

# **Job satisfaction among teachers of special education in Sultanate of Oman**

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### **Introduction:**

Since 1930, the results of job satisfaction studies were interpreted to suggest a need for additional studies about the variables causing the dissatisfaction in work rather than salary and fringe benefits. Some of these studies stressed the importance of the work group and the supervisor as determinants of worker job satisfaction (Mayo, 1945). Regarding Maslow's theory (Maslow, 1954, 1971) of a need hierarchy, people have lower order needs, such as security and salary, and higher order needs, such as self-esteem and self-actualization. According to this theory, gratification of this lower order needs lead to the emergence of higher order needs, and so gratification of these higher order needs is necessary for true job satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Abd- el-Fattah, 2010).

Influenced by Maslow's theory, Herzberg (1966) explained that job characteristics can be a factor that leads to job satisfaction or a factor that leads to job dissatisfaction. He mentioned two sets of factors: Motivators or satisfiers; which are stimuli related to job satisfaction such as: work itself, recognition, etc, and hygiene factors or dissatisfies; which are stimuli related to conditions of work, such as: compensation, etc. (Suelter,

1986). According to Herzberg's theory; job satisfaction can only come from the gratification of higher order needs.

Concerning the competency or the level of the education of the teacher; Suelter (1986) and Avery (1998) indicated that the level of education is not a significant factor in teacher's job satisfaction. Suelter (1986) found that teachers with long experience tend to be more satisfied with their job. However Dabo (1998), Sargent and Hannum (2003) found that better qualified teachers tended to be less satisfied than less qualified teachers.

Some studies mentioned that teacher dissatisfaction may be caused by a lot of variables. In addition to salary, Guth (1970), Bloland and Selby (1980) and Best (1981) reported that teachers continually related dissatisfaction to lack of administrative support. Furthermore; Lortie (1975) and Best (1981) revealed that teachers were often left to fend themselves in matters of discipline, relations with parents and class structure. Other researchers indicated that lack of communication between teachers and principals, and between teachers and other staff members in the school may cause some problems, such as conflicts, low performance, stress, etc. (Erlandson and Pastor, 1981;Reineke and Welch 1975;Mazer and Griffin 1980).

### **Special Education Teacher:**

The inclusion of pupils with disabilities makes the profession of special education teachers a stressful one which requires more effort and skills. Teachers have ability and proficiency to work with pupils who have different

types of disabilities; so they should feel comfortable and satisfied with their job to overcome the challenges of it. The findings of several studies supported this idea. For example, Lobosco & Newman (1992) reported that working with pupils who have learning difficulties had a negative impact on job satisfaction. Thus, in western countries ; many researchers were interested in studying job satisfaction of special education teachers (Suelter, 1986; McArthur, 2008; Voris, 2011; Bergstrom, 2006). These studies reported the importance of some variables such as salaries, recognition, competency, work itself, etc.

Studies also showed that factors of dissatisfaction may have effect on special education teacher decisions regarding job change (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Cross & Billingsley (1994) have indicated that job dissatisfaction is the highest predictive variable for intent to leave teaching in special education classroom. Ingersol (2001) (as cited in Bergstrom, 2006) indicated that special education teachers had the highest percentage of annual turnover. This effect emphasizes the importance of the studies concerning the job satisfaction in this domain.

### **Context of the study:**

In the Sultanate of Oman, the job of special education teacher has been recently created. Accordingly research on job satisfaction of special education teachers in Oman is rare. During teaching and training the in special education program at Sultan Qaboos University, the researchers felt

the need for studies which examined the job satisfaction of special education teachers in Oman. The discussion with teachers also revealed problems and issues that may cause dissatisfaction. Numerous factors have been revealed in the discussion, but no specific variables had been identified.

Special education teachers in Oman have worked at the centers of Al Wafaa as volunteers for more than 12 years, until 2008 (The monthly remuneration= 100 OR). In 2008, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos offered them three opportunities: Teachers should have a qualification in special education, as well as , they should work at in these centers (ALWafaa) as specialists in special education not as volunteers, - to increase their salary to 400 OR per month.

Under these circumstances and according to the cultural background of Omani society; these teachers were expected to have high job satisfaction; especially they really realized that government policies and legislation supported them administratively and financially.

So, our study attempted to explore if these three opportunities (Increased salary, the job itself, and the qualification or competency) affect the teachers' job satisfaction.

This study is important; because it sheds light on the impact of some factors on the teachers' job satisfaction. These factors are considered crucial determinants of the level of job satisfaction. Special education in the Sultanate of Oman is modern and moderate; that is working in this

field still needs for development especially in teachers. In addition, studies conducted in this area in this country are limited and rare.

