



Critical Analysis of Job Satisfaction among Special Education Consultants, Trainers and Teachers: Evidence from Province of Sindh

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Abstract

A study sought to evaluate the characteristics that influence work satisfaction among special education teachers, consultant and trainers. The survey included 323 full-time teachers and 207 professionals employed in special education institutions in Karachi, Sindh. Working in special schools, connections with colleagues, job stability, pupil-professional ratio, accomplishment, principal support, and working-class reputation were all factors that influenced job satisfaction. Special allowances, physical amenities, resource acquisition, pay, and prospects for advancement were all factors that contributed to work unhappiness. Competitive compensation, equal advancement chances, positive connections with coworkers, supportive supervisors, and participation in decision-making are all strategies for increasing workplace satisfaction. This investigation utilized a descriptive survey plan, a cost-effective method for collecting large amounts of data from a large population. The research data was analyzed using descriptive statistics like percentages, means, and frequency distribution tables to present the findings. The study reveals a correlation between workload, work environment, organizational support, and job satisfaction in professionals and teachers working with special needs students. Organizational support significantly predicts job satisfaction. However, research on Pakistan's impact is limited. Recommendations included improving working conditions, recognizing and promoting employees appropriately, and offering suitable teaching and learning materials from diverse stakeholders.

Key words: Job satisfaction, Special education teachers, Consultant, Trainers, Therapists, Special education needs, Leadership



Introduction

The growing number of school-aged children, particularly those in need of special education services, is primarily due to social, medical, and economic changes, with the need for well-trained professionals less likely to be satisfied (Adigun, 2020; Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996). The expanding number of pupils eligible for special education services, as well as the ongoing difficulty in finding competent individuals, is driving up demand for special education professionals.

Researching work satisfaction is challenging for special education staff, who often have mixed feelings about their job satisfaction and motivation, especially when working with exceptional students. This is largely due to the various roles they perform and the impact they have on their job satisfaction and motivation.

Academics have long studied job happiness in industrial and educational contexts to prove that contented individuals perform better. However, there is controversy about whether job happiness leads to productivity or vice versa (Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985; Satuf, Monteiro, Pereira, Esgalhado, Marina Afonso & Loureiro, 2018; Kosasih & Basit, 2019; Nierenberg, Alexakis, Preziosi, & O'Neill, 2017). Hoppock first introduced the concept of job satisfaction in 1935, combining psychological, physiological, and environmental elements.

Efficiency in the workplace necessitates favorable settings, and Special Needs Educators should be supplied with an enabling atmosphere in order to perform and generate desired results (Williams, 2004). This setting should be advantageous to their job satisfaction and productivity, as Williams contends that efficient work necessitates attractive working conditions. As a result, creating a conducive environment and working circumstances is critical for Special Needs Educators' happiness and success. Dissatisfied special education professionals experience low morale, poor performance, increased bonus values, dissatisfaction with school administration, high staff turnover, and chronic shortages. Due to insufficient resources and poor working conditions, this problem is especially prevalent in urban schools with high poverty rates (Darling Hammond, L. & Young, P. 2000).

Special education teachers are qualified to teach students with disabilities, who have diverse skills, ages, learning styles, and personalities. These students may have cognitive, physical, sensory, chronic health, multiple, or behavioral issues (Hillel Lavian, 2015). Basic curriculum



coursework and student teaching experiences don't fully prepare educators for these unique challenges. Special education teachers work in various educational settings; such as resource rooms, self-contained classrooms, private schools, residential schools, public schools, and general education courses (Wasburn-Moses, 2005). They face diverse norms, expectations, and obstacles, requiring adaptability and assistance from colleagues (Shepherd, Fowler, McCormick, Wilson & Morgan, 2016).

Job satisfaction directly impacts teaching intent, but stress can lead to burnout, skill improvement, or termination (Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Lopez, 2018). Shortages, high turnover rates, and increasing demands on special educators highlight the importance of finding, training, and retaining skilled workers, a serious concern for both public and private school systems (Ababneh, 2020; Platt & Olson, 1990).

Literature Review

Research on the factors influencing and limiting the retention of special education practitioners has revealed that external factors like sociological, economic, or institutional variables, job elements like teacher credentials and training, and personal factors like family requirements and demography all contribute to high retention rates among special educators (Billingsley 1993). Brownell and Smith made more thorough attempts in 1992. They identified five elements that affect teacher preparation quality: historical impacts, teacher characteristics, workplace setting, federal/state/district policy considerations, and external influences.

