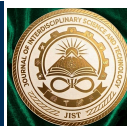


Research Article



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Teachers' Motivation and Job Satisfaction for Quality Education at Secondary Schools of South Gondar Zone, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the motivation and job satisfaction of secondary school teachers. Specifically, it was designed to evaluate teachers' motivation and job satisfaction in their profession. Convergent mixed method with qualitative and quantitative approaches was employed. Quantitative data were collected from 222 teachers via multistage sampling, utilizing a questionnaire adapted from Spector's (1985) Job Satisfaction Survey. Qualitative data were collected from 10 purposively selected teachers through semi-structured interviews and FGD. The data were analyzed quantitatively using a one-sample t-test. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically using description and narration. A one-sample t-test revealed that the level of secondary school teachers' was significantly lower than the expected theoretical mean of 3.0 ($MD = 1.28$, $df (221)$, $t = -16.295$, at $p < .001$). The results revealed that failure in motivation and job satisfaction was a significant hindrance to quality education. They were demotivated due to insufficient salary and fringe benefits, administrative challenges, and lack of students' active participation. The findings of this study have important implications for having empirical evidence regarding teachers' motivation and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Quality education; motivation and job satisfaction; secondary school teachers, South Gondar Zone

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Job satisfaction (JS) of an employee can be manifested with an emotional, affective response to a job or certain components of it [1]. Accordingly, Madigan and Kim [2] note JS is a joyful or pleasant emotional state that results from analyzing one's work experience. JS is a complex set of variables governed to a large extent by the perception and motivation of the employees. This implies an employee may honestly declare that they are satisfied with their employment when a variety of psychological, physiological, and environmental needs are fulfilled[3].

Employee job motivation and satisfaction has a significant contribution for better performance in the tasks of the employee. Mgaiwa [4] notes that motivation and JS are critical for better work performance, reduced turnover intention, enhanced organizational commitment, and decreased job burnout. The quality of education depends upon the competence, dedication and quality of school teachers' effectiveness. Research has shown that a reliance on curriculum standards and statewide assessment strategies without paying due attention to teachers' job satisfaction appears to be insufficient to gain the improvements in student outcomes [5]. She emphasized that the quality of teacher education and teaching appears to be more strongly related to student achievement. Teacher education can improve the situation of dissatisfaction with outcomes and the education system. The "what" of knowledge about students and curriculum as well as the "how" of teacher education such as close analyses of learning and teaching, case methods, performance assessments, action research, and 21st century skills makes teachers' job satisfaction decisive [5], [6].

Despite the contribution of teachers' job satisfaction to teachers' competency in student-centered learning methodologies, the problem-based approach of the 21st century skills, interdisciplinary activities, problem solving, reflective practice, imaginative learning, problem based learning, teachers' satisfaction have been

problematic [5]. In the Ethiopian Context, teachers need job satisfaction to ensure the expected competencies for the implementation of appropriate teaching methods, ongoing student support and utilize continuous assessment techniques [7], [8]. Sintayehu and Hussien [9] found that the teacher is facing challenges related to substandard living conditions, increased living expenses, inadequate monthly salary and housing allowance, and a dearth of opportunities for career advancement. Chattopadhyay [10] identified low motivation, poor working conditions, inadequate leadership, a lack of resources, and insufficient compensation as critical challenges driving academic staff turnover. These systemic issues directly undermine teacher satisfaction, which Spector [11] notes is the decisive factor in whether employees choose to remain in or depart an organization.

The aforementioned studies prompted the researchers to examine the teacher job satisfaction and its associated factors in the secondary schools of South Gondar, Ethiopia. This research aims to determine the status of teachers' job satisfaction (TJS) and the associated factors influencing their job. The existing researches often focus on isolated aspects without addressing the aggregated empirical evidence on teachers' job satisfaction in South Gondar Zone's secondary schools. In this regard, the researchers' preliminary observations that dissatisfied teachers were working in schools which have an adverse effect for effective teaching with advanced skills in assessment, student management, and contemporary teaching methodology. Therefore, this study aims to address the following research questions

What is the level of job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in the South Gondar Zone of Ethiopia?

What are the major challenges that deter teachers' job satisfaction at secondary schools of South Gondar zone, Ethiopia?

