

Understanding Job Satisfaction among Special Education Integration Programme Teachers Using Herzberg Two-Factor Theory

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Abstract

This study investigates job satisfaction among Special Education Integration Programme (PPKI) teachers in Perak, Malaysia, using Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Employing a quantitative approach, data were collected from 240 PPKI teachers through questionnaires. Participants were selected using cluster sampling followed by simple random sampling. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to assess intrinsic and extrinsic factors in shaping job satisfaction. Results indicated a high level of satisfaction across both dimensions, suggesting that teachers feel appreciated, supported, and engaged in their roles. These findings offer valuable insights for the State Education Department, emphasizing the importance of teacher motivation and strategic initiatives at both school and departmental levels to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the education system.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Herzberg's Two-factor Theory, Special Education Teachers, Malaysia

Introduction

Job satisfaction is a critical factor influencing the performance, retention, and overall well-being of teachers. It encompasses an individual's emotional and cognitive evaluation of their job, including aspects such as work environment, compensation, professional relationships, and career development opportunities (Locke, 1976; Ali & Anwar, 2021). In the educational context, satisfied teachers are more likely to demonstrate commitment, creativity, and effectiveness in the classroom, which directly impacts student achievement and school performance (Jusoh et al, 2020; Ismail & Meran, 2021; Toropova et al., 2021). As teaching becomes increasingly complex due to evolving curriculum, administrative demands, and societal expectations, understanding the determinants of teacher job satisfaction is essential for sustaining a high-quality education system.

Numerous studies have explored the nature of job satisfaction among educators. Factors such as workload, leadership support, professional development, and interpersonal relationships have been identified as key influencers (Hassan, 2017; Hee et al., 2019; Abdullah et.al., 2021;

Kirimi et al., 2021 Tria, 2023). In Malaysia, recent research highlights moderate levels of job satisfaction among teachers, with concerns over promotion opportunities, work conditions, and stress levels (Hedzir et al., 2024). These findings suggest that while teachers remain committed to their roles, systemic challenges continue to affect their morale and performance.

Despite the recognized importance of teacher job satisfaction, many educators continue to face challenges that hinder their professional fulfillment. Reports of early retirements, high stress levels, and declining morale among Malaysian teachers indicate a growing concern (Hedzir et al., 2024). Factors such as excessive workload, limited career advancement, and lack of recognition contribute to dissatisfaction, which may lead to reduced teaching effectiveness and increased attrition. Moreover, the absence of a supportive school climate and inadequate empowerment mechanisms further worsen the issue.

Job satisfaction among special education teachers is a concern in the field of inclusive education, given the complex demands and emotions involved in teaching students with disabilities. In Malaysia, the role of special education teachers has become increasingly vital with the expansion of inclusive education policies such as the Zero Reject Policy (“KPM Tambah Guru Pendidikan Khas”, 2019). These educators are responsible in supporting students with diverse needs, including physical, cognitive, and emotional disabilities, often within mainstream school environments. Their responsibilities go beyond classroom instruction to include individualized education plans (IEPs), behavioral interventions, and collaboration with families and specialists. Studies have shown that job satisfaction among these teachers is influenced by factors such as administrative support, workload, recognition, and access to professional development (Mohd Nor et al., 2021; Mohamad Ashari & Velloo, 2024).

Excessive workloads, unclear role expectations, and limited resources contribute to stress and burnout (Pazim et al., 2021). Leadership practices within schools, particularly the competency and empathy of headmasters, play a significant role in shaping teachers’ experiences. When school leaders lack understanding of special education needs, teachers often feel undervalued and unsupported, which negatively affects their morale and performance (Norazmi et al., 2020). Additionally, extrinsic motivators such as salary and promotion opportunities are often cited as areas of dissatisfaction, despite high intrinsic motivation among these educators (Mohamad Ashari & Velloo, 2024).

The broader implications of job satisfaction in this context are profound. Satisfied special education teachers are more likely to remain in the profession, contribute positively to student development, and foster inclusive school cultures. Conversely, dissatisfaction can lead to absenteeism, attrition, and diminished teaching quality. As Malaysia continues to advance its inclusive education agenda, understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by special education teachers is essential for sustaining a motivated and effective workforce. Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory has frequently been applied to explain the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that contribute to teachers’ satisfaction (Hedzir et al., 2024; Mohamad Rokeman et al., 2024).