Ali (2021) highlighted that work satisfaction among special educators is crucial, as attrition can result from various factors, including work discontent. Dissatisfaction can lead to teachers leaving, while job commitment is linked to satisfaction, as a satisfied teacher is more dedicated and likely to stay in their current position. The findings of the research conducted by Robinson, Bridges, Rollins & Schumacker, (2019) shows that external, employment, and personal factors influence work satisfaction among special educators. Factors such as the economy, institutions, and communities influence attrition and retention. Workload, training, administrative assistance, position ambiguity, student characteristics, and colleagues contribute to teacher burnout.

According to Yavuz (2018), various factors, including career dedication, leadership support, and working conditions, have a significant impact on teacher career decisions. He went on to note



that personal factors such as life events, family move, and childcare requirements all have an impact on teacher attrition and retention. Robinson, Bridges, Rollins, and Schumacker (2019) focused on teacher burnout, arguing that stress impacts job satisfaction, retention, and attrition. Special educators, particularly those who teach children with behavioral problems, face difficulties in attracting and retaining teachers due to the demands of their jobs. More study is needed to better understand the factors impacting career choices and work satisfaction in this profession.

Over the past few decades, teachers' roles have evolved, resulting in less time for direct instruction. To meet individual learners' needs and fulfill these expanded duties, additional support is needed. Pickett, Vasa & Steckelberg (1993) and Hughes & Valle-Riestra (2008) assert that, supplemental resources have been sought, including the employment of professionals, trained in specific fields like medicine, training or therapies. Research shows that inclusion, where special education students are placed in regular classes with professionals providing assistance, is a widely used approach in special education programs, with professionals continuing to provide greater support in the normal classroom (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Rebelowski, 2003).

Professionals are increasingly playing a crucial role in special education, providing personalized therapies, assistance, design sports and physical program, behavior management, hygiene education, health care, and managing administrative chores. Their growth has led to a more comprehensive approach to teaching, addressing students' health issues and executing administrative tasks (Blalock, 1991; Rubin & Long, 1994; Naghavi, 2019, Brown & Stanton-Chapman, 2017).

Shaukat, Vishnumolakala, and Al Bustami (2019) found that the self-efficacy views and work satisfaction of special education teachers in Pakistan are significantly influenced by factors such as gender, age, academic education, and teaching experience. Female teachers reported higher levels of job satisfaction and self-efficacy when working with diverse student populations. But there was no discernible link found between job satisfaction and self-efficacy. In particular, for children with disabilities, the study recommends professional development programs for teachers to increase their sense of self-efficacy and job satisfaction.



Research Methodology

Research Design

The study focused on variables such as salary, benefits, working conditions, job security, supervision, policies, management, interpersonal relationships, achievements, promotion, recognition, job responsibility, and job satisfaction strategies. The quantitative research technique uses representational numerical data and a deductive approach to investigate levels of work satisfaction in a sample of special education workers working in solely special education facilities. The study was carried out using a stratified purposeful sampling approach to provide a representative sample of the entire population.

Study Site

The research focuses on special education institutions in Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan; which offer a wide range of services to students with disabilities. These services included academic programs, rehabilitation units, and training facilities. The study comprised 323 full-time special education teachers (61%) and 207 paraprofessionals (39%), who provided a comprehensive approach to aiding students with special educational needs. These institutes provide evaluations, educational programs, counseling, home programs, referral services, treatment, therapy, extracurricular activities, and pre-professional training.

Research Instrument

The study aimed to assess job satisfaction among multidisciplinary team members, including teachers, consultants, trainers, and therapists, using a questionnaire based on work adaptation theory. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: demographic information, variables influencing job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and techniques for increasing job satisfaction. The first section included ten demographic elements, while the second section examined variables influencing job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, including work factors, professional responsibility, work environment, recognition, supervision, and job security. The third section focused on strategies for enhancing job satisfaction and their influence. Specific scales were used to measure various aspects of job satisfaction, including intrinsic, extrinsic, and general satisfaction, with scores assigned to response options on a five-point Likert-type scale.



Pilot Study

A questionnaire was piloted in five special schools to ensure that it used plain language and included suitable items. The researcher verified the instrument by looking at how the studied variables were represented and assessing test items. The instrument's reliability was measured using a test-retest method which was reported as 0.82.

