

Addressing Job Satisfaction in Jordan's Public Schools: The Influence of Perceived Organizational Support on Maslow's Hierarchy and Self-Determination Theory

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Abstract

This conceptual paper explores how integrating Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Self-Determination Theory can enhance job satisfaction among educators in Jordan's public schools, with a particular focus on perceived organizational support. The study emphasizes that perceived organizational support plays a crucial moderating role in the relationship between various job satisfaction factors and educators' experiences. Challenges such as low pay, heavy workloads, and insufficient professional development opportunities highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of how these factors, coupled with organizational support, impact teacher morale and retention. The proposed framework suggests that a supportive organizational context enhances the effects of both foundational and psychological needs, fostering higher job satisfaction. By illustrating the significance of perceived organizational support in amplifying job satisfaction, the paper aims to provide educational leaders with actionable strategies to address teachers' diverse needs. This research contributes to the understanding of job satisfaction in the Middle Eastern educational context and offers pathways to improve teacher retention and create a more conducive work environment in Jordan's public schools.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Self-Determination Theory, Perceived Organizational Support, Jordanian Public Schools

Introduction

In recent years, quality education has increasingly become a focal point for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners (Guzmán-Valenzuela et al., 2021). Key environmental challenges related to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which prioritizes quality education, include ensuring equitable access to educational resources, fostering inclusive learning environments, and addressing gaps in infrastructure and technology, particularly in under-resourced and rural areas (Agbedahin, 2019; Mbithi et al., 2021). To achieve these goals, organizations need diverse resources, including natural, financial, scientific, technological, and human resources. Of these, human resources are the most vital, as they

activate and sustain the use of other organizational resources (Olubiyi, 2023). Within organizational development, retaining high-quality human resources with credibility is crucial for optimal performance. When employees demonstrate strong performance, they tend to feel satisfied, which, in turn, promotes loyalty to their organization (Novianti et al., 2024). This principle is also highly applicable in the educational sector, where job satisfaction is essential to both individual and organizational success. Specifically, in Jordan's Ministry of Education, teacher satisfaction requires focused attention to support educational outcomes (Dababneh et al., 2022). The Ministry of Education in Jordan faces several challenges affecting teacher satisfaction, including low pay, heavy workloads, limited autonomy, and insufficient professional development opportunities (Alnaimat et al., 2022; jo24, 2024; Queen Rania Foundation, 2021). These factors not only reduce job satisfaction but also hinder sustainable educational development (Queen Rania Foundation, 2021). Additional concerns include financial instability, job insecurity, and unmet higher-level needs—such as esteem and self-actualization often exacerbated by inconsistent teacher training (Alkhlaifat, 2020; Queen Rania Foundation, 2021). Addressing these issues could be supported by integrating Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) into Ministry policies to enhance teacher satisfaction. Studies have indicated that job satisfaction improvements often stem from addressing organizational factors like compensation, workload, working conditions, work organization, supervision, and leadership (Abdulahi, 2020; Jackson, 2018; Suryo Wibowo et al., 2024; Yang, Obrenovic, et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Aras & Gümüşsoy (2024) observed that many individuals have grown concerned about job security and have considered leaving their positions. Thus, focusing on the root causes of job dissatisfaction in schools may help reduce turnover and strengthen employee engagement (Battaglio et al., 2022; Queen Rania Foundation, 2021; Rojas et al., 2023).

This section introduces the research question, emphasizing the critical need for studies on job satisfaction within Jordan's Ministry of Education schools. Limited literature addresses job satisfaction within the Middle Eastern education sector, highlighting a gap in understanding factors that drive job satisfaction, including elements from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Self-Determination Theory. This study aims to fill these gaps by examining the drivers of job satisfaction in Jordanian schools. Through its research question, the study seeks to provide a thorough understanding of job satisfaction dynamics specific to the context of Jordan's Ministry of Education schools. The research question of this study is:

What are the drivers that influencing job satisfaction in Jordanian public schools?

