competent and connected with others at school, and correspondingly they are less likely to report that their teaching is self-determined and that they are engaged in their teaching. This finding provides empirical support for the interrelation between perceived students' behaviors and teachers' teaching motivation and behaviors (Hiver et al., 2018; Kubanyiova, 2019). It demonstrates the complex nature of language teacher motivation and underscores the importance of recognizing student performance as both antecedents and outcomes of language teacher motivation and engagement (Kubanyiova, 2019). In other words, not only is it tenable that language teachers affect their students' learning motivation and engagement by influencing the students' sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness (e.g., Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017; Noels, 2009, 2015; Noels et al., 2019; Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2017; Wu, 2003), but also that students can also exert an impact on their teachers' psychological need satisfaction, and subsequently the teachers' motivation and engagement in language teaching

It is noteworthy that, although perceived student disengagement is linked to teaching engagement through the mediation of psychological need satisfaction and autonomous teaching motivation, perceived student engagement directly predicts teachers' sense of self-determination and intrinsic motivation and subsequently their teaching engagement, without the expected mediation by need satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This finding is similar to the pattern showing that teachers' perception of students' motivation directly predicts teachers' motivation, and, in turn, their autonomy-supportive teaching behaviors (Pelletier et al., 2002; Taylor & Ntoumanis, 2007). It also seems reasonable to think that, because of their novice

status and lack of authority in the school system, students are not likely in a position where they can offer much support to their teachers' psychological needs. Instead of demonstrating a concern with their teachers' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in teaching., student engagement indicates to teachers the students' commitment to their own learning. That is, students' active and persistent participation in learning activities is essentially a signal to teachers of student motivation and cooperation (Pourtoussi et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2017), and this perception may directly affect teachers' sense of themselves as teachers and their intrinsic motivation. This pattern of results converges with prior studies both in general education and in language teacher motivation (e.g., Pelletier et al., 2002; Pourtoussi et al., 2018; Taylor & Ntoumanis, 2007), and suggests that psychological need satisfaction might be an important but not necessary condition for cultivating self-determined motivation in the student-teacher relationship. This possibility merits greater research attention to better understand the psychological process by which this direct association is possible.

Controlled Motivation

As demonstrated in the analysis of the autonomous motivation model, the analysis of the controlled motivation model found that supervisors' support helped to augment teachers' psychological need satisfaction and in turn their teaching engagement. If we regard engagement as the opposite of teacher burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2017; Maslach et al., 2001), this finding actually parallels Fernet, Austin and their colleagues' (2013) model that articulates how contextual support contributes to teachers' sense of perceived autonomy, competence and relatedness and how in turn, the satisfaction of these needs mitigates teacher burnout experiences. A controlled motivational orientation was neither predicted by need satisfaction, nor related to teaching engagement. Theoretically, we might have expected a negative relation between need satisfaction and less autonomous forms of motivation, but because of the analytical decision to combine external and introjected regulations (a somewhat more autonomous form of regulation) into a single index, it may have diminished the correlation. As for the lack of association between the controlled motivational orientation and engagement, this pattern is consistent across much language learning research

(Pourtoussi et al., 2018). Studies about language teacher motivation have indicated that teachers exhibit a low level of teaching engagement when they are "demotivated" (Pourtoussi et al., 2018, p. 187). In other words, it is possible that even when language teachers hold a controlled motivational orientation, they may still demonstrate a reasonable level of teaching engagement, as they may feel obliged or pressured to do so. Nonetheless, that engagement is unlikely to be deep or consistent or to continue after the pressure is lifted. Accordingly, there is no reliable relation between controlled motivation and engagement.