It was hypothesized that special education teachers have job satisfaction; because their job conditions have increasingly improved for the last decade. In spite of difficulty of working with individuals with disabilities, and stress resulting from these conditions; special education teachers in Oman, especially those dealing with different disabilities are expected to report accepted job satisfaction. Special education teachers in Oman are not initially qualified in special education , but their professional preparation passes through several stages: At the beginning , the initial qualification of those teachers is General Diploma (Secondary Education) ; Normally, they would have received a substantial in-service training program in special education ;subsequently they continue their education at the expense of Ministry of social affairs to obtain an intermediate Diploma degree in Special Education.

The purpose of this study was to determine job satisfaction level among the teachers of special education in Sultanate of Oman. The study attempted to answer the following questions: (1) To what extent do special education teachers have job satisfaction? (2) Are there significant differences in job satisfaction due to gender,

qualification, age, specialization (teacher's field of disability category) and experience?

### **Method:**

#### **Participants:**

A convenience sample of (129) female special education teachers was used. This sample represents those who work at different special education centers in Muscat governorate. The demographic and independent variables of teachers were: education, experience, category of disability, marital status, and age. They teach children with different disabilities in Al Wafaa special education centers including: intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, learning disabilities, deafness, loss of vision, and physical and health impairment. The teachers have qualifications from different levels: High school, High school with training and Intermediate Diploma in special education. Their experience ranged from (1-15) years, and their age ranged from 20 to 35 years with mean of 27. 73% of the teachers were married and 27% were single.

#### **Measure:**

A Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) was constructed based on literature review to assess the extent to which female special education teachers have job satisfaction. JSS in its primary version was composed of 40 items categorized into the following three dimensions :**(1). Work itself:** it involves the tasks related to the job **(2). Pay:** it involves the economic profits, rewards, premiums, and salaries. **(3). Competency:** it describes skills and techniques that enable



teachers to deal with different teaching and behavioral situations. The final version of the scale consisted of 35 items distributed among the dimensions as follows: (1) 15 items for "work itself" dimension; (2) 7 items for "pay dimension", and (3) 13 items for "competency dimension". The JSS items were calculated by rating the degree of having satisfaction according to a 5- point Likert scale format (Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1). The total score (maximum score) obtained by summing up the scores of all items was 175, the minimum score was 35, and the average score was 105. Any score above 150 indicates a high level of job satisfaction, and any score between 105 and 150 indicates a moderate level of job satisfaction, while any score below 105 indicates a low level of job satisfaction.

**Validity:**

Face validity was assessed based on the conventional concept of job satisfaction and its components. The JSS was submitted to a panel of experts who have a PhD in counseling and special education. They were asked to indicate the extent to which every item is highly adequate or inadequate. If an item was inadequate, they were asked to delete or modify it. The experts were provided with an operational definition for every dimension in order to simplify the assessment of the JSS validity. The Original version of the JSS consisted of 40 items. Most of these items (30 items) were found to be highly adequate, but

some items (5 items) were modified and the other ones (5 items) were deleted. The final version of the JSS consisted of 35 items. Concurrent validity was also assessed by using the Teacher Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (TJSQ) developed by Lester (1984). TJSQ is a 66 item questionnaire and consists of overall and nine job satisfaction factors: supervision, colleagues, working conditions, pay, responsibility, work itself, advancement, security and recognition. After adjusting TJSQ to Omani environment; JSS and TJSQ were administered to a pilot sample of 20 special education teachers. Correlation coefficient between the two scale scores was ( $r = 0.68$ , significant at  $p=0.0001$ ), which means that JSS is shown to have strong validity.

### **Reliability:**

Reliability of the JSS was estimated in two ways: test-retest reliability and internal consistency. To estimate test – retest reliability, a pilot study was conducted twice with an interval of 3 weeks on 20 special education teachers at Muscat Education Directorate. The correlation coefficient between the first time scores and the second time scores of conducting the pilot study was calculated, and it was found to be 0.69. Internal consistency was calculated by Cronbach's Alpha for all items and for three dimensions. The total Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.71, while Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the dimensions (subscales) were as follows: 0.73 for Work itself dimension, 0.69 for pay dimension and 0.71 for competency dimension.

All told, these values indicate adequate reliability for the JSS scores.

### Study Design and Statistical Analysis:

This study is considered descriptive study. To answer the study questions, means and standard deviations were calculated. Univariate analysis was utilized as well to find the significance of effect of independent variables (qualification, experience, marital status, age and category of disability) on job satisfaction.

### Results

**To answer** Data collected from the participants were analyzed by SPSS. Table 1 illustrates means and standard deviations of participants' scores on the JSS according to dimensions.

Table 1.  
Means and standard deviations of participants'  
scores on the JSS according to dimensions

Dimension	N	Mean	SD	Max- Min
Work itself	129	2.08	0.35	3.33 - 1.13
Pays	129	2.56	0.45	3.75 - 1.50
Competency	129	2.51	0.49	4.15 -1.38
Total	129	2.39	0.35	3.17 -1.46

Table 1 shows that special education teachers reported low level in job satisfaction in all dimensions, although they reported higher satisfaction in the dimension of *pays*. The total score also showed that the teachers had low job satisfaction. Table 2 illustrates findings of Univariate Analysis on the effect of independent variables on the JSS.