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory distinguishes between hygiene factors (which prevent dissatisfaction) and motivators (which promote satisfaction). Hygiene or extrinsic factors include salary, working conditions, and administrative policies, elements that, if inadequate, lead to dissatisfaction but don't necessarily motivate when present. Motivators or intrinsic, on the other hand, such as recognition, achievement, and personal growth, are intrinsic to the job and directly influence satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959; Robbins et al, 2020). In the context of education, this theory helps explain why teachers may feel disengaged even when basic employment conditions are met, true satisfaction stems from meaningful work and opportunities for development. Thus, it provides a valuable framework for understanding job satisfaction in Malaysia's education sector.

A study by Hee et al. (2019) found that new teachers in Malaysia often face unexpected challenges such as poor classroom conditions and limited autonomy, which can lead to early career dissatisfaction. Similarly, Leow et al. (2020) highlighted that teachers' satisfaction with student behavior and relationships with parents significantly predicted their mental wellbeing. These findings highlight the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in shaping job satisfaction. Applying Herzberg's theory, Malaysian schools and policymakers can better address the dual needs of teacher, by ensuring basic conditions are met while also cultivating a motivating and supportive professional environment.

Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted to understand job satisfaction among Special Education Integration Programme (PPKI) teachers in the state of Perak, Malaysia using Herzberg Two-Factor theory.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design. The sample consisted of 240 secondary school teachers involved in the PPKI across the state of Perak, Malaysia. The items measuring job satisfaction were adapted from Ibrahim and colleagues (2018) using 20 items, evaluated using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree). The job satisfaction scale was originally derived from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), developed by Weiss et al. (1967).

Descriptive statistics were used to answer the objectives. The mean scores were interpreted as follows. A formula was used that divided the maximum scale value of 7 by three categories, producing a class interval of 2.33. Table 1 displays the interpretation of the mean scores.

Table 1

Interpretation of Mean Scores

Levels	Range
Low	1.00 - 2.33
Moderate	2.34 - 4.66
High	4.67 - 7.00

Results

Table 2

Shows the demographic profile of the respondents.

Demographic Profile		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	43	17.9
	Female	197	82.1
Age	21-30 years old	27	11.3
	31-40 years old	122	50.8
	41-50 years old	66	27.5
	51-60 years old	25	10.5
Ethnic	Malay	198	82.5
	Chinese	11	4.8
	Indian	30	12.5
	Sikh	1	0.4
Education profile	Diploma	8	3.3
	Bachelor degree	196	81.7
	Masters	35	14.6
	PhD	1	0.4
Years of service	1- 10 years	81	33.7
	11-20 years	109	45.4
	21 -30 years	44	18.4
	31 years and above	6	2.5

The results presented below are based on based on Weis et.al's (1967) classification of intrinsic and extrinsic factors as well as findings from previous studies (Amin et al, 2021; Mohamad Rokeman et al, 2024). The results for intrinsic factors are presented in Table 3.

The results for intrinsic job satisfaction factors in this study reflect how meaningful and personally fulfilling the work is to teachers. High-scoring items such as the opportunity to help others (M=5.90), utilize abilities (M=5.82) and experience a sense of accomplishment (M=5.65) indicate that employees feel a strong sense of purpose and alignment with their values through their roles. The ability to make judgments (M=5.54) and try new methods (M=5.64), suggests that autonomy is well-supported within the job. These aspects promote inner motivation, creativity, and personal ownership of work. However, the relatively lower score on working alone (M=4.77) implies that while individual independence is valuable, collaboration may be more motivating among teachers. Overall, intrinsic factors reveal that teachers find their work engaging, impactful, and supportive of personal development.

Table 3

Intrinsic factors

Item	Mean	SD	Levels
This job is able to keep me busy all the time	5.50	1.173	High
Opportunity to work alone	4.77	1.449	High
Opportunity to do different things from time to time	5.34	1.258	High
Opportunity to be "somebody" in the organizational community	5.35	1.203	High
Being able to do something that doesn't go against my instincts	5.42	1.302	High
Opportunity to do something for others	5.90	1.041	High
Opportunity to tell others what to do	5.43	1.245	High
Opportunity to do something that utilizes my abilities	5.82	1.057	High
Freedom to use my own judgment	5.54	1.142	High
Opportunity to try my own methods in doing work	5.64	1.139	High
The sense of accomplishment I gain from work	5.65	1.130	High

The results for extrinsic factors are presented in Table 4. The highest-rated item such as salary (M=5.94) , job stability (M=5.90), and colleague interactions (M=5.73) demonstrate that teachers perceive strong organizational support and adequate compensation, which enhance their motivation. Effective leadership (M=5.42), favorable working conditions (M=5.66) , and clear policy implementation (M=5.50) also contribute positively to overall satisfaction. These factors suggest that teachers operate in a stable, fair, and well-managed environment, which complements their internal motivations. The consistency of high scores across extrinsic elements highlights that the organization successfully provides the necessary structure, rewards, and social dynamics that reinforce teacher commitment and morale.