Table 5. *Controlled Motivational Orientation Model Total and Indirect Effect Estimates*

Total Effect					
Outcome variable	Predictor	*b (SE)*	*t*	*p*	*R²*
Teaching engagement	Supervisors' support	.10 (0.056)	0.914	.365	.26***
	Student engagement	.44** (0.132)	3.462	.001	
	Student disengagement	−.11 (0.093)	-0.863	.392	
Indirect Effects		Estimates (SE)	95%CI		
Supervisors' support → Teachers' psychological need satisfaction → Teaching engagement		.22* (0.104)	[0.048, 0.448]		
Supervisors' support → Controlled motivational orientation → Teaching engagement		.002 (0.023)	[−0.049, 0.053]		
Supervisors' support → Teachers' psychological need satisfaction → Controlled motivational orientation → Teaching engagement		−.001 (0.013)	[−0.021, 0.034]		
Student engagement → Teachers' psychological need satisfaction → Teaching engagement		.06 (0.046)	[−0.016, 0.165]		
Student engagement → Controlled motivational orientation → Teaching engagement		−.002 (0.028)	[−0.069, 0.053]		
Student engagement → Teachers' psychological need satisfaction → Controlled motivational orientation → Teaching engagement		−.0002 (0.004)	[−0.009, 0.010]		
Student disengagement → Teachers' psychological need satisfaction → Teaching engagement		−.16* (0.082)	[−0.339, −0.018]		
Student disengagement → Controlled motivational orientation → Teaching engagement		−.004 (0.045)	[−0.078, 0.106]		
Student disengagement → Teachers' psychological need satisfaction → Controlled motivational orientation → Teaching engagement		.001 (0.010)	[−0.025, 0.017]		

Note. ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$.

Student engagement significantly contributes to teaching engagement in this model, but the relation is not mediated by either the controlled motivational orientation or teachers' psychological need satisfaction. As indicated above, student engagement mainly concerns student-initiated behaviors or practices that do not necessarily connect to the satisfaction

of teachers' psychological needs. Teachers tend to base judgments of their students' motivation and cooperation in classes on their observations of students' engagement (Pourtoussi et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2017). Meanwhile, students' disengagement attenuated their teachers' need satisfaction and teaching engagement. In other words, faced with disaffected students, teachers feel a sense of obligation and pressure to teach in what might be considered an aversive classroom dynamic (Clément et al., 1994). Just like perception of students' motivation (Pelletier et al., 2002; Taylor & Ntoumanis, 2007), perception of students' disengagement also directly predicted controlled motivational orientation for teaching.

Taken together with results pertaining to teachers' autonomous motivational orientation, student engagement and disengagement were found to be two distinct constructs that have unique predictive potentials (Wang et al., 2017). It is reasonable to think that teachers' general perceptions of student engagement and disengagement are likely associated with different students in the class or different classes of students that the teacher is teaching. Whereas student engagement is more associated with adaptive outcomes, such as an autonomous orientation and teaching engagement, student disengagement better predicts negative outcomes, such as less need satisfaction, a greater sense of being controlled, and less teaching engagement. A teacher's challenge, it would seem, is to focus on those students who are engaged to sustain their motivation to mitigate the negative effects of less engaged students.

Limitations and Directions for Research

The present research indicates that a working environment with supportive supervisors and a group of engaged learners may be vital for English language teachers to develop self-determined teaching motivation and to be enthusiastically engaged in their everyday teaching. Taken together with existing literature about the effects of teacher motivation and behaviors on students' performance, the results of our study add to the picture concerning how teachers' and students' motivation and/or behaviors may mutually influence each other. Our study also shows that an autonomous teaching motivational orientation not only contributes to specific behaviors like adopting an autonomy-supportive teaching style, but also to teachers' overall engagement in their work.

Despite these important findings, this study is not without limitations. The most notable is the low sample size; although the results were largely consistent with theoretical expectations and previous research findings, the small sample precluded more robust structural equation modeling analyses of the proposed relations. And as with all cross-sectional designs, the correlational nature of these data precludes causal conclusions until longitudinal and/or experimental studies confirm the temporal sequence between variables, including transactional or reciprocal relations between teachers' perceptions of students and supervisors, and students' and supervisors' perceptions of teachers (cf., Bernaus et al., 2009; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008).

This sample was generally restricted to teachers of English as a second language in Canada, and a more diverse sample of teachers of other languages in other national contexts could test the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural generalizability of the findings. This kind of comparative research design can better inform researchers and education experts on how differences in education systems' policies and practices can impact teachers' motivation, and ultimately the extent to which teachers remain and thrive in the profession. Additionally, five of the participants identified themselves as teaching in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context, which implies that their responses might reflect their teaching experience both in an EFL setting and in Canada. Future comparative studies may also consider teasing apart teachers from English as a second language (ESL) and EFL contexts so as to have a better understanding of the role that access to the target language community plays.