The structure of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 offers a comprehensive review of past literature and outlines the development of the study's hypotheses. Section 3 discusses the contributions of this research and presents the conclusions derived from the literature review findings.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been understood and defined in various ways, capturing its complex and multi-dimensional characteristics. Vroom (1964) describes job satisfaction as an emotional orientation toward one's work role, highlighting the importance of the emotional connection that employees form with their tasks. Hoppock & Spiegler (1938) define it as a blend of psychological, physiological, and environmental conditions that contribute to an employee's

sense of satisfaction with their job. Locke (1976) further describes job satisfaction as a positive emotional state related to one's position. Expanding on this, Leap and Crino (1993) emphasize employees' feelings about their job, the rewards they receive, and the social, organizational, and physical aspects of their work environment. Thus, job satisfaction is influenced by both individual expectations and external factors, making it essential for organizations to cultivate a satisfied workforce to minimize turnover and support high performance.

Underpinning Theories

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is structured as a ladder-like progression, encompassing five levels: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization (Ihensekien & Joel, 2023; Rojas et al., 2023). This theory remains widely used by researchers and organizations alike to analyze human behavior, particularly within educational contexts (Quinteros-Durand et al., 2023; Wood, 2022). In this study, Maslow's hierarchy is further broken down into three key subcomponents based on employees' needs: physiological, safety, and social needs, which include factors such as working environment, working conditions, training, public service motivation and intrinsic needs which are reflected in job satisfaction.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a theory of human motivation (Cassia & Magno, 2024; Deci & Ryan, 1985). SDT provides a compelling explanation of how fulfilling the core psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness leads to thriving and meaningful engagement in work. According to SDT, these needs are foundational for intrinsic motivation, well-being, and purpose; when work environments support these needs, employees experience heightened motivation and satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Unlike Person-Environment Fit theory, which focuses on alignment between personal traits and job demands, SDT offers mechanisms for how supportive contexts actively enhance well-being and meaning (Greguras et al., 2015; Nikolova & Cnossen, 2020). Research further shows that employees who feel competent, autonomous, and connected to others find greater meaning and are more engaged, productive, and likely to remain in their roles, benefiting both individuals and organizations (Allan et al., 2016; Deci et al., 2017).

Justification for Integrating Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Self-Determination Theory

The integration of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is well-founded, as both theories complement each other in exploring human motivation and well-being, especially within organizational settings. These frameworks underscore the importance of meeting individual needs to enhance job satisfaction, motivation, and performance.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs presents a sequential model where individuals must fulfill lower-level needs, such as physiological, safety, and social before they can address higher-order needs like esteem and self-actualization. In contrast, SDT highlights three fundamental psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness that are essential for fostering intrinsic motivation and well-being (Deci et al., 2017a; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Both theories agree that satisfying fundamental needs is essential to achieving higher engagement and fulfillment. For instance, Maslow's esteem needs, which include recognition and respect, align with SDT's emphasis on competence, while self-actualization aligns with SDT's focus on autonomy and competence, as individuals seek personal growth and meaningful work (Leroy et al., 2015).

Maslow's theory suggests that human needs are satisfied in a sequential order, beginning with basic survival needs and progressing to higher levels of motivation. In contrast, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) offers a holistic perspective, proposing that the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness can be nurtured simultaneously, with the satisfaction of basic needs forming a foundation for deeper psychological fulfillment (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Combining these theories suggests that when employees' fundamental needs, such as safety and job security, are met, they are better positioned to fulfill their psychological needs, leading to increased job satisfaction and motivation. This approach supports the notion that organizations can address basic needs while simultaneously fostering intrinsic motivation through a supportive work environment (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

The integration of Maslow's Hierarchy and SDT is particularly valuable in organizational contexts, where employee motivation and satisfaction are essential to performance. Maslow's framework offers a structured approach to prioritizing needs, ensuring that organizations initially address essential aspects such as fair compensation, safety, and job security. Once these needs are met, SDT provides guidance for creating a work environment that supports competence, autonomy, and relatedness, which are essential for intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement (Deci et al., 2017). This integrated approach allows organizations to cultivate environments where both foundational and psychological needs are satisfied, resulting in higher job satisfaction, engagement, and productivity.