2 Methods

2.1 Research Approach and Design

To achieve the objectives of the study, both quantitative and qualitative research approaches were employed. The design for this study was mixed, with qualitative approaches embedded in the quantitative parts. This approach helps to complement the two approaches and is essential to collect data at a time than the explanatory or exploratory mixed sequential methods of inquiry [12]. However, to treat some of the objectives, a convergent parallel mixed design was employed. According to Creswell [13], convergent parallel mixed methods is a form of mixed methods design in which the researcher converges or merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. In this method, the researcher typically collected both forms of data at roughly the same time and then integrated the information in the interpretation of the overall results. Therefore, a side-by-side comparison approach was used in which the researcher first reported the quantitative statistical result and then discussed the qualitative findings either to confirm or disconfirm the statistical results at the level of data analysis.

2.2 Sampling and Sample Size Determination

In this study a multi-stage sampling technique was employed. Nine out of 63 secondary schools (14.3%) were selected via simple random sampling to ensure representativeness. Teachers were sampled with simple random sampling techniques from the nine schools.

From a total population of 1,186 secondary school teachers, a sample size of 290 was calculated using Yamane's [14] formula for finite populations at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error ($e = 0.05$). Accounting for a 10% non-response contingency (29 teachers), the final targeted sample was 319. Ultimately, 222 teachers completed and returned the survey, yielding a response rate of 70%. While a 70% response rate ($n = 222$) is methodologically sound [15], it is particularly robust given severe data collection constraints. Localized conflict and security issues frequently disrupted access to sample schools, while heavy

workloads and low institutional incentives brought weak interest for research among teachers. Ten teachers for interview and FGD were selected purposively with consultation of the principals. The selection was to ensure a mix of gender and teaching experience. This will foster discussion and reveal shared norms and challenges.

2.3 . Data Gathering Tools and Procedures

The study used open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires. The questionnaire was adapted from Spector's Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) [16]. Hence, the modified structured, five-point Likert-scale surveys were used to assess teachers' motivation and job satisfaction. Semi-structured interviews and FGD were used with teachers. Before administering the instruments, each group of items was prepared by the researchers, and validation was done by professionals. Items to measure some of the objectives were obtained from standard tools that were adapted to the Ethiopian context. Instruments that measure objectives were piloted a secondary school not selected as sample with 27 respondents to ensure reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.7$). A focus group discussion on the existing problems in the teachers' job satisfaction was also made to get firsthand, more brief and inclusive information. As a result, it was possible to comment that each item would be relevant to get basic information about the objectives of the study.

2.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using a mixed-methods approach. The qualitative analysis obtained from interviews and focus group discussion (FGD) data underwent thematic analysis to identify recurring themes (e.g., resource scarcity, pedagogical challenges). Findings were presented via thematic narration and triangulated to ensure validity. Quantitative analysis was used descriptive statistics alongside an inferential one-sample t-test to evaluate teachers' job satisfaction levels.

2.5 Validity and Reliability of the Study

Regardless of the disciplines and methodologies used, the study's validity and reliability are essential to all research. The information gathered ought to be true, genuine, and representative of the world. According to Mazibuko [17], researchers want their work to be legitimate regardless of its format or goal.

According to Johnson and Christensen [18] qualitative validity refers to trustworthiness. Specifically, how accurately a researcher's account represents the participants' realities and perspectives. The degree to which the researcher and participants can both understand the interpretations and concepts is what McMillan and Schumacher [19] define as the validity of qualitative designs; the researcher and participants should be able to agree on how to describe and interpret certain experiences. The consistency of the researcher's interaction approach, data collection, data processing, and interpretation of participant meanings from the data are all considered aspects of reliability in qualitative research [19]. According to Creswell [13], combining several data types improves validity and reliability since the advantages of one strategy might offset the disadvantages of another.

As a result, the researchers tried using a variety of data types. The dependability of this study was thus demonstrated using both closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires, followed by semi-structured interviews and FGD, and cross-verifying responses by replication across multiple schools.

2.6 Confidentiality and Ethical Consideration

To ensure confidentiality throughout the process, the respondents were identified through numbers and letters; what they discussed was not told to anyone else. The interview took place in a private, quiet room away from any other professionals within the school setting. Once the data had been collected from the interview, it was transferred onto a computer and immediately the data became confidential by using numbers and letters to identify each individual, as well as all the documents.