Apart from these methodological improvements, this study's results point to new research questions that could be informed by and/or test the limits of current formulations of SDT as an explanatory framework for language teaching motivation. As noted earlier, important questions include: (1) To what extent is need satisfaction a necessary condition for the internalization of teacher identity and/or the prediction of teaching engagement?; (2) How is it that students communicate their engagement to teachers, explicitly or implicitly, in a way that fosters teachers' motivation (cf., Reeve's (2013) notion of "agentic engagement")?; (3) How can teachers mitigate the negative effects of students' disengagement on their own motivation?; (4) How do other people or circumstances

beyond the immediate supervisor and students impact teachers' motivation, such as program design, pedagogical approaches, and the culture of the school and/or the school district, and so on.

Also, our study mainly addressed the role of contextual factors in keeping teachers motivated. Future studies may consider how Self-Determination Theory can explain the other three key questions of teacher motivation identified by Hiver and his colleagues (2018): (1) How does teachers' initial motivation to become a teacher evolve as they spend more years teaching and working with different student cohorts with varying degrees of engagement?; (2) How could autonomous teaching motivation and/or increased teaching engagement contribute to teachers' professional development?; and (3) how could autonomous teaching motivation and/or increased teaching engagement, through their potential connection with actual teaching behaviors, be connected back to their students' learning.

Implications for Teaching Practice

These results point to the important role of school administrators and teacher mentors in supporting English language teachers. To foster teachers' sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness, they might invite English language teachers to become involved in decision-making processes and provide teachers with opportunities to freely communicate their opinions regarding things like curriculum design and school policies (Wyatt, 2013). They also need to provide professional development opportunities and offer informative feedback about teachers' day-to-day teaching practices to help teachers cultivate their teaching competence (Syamananda, 2017; Wyatt, 2013). Creating a working environment with a sense of belonging among fellow teachers is equally important (Syamananda, 2017; Wyatt, 2013). These supportive supervisory practices may increase teachers' psychological need satisfaction, and, in turn, make them more autonomously motivated and engaged in their teaching (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

As for the implications of the effects of student engagement and disengagement, teachers may need to be aware of how their motivation and teaching engagement may be affected by their perceptions of their students. They could consider developing a set of self-motivating strategies, such as doing teaching reflections and consulting with their supervisors and colleagues (Wyatt, 2013), to combat the negative impact of student disengagement (Harada, 2017). Being more sensitive toward students' needs may also be helpful as it enables them to think from the students' perspective and to become more understanding toward the students (Harada, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The present study shows that English language teachers' self-determined motivation and engagement in their teaching benefit from a working context with supportive supervisors and engaged learners, because this context supports their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This study demonstrates the utility of Self-Determination Theory for developing not only theoretical understanding of teachers' motivation but also practical applications for fostering teachers' sense of identity as a teacher and teaching engagement. It also highlights the importance of the interpersonal context for helping teachers to thrive in their practice, and the possibility of a reciprocal relation in the motivation of teachers and students. Continued research along the present line may help education leaders to effectively support their teaching staff and help teachers to not just develop resilience toward the potential frustration brought by their work environment but to thrive as a professional educator.

Authors' contributions

KAN and MSM designed the study. MSM managed the data collection. XZ and KAN conducted the data analysis, and collaborated in the interpretation of the results. XZ and KAN drafted the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire items (reorganized by key constructs assessed)

Perceived supervisor support
Perceived autonomy support
1. I feel that my supervisor/course coordinator provides me with choices and options.
2. My supervisor/course coordinator listens to how I would like to do things.
3. My supervisor/course coordinator tries to understand how I want to do things before suggesting a new way to do things.

Perceived competence support/informational feedback
4. My supervisor/course coordinator conveys confidence in my ability to do well at my job.
5. My supervisor/course coordinator makes sure I really understand the goals of my job and what I need to do.
6. My supervisor/course coordinator encourages me to ask questions.
7. My supervisor/course coordinator answers my questions fully and carefully.