Research affirms the effectiveness of integrating these theories for understanding employee motivation and satisfaction. Studies have shown that satisfying core psychological needs—competence, autonomy, and relatedness—leads to enhanced intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction (Allan et al., 2016; Deci et al., 2017). Furthermore, combining Maslow's hierarchy with SDT underscores the importance of addressing both basic and psychological needs to support long-term employee well-being and organizational success (Nikolova & Cnossen, 2020). This integrated perspective provides a robust framework for fostering a motivated and satisfied workforce.

Hypotheses Development

The development of hypotheses on job satisfaction is informed by Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Self-determination theory as shown in figure 1. A supportive working environment (H1) is proposed to enhance job satisfaction by addressing employees' fundamental need for security and social connection, thus increasing their job satisfaction. Further, working conditions (H2), training (H3) and public service motivation (H4) are expected to foster a sense of esteem and fairness, leading to greater satisfaction and commitment. According to SDT, autonomy (H5), competence (H6), and relatedness (H7) are central to intrinsic motivation; when employees feel empowered, skilled, and connected, they experience higher satisfaction.

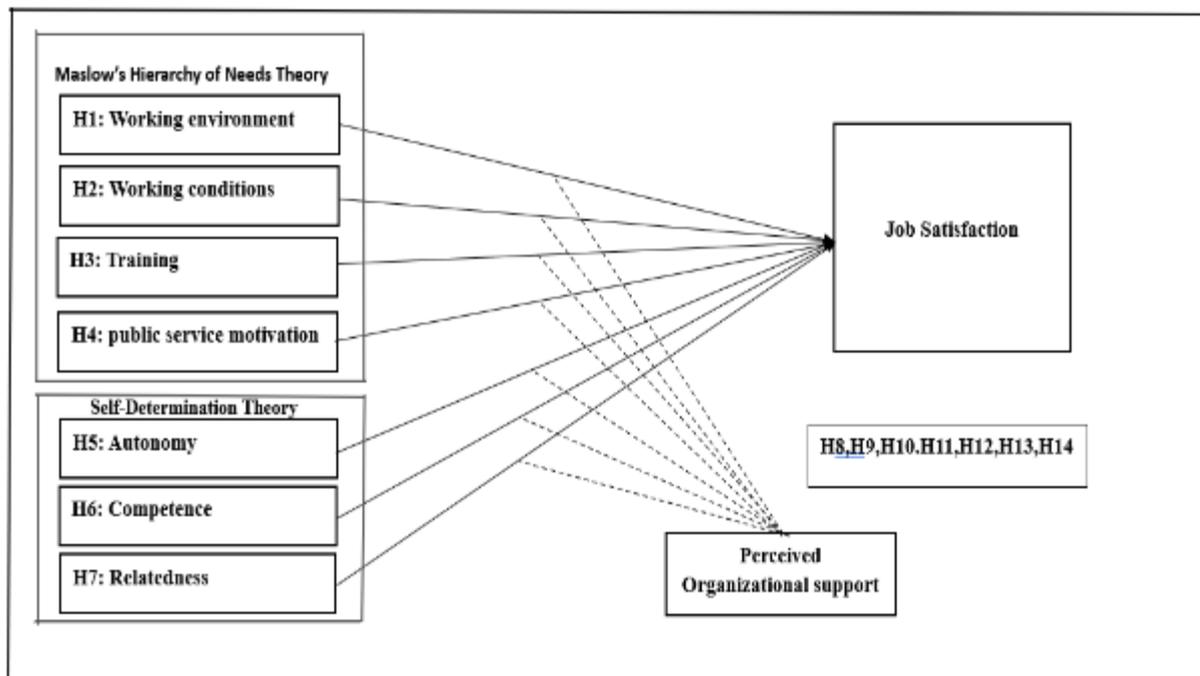


Figure 1 Research Framework

Working Environment

The working environment includes various factors such as physical conditions, hygiene standards, amenities, and open communication channels that a company provides to enhance job satisfaction (Pang et al., 2023). It plays a crucial role in shaping employee job satisfaction, encompassing various physical, social, and organizational elements that directly influence employee daily experiences and overall well-being (Putra & Kudri, 2024). Kim et al. (2024) posited key aspects such as safe and well-maintained workspaces, access to essential resources, equitable policies, and strong support from colleagues and supervisors contribute to creating a positive and fulfilling work atmosphere.

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that the working environment has a positive and significant impact on job satisfaction (Fathurahman, 2022; Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015; Zanardi & Zhau, 2020). In opposite empirical studies have found working environment has no significant impact on job satisfaction (Anasi, 2020; Erlangga et al., 2021; Wahyudi et al., 2023). Thus, this study hypothesized that:

H1: Working environment has a positive impact on job satisfaction.

Working Conditions

Working conditions are the terms of employment, encompassing fair income, hours, benefits, and labor contracts, that support employee satisfaction and well-being (Pang et al., 2023). Work conditions play a fundamental role in creating supportive practice environments (Paudel et al., 2024). The conditions are all physical aspects of work, work psychology, and work regulations that can affect job satisfaction and work productivity (Basalamah, 2021). Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that the working conditions have a positive and significant impact on job satisfaction (Akinsola et al., 2024; Bakr et al., 2019; Bashir et al., 2020). In opposite empirical studies have found working conditions has no significant impact on job satisfaction (Bolaito & Mohamoud, 2024; Mokaya et al., 2013; Rong et al., 2022). Work conditions are statistically significantly related to teacher's school job satisfaction, meaning