Data Analysis

The study examined participants' responses to work satisfaction indicators using descriptive statistics and the chi-square test. The mean scores on the 5-point Likert Scale were interpreted using the following criteria: levels less than 1.5 (very low), 1.5–2.5 (low), 2.5–3.5 (moderate), 3.5–4.5 (high), and 4.5–5.0 (very high).

Ethical Consideration

Principals from randomly selected schools were asked to allow conducting a survey and presenting an overview of the study endeavor. A questionnaire and a cover letter were given to each participant. The cover letter emphasizes respondents' gratitude, voluntary participation, questionnaire completion, the study's usefulness, and confidentiality guarantees. Principals were informed about the deadline and encouraged to submit the surveys three weeks after respondents completed the questionnaire and data form.

Findings and Results

Demographic Information

A survey of 530 participants found that 53% of special educators were junior instructors and 33% were senior staff members. The remaining 46 worked as special education teacher trainers. The second cohort comprised 25% medical experts, 34% trainers, and 41% therapists. The sample comprised of 59% females and 41% males, with the majority aged 31 to 50 years. The largest group of participants was married, while 49% were single. The majority of participants (37%) had fewer than five years of experience. All participants received training in their specialized profession, with 38% holding bachelor's degrees, 23% holding master's degrees, and 20% holding diplomas in the relevant field. Fewer individuals (3%) obtained postgraduate degrees, such as M.Phil. and Ph.D.



Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Characteristic	Sample Distribution				
1] Cohort	Special education teachers 323 (61%)		Consultants, Trainers & Therapists 207 (39%)		
2] Gender	Male 215 (41%)		Female 315 (59%)		
3] Age (in years)	21 – 30 69 (13%)	31 – 40 227 (43%)	41 – 50 163 (31%)	> 50 71 (13%)	
4] Marital status	Married 261 (49%)	Single 224 (42%)	Divorced 24 (5%)	Widow 16 (3%)	Separated 05 (01%)
5] Working Experience (in years)	< 5 198 (37%)	6 – 10 125 (25%)	11 – 15 91 (17%)	16 – 20 66 (12%)	> 20 50 (09%)
6] Educational Qualification	In-service 87 (16%)	Diploma 106 (20%)	Bachelor 195 (38%)	Masters 124 (23%)	M.Phil /Ph.D 18 (03%)

Work Factors

The study found that special educators and professionals have similar job satisfaction levels, with a combined mean of 3.14. The highest satisfaction was achieved when working with children with multiple disabilities, with professionals scoring slightly higher (3.99). Special education teachers scored higher than professionals (3.23). The lowest satisfaction was encountered with pressure in meeting employment objectives, with instructors scoring less (2.62) than professionals (3.17). The assigned workload had the lowest satisfaction score (2.97). The results are presented in Table – 2.

Table 2
Comparison of average scores between special education teachers and Professionals related to work factors

Factors	Special Education Teachers		Professionals		Combined data of groups
	Average Score	Ranking	Average Score	Ranking	
1] Work with children has multiple disabilities	3.28	I	3.99	I	3.64
2] The workload	3.12	III	2.81	IV	2.97
3] Pupil – professional ratio	3.23	II	2.86	III	3.05
4] Pressure in meeting the job demands	2.62	IV	3.17	II	2.90
Mean score in work related factors	3.06		3.21		3.14
Satisfaction level	Moderate				



Professional Responsibility and Career Advancement

The study found a difference in satisfaction levels between special educators (2.74) and professionals (3.66) regarding professional responsibility and career progression variables. Professionals had a higher satisfaction level (3.5-4.5), while special educators had moderate contentment. Both groups expressed moderate satisfaction with their responsibilities in conducting evaluations and developing daily activities for special needs children. The lowest satisfaction was found in the possibility of working with parents and follow-up, followed by the likelihood of job advancement.

Table 3

Comparison of average scores between special education teachers and professionals related to professional responsibility and career advancement

Factors	Special Education Teachers		Professionals		Combined data of groups
	Average Score	Ranking	Average Score	Ranking	
1] Responsible for assessment and daily activities with children	3.18	I	3.62	III	3.4
2] Opportunities for working with parents and follow-up	2.27	IV	3.92	I	3.1
3] Professional accomplishments	3.02	II	3.37	IV	3.2
4] Chances of career advancement	2.47	III	3.74	II	3.11
Mean score in factors related to professional responsibility and career advancement	2.74 Moderate level satisfaction		3.66 High level satisfaction		3.2 Moderate level satisfaction

Work Environment

The study found that teachers and professionals had varying satisfaction levels for a positive working environment. Professionals had a high satisfaction level (3.5-4.5), while special educators had a moderate satisfaction level (2.5-3.5). However, special school professionals were very satisfied (4.1) in working environment elements, while special education teachers had an average satisfaction score of 2.8. The community needs time to appreciate their services, which they now do not understand. The results are presented in Table 4.



