



Impact of Happiness on Job Performance: The Case of Primary School Teachers in Malaysia

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Research Article

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to estimate the impact of happiness on job performance among the primary school teachers in Malaysia.

Methods: The multi-stage stratified sampling method is used in the present study. This sampling method is chosen based on the efficiency of the sample. In the first stage, the targeted population is divided by states and their areas, with local authority or areas as sampling units.

Results: Results reveal that the overall job performance of the teacher is very high. The empirical findings indicate that happiness can influence the job performance of primary school teachers in Malaysia for self-perceived job performance only (feedback, student assist, and annual appraisal). The effects are highly significant and positive.

Implications: The implication of the study indicated that happiness increases the job performance of a teacher which helps to become an efficient teacher. Therefore, the authority should strive to ensure teachers' happiness for good and qualitative education output.

Keywords: Job performance; Primary school teachers; Happiness, Malaysia

1. Introduction

Primary school is the most important stage of education in any country. This is the place to get basic education, learn soft skills, and develop human interrelationships. It is also a place to cultivate patriotism and a sense of nation-building. In primary schools, children are taught to appreciate peace and living in harmony with each other and share the same moral values. Pupils line up at the assembly together and feel togetherness. These activities create an instinct of love to their motherland, feel harmony and become instrumental to minimize prejudice related to races. The teachers play the most vital role in nurturing the students in the right direction. Thus, teacher's job performance is extremely important to nurture the best human

resources for a country especially for Malaysia that aspires to become a developed nation in every dimension by 2030. Therefore, it is important to understand the determinants of teacher's job performance in order to formulate better policies for primary school teachers.

Relating to the teacher's job performance, we have conducted an informal interview with several retired teachers who served in primary schools for more than thirty years. They have unanimously made the following remarks based on their observations:

"Problematic teachers are a stumbling block to the development of the academic environment in the schools. They hurt learning in and outside the classroom, and hamper the social fabric of the school. In fact, teachers facing a financial problem and unusual job pressure definitely cannot perform well in their job. They easily lose their temper while dealing with students. Therefore, the students become victimized. An unhappy teacher leads to poor job performance and poor students' output".

The common belief, "happy teacher will lead to happy student" is supported by empirical studies (Bakker 2005, and Tdic, Bakker & Oerlemans 2013). Teachers can perform to the maximum of their capacity if they are happy and satisfied with their job. Fredrickson (1998) argued that happiness and joy will lead to the development of social and mental skills. It is believed that only happy and satisfied teachers can think about the well-being of the pupils. Abdul Rahman (2001) pointed out that the willingness of a teacher to contribute depends on his or her happiness. This highlights the importance of happiness to the teacher's performance and without taking care of the happiness of teachers, the performance of teachers may not improve (Dang & Rogers, 2007). The Malaysian government's policy is to transform primary school education into a world-class standard. This has created more pressure on the happiness of primary school teachers. The important concern is that the sign of unhappiness persists among the school teachers in Malaysia and it seems increasing over time. Furthermore, the Malaysian primary school education sector is unique with its construct of three types of primary school using different media of instructions (i.e, Malay, Chinese and Tamil). This unique feature needs to be taken into consideration for the teacher's happiness. Against this backdrop, the present study aims to evaluate the impact of happiness on the job performance of primary school teachers in Malaysia.

2. Literature Review

Conceptually, Field Theory (1975) of job performance can explain the potential impact of happiness on job performance. The Field Theory proposes that there are simultaneous influences between traits and environment, which jointly influence behavior (job performance). Lewin's Field Theory (1975) is a social psychological theory that clearly defined the relationship between the person and his or her environment. It has been widely applied in the context of organizational behavior (Miner, 2003). Lewin's theory attempts to explain the relationships between person and behavior based on the role of environmental factors. However, it stresses on the reciprocity that exists between the person and the environment (Lewin, 1975).

Human behavior suggested by Lewin could be applied in the primary school organizational context. This study investigates the teachers' engagement in workplace learning and individual job performance. Lewin focuses on that person's behavior is more influenced by the psychological aspect instead of the physical or psychological aspect of situations that determine his or her behavior. The more important thing is the person's motive and how he or she understand and interpret it. The field is known as the psychological environment, hence dynamic could be change and easy changes depending on the tensions or forces that arise from the psychological environment.