that as schools adopt these techniques, both teacher satisfaction and school performance improve (Awodiji et al., 2022). Thus, this study hypothesized that:

H2: Working conditions have a positive impact on job satisfaction.

Training

Training are the opportunities a company provides for employees to develop skills, knowledge, personal development and receive guidance on safety practices (Pang et al., 2023). The empowerment of employees within training initiatives significantly boosts job satisfaction by positively influencing their overall well-being and performance (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Furthermore, training not only facilitates the acquisition of new skills, knowledge, and abilities but also promotes knowledge sharing among participants, which enhances both individual performance and collective job satisfaction (Kanapathipillai & Azam, 2020). Researchers revealed that training positively affects job satisfaction (Azhari et al., 2024). In contrast, empirical studies have found training has no significant impact on job satisfaction (Che Md Nor et al., 2021; Nalbandi & Zonoozi, 2019; Rong et al., 2022). Based on these findings, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3: Training has a positive impact on job satisfaction.

Public Service Motivation

Public service motivation(PSM) is the intrinsic drive to engage in meaningful public service and recognize the interdependence of individuals in society (Tu et al., 2024). Organizations that recognize and reward contributions consistent with public service values are more likely to nurture a satisfied workforce(Bright, 2008; Hue et al., 2022). Moreover, offering opportunities for professional growth, such as skill enhancement, career progression, and collaborative initiatives, amplifies the beneficial effects of PSM on job satisfaction (Caoagdan et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024). employees with elevated PSM scores exhibit greater efforts, leading to enhanced job performance and satisfaction (Ha et al., 2023). Kim (2012) states that a higher level of PSM tends to reflect the higher level of loyalty and emotional attachment to their departments, such that PSM can facilitate the staff's organizational commitment. emphasizes that higher levels of PSM often correspond with increased loyalty and emotional attachment to one's department, ultimately fostering greater organizational commitment (Boyd & Nowell, 2023). Empirical studies have shown that public service motivation positively and significantly affects job satisfaction (Ha et al., 2023; Saputra et al., 2020; Tu et al., 2024). In contrast, empirical studies have found public service motivation has no significant impact on job satisfaction (Idris & Hidayat, 2024; Priscilla et al., 2024; Wahyudi et al., 2023). Based on these findings, we propose the following hypotheses:

H4: Public service motivation has a positive impact on job satisfaction.