Table 4

Comparison of average scores between special education teachers and professionals related to work environment

Factors	Special Education Teachers		Professionals		Combined data of groups
	Average Score	Ranking	Average Score	Ranking	
1] The relationship with multidisciplinary team members	2.8	II	4.0	IV	3.40
2] Support from the administration	2.7	III	4.2	I	3.45
3] Prestige within the social groups	2.6	IV	4.1	III	3.35
4] Admiration of services by the community	3.1	I	4.2	I	3.65
Mean score in factors related to work environment	2.8		4.1		3.46
	Moderate level satisfaction		High level satisfaction		Moderate level satisfaction

Recognition, Supervision and Job Security

The study found a difference in satisfaction levels between teachers satisfaction level (3.5-4.5), while special educators had a lower satisfaction level (2.5-3.5). Both groups had moderate satisfaction, with professionals enjoying higher pay and no termination. Factors such as age, gender, experience, and educational level impacted work satisfaction and security. The results are presented in table-5.

Table 5

Comparison of average scores between special education teachers and professionals related to recognition, supervision and job security

Factors	Special Education Teachers		Professionals		Combined data of groups
	Average Score	Ranking	Average Score	Ranking	
1] The appreciation by administrators	2.94	II	3.68	II	3.31
2] The leadership from the head/ incharge	3.02	I	3.66	III	3.34
3] Job security	2.70	III	4.15	I	3.35
Mean score in Recognition, Supervision and Job Security related factors	2.89		3.83		3.43
	Moderate level satisfaction		High level satisfaction		Moderate level satisfaction

Factors Influencing Job Dissatisfaction

The study found a significant difference in job dissatisfaction satisfaction levels between teachers (2.22 average) and professionals (3.09 average), with the professional group



experiencing moderate satisfaction (2.5 to 3.5), while teachers' satisfaction level was low (1.5 to 2.5). Both groups reported mild or extremely unhappy experiences, with the professional group being more satisfied (mean score = 3.09) than the special education teachers' group (mean score = 2.22). The results are presented in Table – 6.

Table 6

Comparison of average scores between special education teachers and professionals related to factors influencing job dissatisfaction

Factors	Special Education Teachers		Professionals		Combined data of groups
	Average Score	Ranking	Average Score	Ranking	
1] Special reward (allowances/increment)	2.20	IV	2.49	VIII	2.35
2] Availability of required facilities	2.00	VI	1.87	X	1.94
3] Involvement in procurement of aids, appliances and assistive technology	1.87	VIII	2.77	VII	2.32
4] Teaching/therapy learning materials	2.02	V	3.52	IV	2.77
5] Present salary structure	1.80	IX	2.22	IX	2.01
6] Participation in decision making	2.20	IV	3.35	VI	2.78
7] Participation in supervisory tasks	2.82	I	3.82	I	3.32
8] Perception about present school's status	2.72	II	3.80	II	3.26
9] Chances of promotion	1.94	VII	3.36	V	2.65
10] Assign role in different school committees	2.61	III	3.70	III	3.16
Mean score in Factors associated with Influencing Job Dissatisfaction	2.22		3.09		2.66
	Low level satisfaction		Moderate level satisfaction		Moderate level satisfaction

Strategies for Enhancing Job Satisfaction

Teachers and professionals in special education agreed on techniques to increase work satisfaction, with a combined mean agreement score of 4.15. A score between 3.5 and 4.5 indicates strong agreement. The highest agreement was found on the recommendation of opportunities for professionals to apply their expertise creatively and positively, with a combined mean score of 4.48. Both groups strongly agreed on the proposed tactics. The study suggests that in-service training is crucial for responders, followed by participation in decision-making and task initiatives and adopting stress-reduction or coping methods. The lowest mean score (3.57) is for the belief that helpful and accessible leadership is important for job satisfaction. Special



educators consider in-service training as the most essential component, while professionals value an atmosphere conducive to stress reduction or coping. The results are shown in table-7.