With regard to the required ethics, there were

many ethical issues that needed to be taken into consideration, including informed consent, the welfare, protection and privacy of the participants. Although this research did not involve any intervention that appears to impact the respondents directly, the research needs to be prepared for any emotional consequences such as anxiety or distress. Therefore, participants were fully informed that their participation in the study was voluntary. Another ethical consideration in interview studies is that the aspects of good interviewing such as building trust and rapport might be the factors that make it hard for participants to refuse or to withdraw [20]. In this regard, the researchers utilized process consent by verbally reaffirming the voluntary nature of the study at multiple intervals. As a guarantee for absolute anonymity and reduce pressure on participants, raw data and transcripts were organized using unique alphanumeric codes (e.g., T1-T10 for Teacher 1).

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Features of Respondents

Participants in the study comprised teachers of secondary schools. Age, sex, level of education and overall work experience were the demographic characteristics that were drawn as background information of the respondent. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and FGDs. A total of 222 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. As an additional source of information for the study, key informant teachers were interviewed because they had firsthand knowledge of the teaching-learning process. All teachers have a BEd or BSc degree or higher and have expertise in their roles.

3.2 Teachers Motivation and Job Satisfaction

This part of the study investigated the status of South Gondar Zone secondary school teachers' motivation and job satisfaction, i.e., their incentives and fringe benefits, training and promotion opportunities, professional interest in the workplace, supervision and support, and the recognition obtained from

Table 1. One-sample test on teachers' job satisfaction

Item	t	df	Sig.	Mean Diff.	Lower	Upper
					Lower	Upper
I am satisfied with opportunities for workshops within and outside the school.	-12.385	221	.000	.725	-.84	-.61
I feel comfortable with my future income.	-19.268	221	.000	1.464	-1.61	-1.31
I feel fairly paid by my employer.	-21.941	221	.000	1.514	-1.65	-1.38
I am satisfied with the in-service training opportunity	-18.808	221	.000	1.410	-1.56	-1.26
I feel satisfied with training and professional development	-17.848	220	.000	1.389	-1.54	-1.24
I am comfortable with the promotion opportunity available to me	-16.919	221	.000	1.360	-1.52	-1.20
Teaching is an interesting job to me	-9.177	221	.000	.986	-1.20	-.77
I enjoy much freedom in my place of work.	-13.976	221	.000	1.252	-1.43	-1.08
I feel comfortable with the rewards I get for doing a good job in the school.	-17.892	221	.000	1.392	-1.55	-1.24
Teaching provides me with opportunity to use all my skills.	-11.960	221	.000	1.135	-1.32	-.95
I am not intending to look for another well-paying job in another school	-21.205	221	.000	1.500	-1.64	-1.36
I am not intending to change my profession.	-17.429	221	.000	1.392	-1.55	-1.23
I am happy with cooperation I receive from school management team.	-13.507	221	.000	1.185	-1.36	-1.01
I am satisfied with care I receive from my immediate supervisor(s).	-16.463	221	.000	1.302	-1.46	-1.15
I am satisfied with autonomy I have in making decisions about my daily tasks	-14.285	221	.000	1.216	-1.38	-1.05
I feel satisfied with the recognition I have in the community.	-17.995	221	.000	1.374	-1.52	-1.22
I am happy with the appreciations I get for the contribution I make in the school.	-15.968	221	.000	1.284	-1.44	-1.13
Total Teachers' Motivation and Job Satisfaction	-16.295	221	.000	1.287	-1.45	-1.13

Test value = 3.

The observed mean deviates from the expected mean at a significant level of difference. It reveals a low level of secondary school teachers' motivation and job satisfaction in the corresponding subscale. Accordingly, the result of one sample t-test in Table 1 indicated that the level of secondary school teachers (MD = -1.28) indicated a lower mean than the expected mean (3.0), with a 1.00–1.79 (very poor) interpretive guide range ($t = -16.295$, $df = 221$, $P > .000$).