Perceived relatedness support
8. I feel understood by my supervisor/course coordinator.
9. I am able to be open with my supervisor/course coordinator at work.
10. I feel that my supervisor/course coordinator accepts me.
11. I trust my supervisor/course coordinator.
12. My supervisor/course coordinator handles people's emotions very well.
13. I feel that my supervisor/course coordinator cares about me as a person.
14. I don't feel very good about the way my supervisor/course coordinator talks to me.
15. I feel able to share my feelings with my supervisor/course coordinator.

Perceived student engagement and disengagement
Perceived student engagement
1. In my class, students work as hard as they can.
2. When working on classwork in my class, students appear involved.
3. When I explain new material, students listen carefully.
4. In my class, students do more than required.
5. When students don't do well, generally they work harder.
6. In my class, students are enthusiastic.
7. In class, students appear happy.
8. When we start something new in class, students are interested.
9. Students seem to enjoy working on class work.
10. For my students, learning seems to be fun.

Perceived student disengagement
11. Students seem distracted when we begin new topics in class.
12. In my class, students come unprepared.
13. When faced with a difficult assignment, students don't even try.
14. In my class, students do just enough to get by.
15. When we start something new in class, students don't pay attention.
16. When we work on something in class, students appear to be bored.
17. When working on classwork, students seem worried.
18. In class, students seem unhappy.
19. In my class, students are angry.
20. When I explain new material, students don't seem to care.

Teachers' psychological need satisfaction
Autonomy
1. I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to teach.
2. I feel pressured in my teaching.
3. I generally feel free to express my ideas and opinions about teaching.
4. In my daily work life, I frequently have to do what I am told.
5. I feel like I can pretty much be myself in my daily work situations.
6. There is not much opportunity for me to decide for myself how to do things in my teaching life.

Competence
7. Often, I do not feel very competent as a teacher.
8. People I know tell me I am good at teaching.

9. I have been able to learn interesting new teaching skills recently.
10. Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from teaching.
11. In my teaching life I do not get much of a chance to show how capable I am.
12. I often do not feel very capable in teaching.

Relatedness

13. I really like the people I interact with.
14. I get along with people I come into contact with at work.
15. I pretty much keep to myself and don't have a lot of social contacts at work.
16. I consider the people I regularly interact at work with to be my friends.
17. People I interact with on a daily basis tend to take my feelings into consideration.
18. People at work care about me.
19. There are not many people that I am close to at work.
20. The people I interact at work with regularly at work do not seem to like me much.
21. People at work are generally pretty friendly towards me.

Teachers' motivational orientations

Intrinsic motivation

1. For the moments of intense pleasure that I experience doing this work
2. Because I enjoy learning new things in this job
3. For the satisfaction that I feel when I overcome interesting challenges at work
4. For the satisfaction that I feel when I succeed at different tasks

Integrated regulation

5. Because this work reflects who I really am
6. Because in doing this job, I am living in accordance with my deepest principles
7. Because this job is a fundamental part of who I am
8. Because my work is my life and I don't want to give up
9. Because this job represents an important part of my life

Identified regulation

10. Because it is the kind of work that I chose and that I prefer to have as a life style
11. Because this job helps me achieve my career goals
12. Because it is the way I have chosen to live my life
13. Because it is the type of work that I chose to help me attain goals that are important to me
14. Because it is the kind of work that I prefer for my career

Introjected regulation

15. Because I really want to succeed in this job, or else I will feel ashamed if I don't succeed in this job
16. Because I want to be very good at this work, otherwise I will be disappointed
17. Because I want to be a 'winner' in my life

External regulation

18. For the social advantages associated with this type of work
19. Because it helps me to earn money
20. Because this kind of work gives me security
21. For the salary

Teaching engagement

Energy

1. At school I am bursting with energy.
2. I feel strong and vigorous when I am teaching.
3. I feel like going to work when I get up in the morning.

Dedication

4. I find teaching full of meaning and purpose.
5. I am enthusiastic about teaching.
6. Teaching inspires me.

Absorption

7. Time flies when I am teaching.
8. When I am working at school, I forget everything else around me.
9. I feel happy when I am working intensively at school.