Table 4

Extrinsic factors

Item	Mean	SD	Levels
The way superiors handle their staff	5.27	1.278	High
The efficiency of the principal and school management in decision-making	5.42	1.302	High
This job provides stability	5.90	0.921	High
How organizational policies are implemented	5.50	1.202	High
My salary/pay and the amount of work I do	5.94	1.185	High
Opportunity to achieve career advancement in this job	5.79	1.121	High
Working conditions	5.66	1.176	High
The way my colleagues interact with one another	5.73	1.116	High
The praise I receive for doing a good job	5.36	1.374	High

The results suggest a well-balanced and generally positive job satisfaction, with both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Overall, the result reveals a motivated workforce with strong alignment between individual purpose and organizational support.

Discussions

The findings of this study reveal a high level of job satisfaction among Malaysian PPKI teachers. Intrinsic motivators such as the opportunity to help others, utilize personal abilities, and experience a sense of accomplishment had high scores, aligning with Herzberg's motivator category and reinforcing the importance of meaningful work (Herzberg, 1959; Hedzir et al., 2024). These results are consistent with Mohamad Ashari and Velloo (2024), who found that intrinsic motivation remains strong among special education teachers despite external challenges. The ability to exercise judgment and apply personal methods further supports autonomy and creativity, which are essential for sustaining engagement in emotionally demanding roles. However, the relatively lower score for working alone suggests that collaborative environments are more valued, aligning the findings by Leow et al. (2020) that interpersonal relationships significantly influence teacher well-being.

Extrinsic factors such as salary, job stability, and peer relationships also recorded high ratings, indicating that hygiene elements are well-managed within the Malaysian special education context. These findings support Herzberg's assertion that while extrinsic factors do not directly motivate, their absence can lead to dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1959). The high satisfaction with leadership and policy implementation reflects effective administrative support, which has been identified as a key determinant of teacher morale (Mohd Nor et al., 2021; Norazmi et al., 2020). However, previous studies have highlighted ongoing concerns regarding promotion opportunities and workload (Hedzir et al., 2024; Pazim et al., 2021), suggesting that while current conditions are favorable, systemic improvements are still needed to address long-term retention and burnout risks. Overall, the results affirm that a balanced approach to intrinsic and extrinsic motivators is essential for sustaining teacher satisfaction in Malaysia's inclusive education landscape.

Recommendations and Future Directions

Based on current findings, Malaysian education authorities and school leaders should continue investing in both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. Initiatives that promote professional autonomy, skill development, and meaningful student engagement can further enhance intrinsic satisfaction. At the same time, maintaining transparent communication, equitable compensation, and strong leadership practices will reinforce extrinsic support. Special attention should be given to fostering collaborative environments, as the result suggests that teamwork and peer interaction are especially motivating for PPKI teachers in Malaysia.

Future research should explore how intrinsic and extrinsic motivators vary across different regions such as urban versus rural schools or government versus private schools. Including qualitative methods like interviews or focus groups could provide deeper insights into the emotional and psychological dimensions of job satisfaction, especially in relation to the unique challenges faced by PPKI teachers. Additionally, longitudinal studies could track how motivation evolves over time, particularly in response to policy changes or professional development initiatives.

Conclusion

In summary, the study demonstrates that job satisfaction among Malaysian PPKI teachers is driven by a dynamic combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. High scores across both dimensions reflect that educators feel valued, supported, and engaged in their work. This dual strength suggests that the Malaysian special education system is successfully cultivating both personal fulfillment and organizational stability, key ingredients for long-term motivation and professional resilience.

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding on job satisfaction by reaffirming Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory within the context of Malaysian special education settings. By integrating both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions, the findings demonstrate that PPKI teachers experience high satisfaction through a blend of personal fulfillment and systemic support. The study enriches the understanding of motivational constructs among educators working with students with special needs. Contextually, this research provides valuable insights into the unique dynamics of inclusive education in Malaysia, a rapidly evolving area marked by increasing policy emphasis and societal recognition. It highlights how localized factors, such as collaborative practices, leadership efficiency, and culturally embedded professional values, shape teacher satisfaction, offering practical guidance for educational reform and future research in Malaysia contexts.

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