Qualitative data from the FGD and interview confirmed that teachers' job satisfaction is in a deteriorating situation. For example, a participant in Focus Group Discussion 1 (FGD1) highlighted their professional dedication, stating, "We are in the profession because our success depends on our students' improvement and success. Our beneficiaries employed in any sector are our motivators. It is one of the reasons that I stay in the profession, which motivates me in my daily work." This sentiment was reinforced by a participant in FGD2, who emphasized the foundational importance of the role, noting that "teachers are the primary drivers for achieving quality education." Thinking about quality is a simple talk now, in the situation of teachers out of the system with strong problems to lead their families. The issue of survival is a day-to-day concern for teachers. T4 also elaborated, "We believe that teaching is the top of the profession, the mother of all the professions. As in the teaching profession,

there is no more imposition by the government; the freedom makes me want to be in the profession. But this is overshadowed by lack of salary and lack of fringe benefits. Some of the teachers' salary is taken by institutions without their consent, and there is no per diem for teachers. Due to inadequate salaries and a lack of fringe benefits, teachers are increasingly forced to work informal private enterprises to survive, a shift that severely undermines the professionalization of teaching. Emphasizing this economic strain, T3 noted that educators must engage in diverse income-generating tasks to sustain their livelihoods, including moonlighting at private institutions, driving vehicles, managing shops, and participating in agricultural activities. To capture the broader systemic impact of this economic hardship, T3 recalled the issue in a metaphor from a Zambian writer: "In my country, Zambia, before a time, goods were in the basket and money was in the pocket, but today goods are in the pocket and money is in the basket." This perfectly mirrors the realities of Ethiopian educators today, illustrating how severe inflation and eroded purchasing power have forced professionals to abandon undivided focus on their classrooms simply to survive.

Teachers face a profound lack of respect and recognition from the community, a systemic issue exacerbated by inadequate education advocacy (T4, T5). Reflecting on this shifting societal attitude, T3 noted that until recently, they deeply valued the

profession. However, due to the current erosion of prestige, T3 expressed an intention to exit the field, stating, “I liked the profession, but now there is no respect. As of this time, I dislike it, and I am ready to leave my job.” This sentiment reflects a broader reality where educators feel disrespected by both students and communities, leading teachers to observe a growing de-schooling tendency within the education system. There is a strong tendency of teachers that limits the implementation of their tasks appropriately. But the problem associated with the profession is lack of no consideration of teachers by the government. Reflecting on this loss of societal prestige, one participant shared their internal conflict, stating, “Before a time when others saw teaching as a low-status profession, I opposed that view; but now, I am revolted to turn back to the view of my colleagues. I want to leave within a few minutes if I get a new and well-paid job.” This individual frustration aligns with broader structural breakdowns in the classroom environment. As participants in FGD2 collectively observed, “The teacher-student relationship is a big concern; the current relationship is discouraging, and students are very aggressive towards their teachers.” In all aspects of weak respect for the profession, a participant, who was a former member of the teachers’ association, explained that this profession has been in a disrespectful trend:

“In my view, the value of education is on the brink of collapse. I have been in the teaching profession for the last 27 years; in my stay in the teaching profession, I liked it very much, but now I am in this profession for my daily subsistence. I do not want to prepare, and I have no moral to teach. I want to advise my students not to be involved in this profession. I stay in this profession only for the salary; I don’t want further study and preparation. Hence, I want to choose a lower grade level, which doesn’t require further preparation. We are employing teaching methods that we experienced 20 years back, as we are not fit for technology and even teachers are devoid of smartphones.” (T4).

Another challenge is lack of hope for professional development; both the in-service and pre-

service training opportunities that previously existed are no longer available. There is a limited awareness of innovation and technology competency in education (FGD1).

The limited attention and support have been a common practice for secondary school teachers. There is a lack of attention from the community and the government. No more parental involvement; the attention of the community is the reflection of the government. Members at FGD3 explained that one of the education quality failures has been associated with the interference of political ideology on school teaching and learning, which has been exemplified by the fact that 1 to 5 political network-based groupings as a teaching and learning strategy in school was a recent history. The school principal and supervisors have been politicians, as there is a big gap in the education quality. As far as educational program experts are concerned, they are not ready to revise and participate in curriculum evaluation. They are not ready to provide academic support in the form of training and clinical supervision. Secondary schools under the eye of district officials are an island. They are not in a position to evaluate the top-down policy implementation in secondary school teachers. District education officers are nominal, not in a position to support our schools with supplies, and not even there to perform simple tasks like teachers’ distribution. There are occasions when teachers are over-saturated in some schools and in short supply in other schools (T1, T7). Others also explained that high schools are like islands; there are difficulties in making relations between experts and teachers, and the experts themselves seem inferior. They come and return without support, and supervisors and directors are no exception to this; they are serving as information bridges but not as supporters (T5).