Autonomy

Autonomy refers to the degree of control employees have over their work tasks, pace, and decision-making within their roles (Demircioglu, 2018). Providing employees with greater autonomy enhances organizational performance, efficiency, and effectiveness while also boosting employee job satisfaction (Saragih, 2011). The need for autonomy is one of these fundamental psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Moreover, autonomy, as a vital organizational resource, fosters job satisfaction by enabling employees to make independent decisions and take ownership of their work (Wu & Zhou, 2020). Autonomy is not only a valuable goal, but it also leads to greater employee satisfaction and thriving, along with

additional benefits for organizational effectiveness (Deci et al., 2017). Empirical studies suggest that teacher autonomy involves the ability of teachers to exercise control over various aspects of their roles, including teaching methods, classroom decisions, school-wide policies, and working conditions (Kengatharan, 2020; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Somech, 2016). Furthermore, studies have shown that autonomy significantly and positively impacts job satisfaction (Demircioglu, 2018; Jing et al., 2021; Jong, 2016; Rizwan et al., 2014). In opposite empirical studies have found autonomy has no significant impact on job satisfaction (Arunika & Kottawatta, 2015; Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021a; Fuadiputra & Novianti, 2020). Based on these findings, we propose the following hypotheses:

H5: Autonomy has a positive impact on job satisfaction.

Competence

Competence refers to the ability to apply and develop skills, knowledge, and abilities while feeling valued and having opportunities for growth within the workplace (Demircioglu, 2018). When an organization provides employees with the autonomy to make decisions and fosters respect and appreciation, employees' sense of competence can strengthen their self-efficacy (Mustafa et al., 2019). These interconnected factors contribute to increased motivation and satisfaction (Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021b). Competence plays a critical role in helping organizations achieve job satisfaction and improve employee performance (Sabuhari et al., 2020). It is closely tied to the skills required to carry out primary duties and functions, directly contributing to job satisfaction (Hajiali et al., 2022). Previous research has shown that competence has a positive and significant impact on job satisfaction (Hajiali et al., 2022b; Olafsen et al., 2024). In opposite empirical studies have found competence has no significant impact on job satisfaction (Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021; Sharma, 2024; Zhang et al., 2022). Based on these findings, we propose the following hypotheses:

H6: Competence has a positive impact on job satisfaction.

Relatedness

Relatedness refers to the sense of connection and support that employees feel from colleagues, especially during challenging work situations (Demircioglu, 2018). In a school setting, for example, relatedness encompasses the relationships between teachers and administrators as well as between teachers and students. These interconnected relationships contribute to higher levels of motivation and satisfaction (Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021b). The satisfaction of the need for relatedness refers to the feeling of being connected to others, to caring for and being cared for by others as well as having a sense of belongingness in groups (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016). A measure of workplace relatedness could clarify whether social ties hinder or enhance workers' job satisfaction (Brunelle & Fortin, 2021). Previous research has demonstrated that relatedness positively impacts both individuals and organizations, including enhanced job satisfaction among employees (Gillet et al., 2013; Slep & Vella-Brodrick, 2014). In opposite empirical studies have found relatedness has no significant impact on job satisfaction (Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021a; Zhang et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2021). In conclusion, we followed hypotheses as follows:

H7: Relatedness has a positive impact on job satisfaction.

The Moderating Effect: Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support has been identified in numerous studies as a critical moderator in shaping employee outcomes. This concept refers to the extent to which

employees feel that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1990). Past research has consistently shown that perceived organizational support plays a pivotal role in influencing the strength and direction of relationships between various organizational factors and employee attitudes, including job satisfaction, commitment, and performance.