Table 2.  
Univariate Analysis on the effect  
of independent variables on the JSS.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Education	41.274	3	137.758	0.090	0.965
Experience	1.424	1	1.424	0.009	0.923
Category	656.221	5	131.244	0.861	0.511
Marital status	33.133	1	33.133	0.217	0.642
Age	406.889	2	203.445	1.335	0.269
Error	12492.981	82	152.353		
Corrected Total	18811.209	128			

Table 2 shows that there were no significant differences in job satisfaction among special education teachers due to education, experience marital status, and age regardless of the category of disability that they work with.

### **Discussion and Conclusion:**

The present results revealed a notable finding. There was a no significant effect of pay increase neither of the intermediate diploma, nor of the employment in the Social Affairs Ministry on special education teachers' job satisfaction. Regarding the pay increase, their dissatisfaction can be interpreted by the insufficient pay increase. The teachers still feel underpaid compared to other teachers at different education level in Oman. According to Herzberg's theory (1966) Factors such as minimum salary could not increase or may cause job satisfaction, it could only affect the amount of dissatisfaction.

Concerning the insignificant effect of teachers' qualification (intermediate diploma) on their job

satisfaction; Boger, (2005) and Avery (1998) confirmed this result, they mentioned that the level of education is not significant factor in the level of teacher job satisfaction, even, Dabo (1998), and Sargent and Hannum (2003) found that better qualified teacher tended to be less satisfied than less qualified teacher. In spite of this finding which is contrary to the expectation that more knowledge and teaching competency are relevant to job satisfaction, especially that these teachers have only a high school diploma, the investigators can explain this finding because they see that the intermediate diploma is not enough to support or withstand teachers in their work.

The third point is the employment in the ministry of Social Affairs. The finding indicated that there was no significant effect on job satisfaction, a possible explanation for this finding is that teacher likes being employed by ministry of Education not Ministry of Social Affairs ; because employment in Ministry of Social Affairs may not meet the teachers' ambition. This finding is consistent with Maslow's theory of a need hierarchy (Maslow, 1954, 1971) who indicated that gratification of lower order needs such as employment, leads to emergence of higher order needs such as self-esteem, self-actualization.

Findings also revealed that no significant differences were found in job satisfaction among special education teachers due to education, experience, social status and age regardless of the category of disability that they work with.

Other studies showed that the experience had no effect on job satisfaction findings, such as Dabo (1998) and Michaelowa (2002) who determined that no correlational relationship between the length of experience and teachers' job satisfaction. Contrary to expectation, the marital status and age had no significant differences in job satisfaction among special education teachers. This result conforms with findings of some studies such as: Kremer-Hayon and Goldstein (1990), Boger (2010) who found that teachers' age did not affect job satisfaction. Concerning the social status, one possible explanation for this finding, that the teachers in these centers are homogenous in age, situation, and the cultural background of Omani society. This homogeneity makes no differences in job satisfaction in terms of the social status between employees.

Concerning the category of disability of the pupils they teach; the researchers explain that it's normal to find no significant differences among teachers in their job satisfaction, this result may be due to the inclusion or mainstreaming of more than one category of disability in the same classroom, and that is the situation in all classes for all teachers including those in the sample.

### **Conclusion:**

In summary, the findings of this study showed that pay increase, characteristics of the work itself and qualifications don't contribute to special education teachers' job satisfaction in Oman as indicated in the finding that there were no significant differences in job satisfaction among

special education teachers due to education, experience, marital status and age regardless of the category of disability of the pupils they work with.

**Implication for special education teacher development:**

In general, the findings of the present study stressed three important implications for special education teachers. First, Policy makers have to know that the important thing is gratification of higher order needs: such as recognition, achievement, self-esteem, etc. not just the gratification of lower order needs such as, pay, security, etc. Therefore, governments would do well to enhance the status of the teaching profession in general. Special education teachers who perceive their vocation as a highly regarded career will be more satisfied and will be more motivated to devote the time and energy required for this profession.

Second it would be best if the teachers' pay is proportionally equal, and every teacher will be employed by the ministry of Education.

Third these teachers should continue their studies in order to obtain Bachelor's degree instead of an intermediate diploma. It is important that school principals become aware of teachers' feelings regarding their competence, job characteristics because it seems have a significant impact on teachers' level of performance, and consequently on in teachers' level of satisfaction.

**Future research:**

The results presented in this study suggest the potential value of further research in order to understand more special education teachers' job satisfaction. To enhance our understanding of the phenomenon, it would be beneficial to conduct a qualitative research studies in addition to the quantitative one; because teachers' explanations could add very significant value to the information collected via questionnaires.

The investigators' next step should be studying the differences in job satisfaction among special education teachers who work in the ministry of Education and others who work in the ministry of Social affairs. It may also be necessary to conduct a research to investigate other variables such as self-esteem, self-actualization, recognition, etc. to identify other higher order needs as related to special education teachers' job satisfaction.



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