4 Discussion

The t-test result of Table 1 confirmed that the teachers from the selected secondary schools perceived that the failure in motivation and job satisfaction was a significant hindrance to quality education in the study area. The qualitative findings also indicated that the motivation and job satisfaction of

teachers were not promising enough to engage them in the desired competence to bring quality education adequately. Their salaries are insufficient to cover basic living expenses, such as housing, food, and their children's educational costs. In many cases, teachers struggle to afford necessities like bread, highlighting the dire economic conditions they face. This financial strain forces many educators to seek additional sources of income, diverting their time and energy from teaching and lesson preparation. As a result, the quality of education suffers, as teachers are preoccupied with personal survival rather than professional excellence. The teaching professions in secondary schools suffer from systemic neglect. Unlike other professions that offer opportunities for advancement and financial stability, teaching is often seen as a dead-end career with little recognition or reward. They were also affected by administrative challenges such as a lack of leadership commitment and follow-up, and a lack of trust between the teaching staff and management bodies. Moreover, the demand side demotivated teachers in their profession. According to the respondents, the classroom dynamic is severely affected by a lack of student engagement, as learners are involved in aggressive teacher-student relationship which limits active participation in the instructional process.

The result of this study indicated that the lack of motivation and job satisfaction of teachers was one of the significant barriers to improving teachers' competencies, which in turn affects the quality of education.

This weak status of teachers' motivation and job satisfaction was also raised by organizations and scholars in the area [2], [21], [22]. By considering interest as an important determinant of teachers as key stakeholders in quality education quality education key stakeholders, the EU (European Commission) calls attention to the need for recognition and adequate pay for teachers. The commission explained that interest and commitment are key factors for supporting a sustainable implementation of teachers' competence. The study indicated the idea of Pinar [22]. For him, the failure in the job satisfaction level of teachers reduces their commit-

ment to the advancement of the field through the teaching of the desired competencies. Finally, this study confirmed that secondary school teachers lack important issues that facilitate their motivation and job satisfaction. They lack training and promotion opportunities, professional interest at work, retention mechanisms on the job, positive relations with stakeholders, supervision, and recognition given to the profession by the community. The result of this study is consistent with research findings conducted in the Ethiopian context by Mohammed et al. [23], which confirmed that pay is a factor for academicians' low job satisfaction. A similar result was found by Guoba et al. [24] for secondary school teachers. All these have been challenges in the process of improving teachers' competencies [25], [26], [27], [28], [29].

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Teachers are the backbone of any education system, yet they face significant challenges that undermine their ability to deliver quality education. Low salaries, economic hardships, and a lack of recognition and professional support have led to widespread disillusionment among educators, further exacerbating the region's educational crisis. The lack of professional motivation and job satisfaction may lead to a proclivity to leave their jobs, a lack of cooperation with their academic colleagues, and a failure to advance the academic professionalism track. The quality of education suffers, as teachers are preoccupied with personal survival rather than professional excellence. Teaching is often seen as a dead-end career with little recognition or rewards which, demoralizes teachers. The plight of teachers in the secondary schools of the study area has broader implications for society. When teachers are undervalued and unsupported, the quality of education declines. This will affect the development of future generations negatively. Students miss out on the mentorship and inspiration that dedicated teachers provide, limiting their potential to contribute to social and economic progress.

5.2 Recommendations

Addressing the issues of teachers' motivation and job satisfaction requires a comprehensive approach, including increasing teacher salaries, incentive, and fringe benefits that must be emancipator to them as moral beings. Providing professional development opportunities, giving recognition, and creating a supportive work environment recognize the critical role of teachers. The holistic intervention also includes fostering ethical behavior among students, depoliticizing education policy, and prioritizing teacher welfare. The support provided by education experts and supervisors to teachers should include academic training and coaching. Their support should not be a mechanical and simple support. By investing in these areas, the Amhara region can rebuild its education system, empowering students and teachers to contribute to a brighter, more prosperous future

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