Organizational support plays a pivotal role in amplifying the satisfaction of these psychological needs at work (Eisenberger, 2011). For instance, regarding autonomy, organizational support fosters a culture of independence by reducing micromanagement and promoting self-directed decision-making (Macaspac, 2024).

In conclusion, the moderating role of perceived organizational support is critical for understanding how various organizational elements influence job satisfaction. The literature underscores its importance, highlighting that high organizational support can mitigate the negative effects of poor work conditions and enhance employee satisfaction and performance across various settings, particularly in the education sector. In conclusion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H8. The Positive effect Working environment on job satisfaction is stronger when perceived organizational support is high.

H9. The Positive effect Working conditions on job satisfaction is stronger when perceived organizational support is high.

10. The Positive effect Training on job satisfaction is stronger when perceived organizational support is high.

H11. The Positive effect public service motivation on job satisfaction is stronger when perceived organizational support is high.

H12. The Positive effect Autonomy on job satisfaction is stronger when perceived organizational support is high.

H13. The Positive effect Competence on job satisfaction is stronger when perceived organizational support is high.

H14. The Positive effect Relatedness on job satisfaction is stronger when perceived organizational support is high.

Methodology

In this study, data will be gathered through a structured quantitative survey conducted within Jordanian public schools. Using a purposive sampling approach, we will identify respondents who are most relevant to the research objectives, specifically focusing on individuals with insights into the educational environment. This method will allow for targeted, in-depth responses, enhancing the study's ability to capture and analyze the factors affecting educational dynamics within this context.

Contributions and Conclusions

Contributions

Theoretical Integration: This paper will offer a novel contribution by combining Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to build a more comprehensive framework for understanding job satisfaction. By integrating these theories, it aims to address both extrinsic factors, such as basic needs like financial security and workplace safety, and

intrinsic factors, including autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This integrated perspective will provide a dual approach to employee motivation, particularly relevant in the public-school sector.

Contextual Relevance: The research will focus on job satisfaction specifically within the context of Middle Eastern public schools, which are often overlooked in motivational studies. By concentrating on this setting, the study will aim to reveal insights into the unique cultural and economic factors that impact job satisfaction among educators in this region, thereby addressing an important gap in the literature.

Policy and Practice Implications: The paper will propose practical insights that policymakers, school administrators, and educational leaders can use to improve retention and job satisfaction in public schools. By highlighting the dual influence of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators, it will suggest balanced approaches that schools could incorporate into policies, fostering a supportive and motivating work environment.

Improving Retention: The study will emphasize how meeting educators' comprehensive needs can help reduce turnover rates in public schools. By addressing the connections between extrinsic and intrinsic needs and job satisfaction, the study will highlight pathways to greater job engagement, offering actionable insights to improve retention across the sector.

Conclusions

Dual Motivational Focus: This paper will argue that job satisfaction among educators can be enhanced through a balanced approach that includes both foundational needs and intrinsic motivators. By meeting these needs, public schools could foster higher job satisfaction levels and lower turnover rates, creating more stability within educational institutions.

Recommendations for Retention: It will conclude that addressing both types of needs could serve as a key strategy for reducing teachers' intention to leave. Establishing a secure environment to fulfill basic needs, coupled with intrinsic motivators that promote autonomy and professional growth, will be shown to enhance employee engagement and retention.

Implications for School Policy: The study will propose that school policies address both extrinsic incentives (such as working environment, working conditions, training and public service motivation) and intrinsic needs (including autonomy and development opportunities). Tailoring such policies within the unique Middle Eastern context, this study will suggest, may help schools optimize job satisfaction and retention.

Cultural and Systemic Considerations: Recognizing that the Middle Eastern public-school environment may differ culturally from other regions, this paper will highlight the importance of adapting motivational strategies to fit this specific context.

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