Table 7

Comparison between special education teachers and professionals (consultants, trainers, and therapists) related to factors associated with strategies for enhancing job satisfaction

Factors	Special Education Teachers		Professionals		Combined data of groups
	Average Score	Ranking	Average Score	Ranking	
1] Competitive salary and fringe benefits	3.67	XIII	4.15	VIII	3.91
2] Opportunities for progress and promotion	3.68	XII	4.09	X	3.89
3] Working environment	3.89	X	3.97	XI	3.93
4] Supportive and accessible leadership	3.86	XI	3.27	XIII	3.57
5] Job secured environment	3.93	IX	3.88	XII	3.91
6] Support services by administration	4.26	IV	4.19	VII	4.23
7] Group working conditions	4.24	V	4.29	VI	4.27
8] Decision making and task initiatives	4.44	III	4.46	III	4.45
9] Improvement in communication skills	4.23	VI	4.42	IV	4.33
10] Availability of in-service training	4.53	I	4.41	V	4.47
11] Opportunities to apply expertise	4.46	II	4.50	II	4.48
12] Ability to reduce/cope stress	4.18	VII	4.60	I	4.39
13] Flexible and friendly work environment	4.17	VIII	4.12	IX	4.15
Mean score in factors associated with strategies for enhancing job satisfaction	4.12 Highly agreed		4.18 Highly agreed		4.15 Highly agreed

Discussion and Conclusion

The study reveals that most teachers and professionals in Pakistan are satisfied with their work with children with multiple disabilities, with 89% being very satisfied or satisfied. However, professionals express dissatisfaction due to the complexity of special needs education classes and lack of training in specific areas. The majority of teachers and professionals are satisfied with the pupil-teacher ratio, but 38% reported dissatisfaction. The client therapist ratio was a satisfying factor for 50% of professionals. Both special education teachers and professionals are satisfied with dealing with stressful situations and regard them as part of routine work. Promotion opportunities are more satisfying for teachers, while professionals are more content with their



pupils' achievements. Job security significantly predicts job happiness, with 10% of teachers satisfied, 19% neutral, and 49% dissatisfied. A competitive salary and allowances could increase work satisfaction.

The study looked at the link between personal characteristics (gender and teacher attitude), work-related factors (workload, work environment, and organizational support), and job satisfaction among special educators and professionals. It discovered a substantial association between gender, workload, work environment, and organizational support, but no correlation with teacher attitude (Abushaira, 2012; Demirel, 2014; Menon & Athanasoula-Reppa, 2011; Ogedengbe et al., 2018).

However, the findings of this study contradict the findings of Gihar and Mishra (2018), who said that gender and work satisfaction did not connect. Consistent with previous studies (Agbozo et al., 2017; Chinomona & Sandada, 2014; Ekpoh, 2018; Peters, 2013; Rezaee et al., 2020; Usman & Kabir, 2019), the current study found that professionals and teachers' workload, working environment and conditions, and support received from their school administrators were all related to job satisfaction.

The study also found that organizational support influences multidisciplinary team members' satisfaction with educating and training students with exceptional needs. Encouraging and positive organizational practices resulted in longer employment tenure and higher work satisfaction. All independent factors predicted work satisfaction, with the exception of instructor attitude. While Abdalkrim and Elhalim (2016) discovered a strong link between employees' attitudes at work and job satisfaction, this study focused on the role of organizational support in determining how well teachers and other professionals in special schools are satisfied with teaching students with disabilities.

The study found a correlation between workload, work environment, organizational support, and job satisfaction among professionals and teachers working with students with special needs.

Organizational support was found to be a significant predictor of work satisfaction. To motivate specialists, incentives like early promotion, special allowances, recognition awards, and training should be implemented. School administrators should promote a healthy work environment; encourage professional growth, and lower workloads for interdisciplinary teams. However, there is limited research on the impact of perceived organizational support on work satisfaction in special education, especially in Pakistan.



The study recommends enhancing job satisfaction for special education teachers and professionals by establishing collaboration support structures, prioritizing compensation, exploring alternative funding options, offering leadership positions, encouraging postgraduate degrees, and providing leadership training and administrative apprenticeships. It also suggests active participation in school policies, promoting shared decision-making and ownership. Future research should explore satisfaction perspectives among special educators and professionals in private and public schools, broader scale research, policy-making methods, and collaborative teamwork to identify additional elements that improve work satisfaction.

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