The teacher (by personality) is happy might not necessarily doing his or her job well, the job performance is dropping consequently. This is due to the interactive effects of the school environment. In the big circle of Figure 2.2, the school or psychological environment is very important. The perceptions of the school as a learning organization affect teacher's performance. With the right school environment, teacher's happiness will increase job performance significantly. This theory suggests that happiness is independent variables, job performance as the dependent variable, and the school environment factors as independent and interactive variables. This is consistent with happiness theories.

In literature, performance means to perform or to take a complex series of actions that integrate skills and knowledge to produce goods or services. Performance is not defined by the action itself only but also by judgment and evaluative process (Ilgen & Schneider, 1991; Motiwidlo, Borman & Schmit, 1997). This means performance consists of outcomes (actions) and criteria that evaluate or judge the outcomes. Li and Chen (2012) from the perspective of teachers, claimed that job performance should be seen as the outcome or ability related to teaching. For a primary school teacher, their job performance is also multi-dimensional which comprises teaching and non-teaching tasks, such as classroom teaching, observation and inspection, administrative roles, student management, curriculum development, extra-curricular activities, and involvement in social activities. Some of them are not directly observable.

There are extensive studies on the determinants of job performance. Yoke and Panatik (2015) studied the impact of emotional intelligence on the job performance of schoolteachers in Singapore. Using a sample of 192 experienced schoolteachers, they found that emotional intelligence such as self-emotion appraisal is positively and significantly related to teacher's job performances. This finding reveals that happiness is closely related to stress and emotional intelligence.

Inayatullah and Jehangir (2012) investigated the effect of motivation on job performance of primary school teachers in Pakistan. The motivation is found to be positively related to the teacher's job performance. This study used a self-developed questionnaire for job performance, the findings indicate the importance of the teacher's psychological make-up for better performance. Shaari, Yaakub, and Hashim (2002) studied on job motivation and performance of secondary school teachers in the state of Kedah, Malaysia. Using a sample of 245 secondary school teachers, they found a range of scores for overall job motivation between 25 and 47, with a mean score of 36.68. The results showed that 85% of teachers belong to the high motivation

category and 15% belong to the low motivation category. This study suggests that achievement motivation is one of the potential determinants of good performance.

Abdullah, Ali, Ling & Ping (2016) studied the impact of teacher's happiness on the job performance in Malaysia. They investigated workplace happiness in school and its relationship with other performance indicators. They used a sample of 835 teachers from 167 national secondary schools in the northern part of peninsular Malaysia. They found that there is a direct correlation between workplace happiness in school with teachers' efficacy, affective commitment, and innovative behavior. The findings suggest that school administrators should create a happy work environment at school in order to bring positive change in the attitudes and to develop self-confidence to improve teaching and learning at school.

In Philippine, Usop, Askandar, Kadtong, and Usop (2013) studied the relationship between work performance and job satisfaction among teachers in Cotabato city, Mindanao. They used a sample of 200 elementary teachers from 12 selected schools. The findings show that teachers display a high level of performance. They have contended with the factors, such as school policies, supervision, pay and emoluments, interpersonal relations, opportunities for promotion and growth (self-development), working conditions, work itself, achievement, recognition, and responsibility.

Jalali and Heidari (2015) examined the relationship between happiness, subjective well-being, and job performance of primary school teachers in Ramhormoz City, Iran. They used a random sample of 330 from the population of 2500 elementary school teachers in the Ramhormoz city. They found a positive and significant relationship between happiness, well-being, and job performance. Happy individuals are generally responsible, decent and law-abiding citizens. They think positively of their daily tasks and explore better alternatives for solving minor or major problems. This highlights the importance of linking happiness and job performance.

Other studies also evaluate the impact of happiness related factors on job performance for employees. For example, Ali, Raheem, Nawaz and Imamuddin (2014), studied the impact of stress on job performance among employees of private universities in Karachi, Pakistan. Applying Multiple and Linear Regression techniques, the study affirms that stress among employees affects (reduce) their work performance. The study indicates that stress is a pervasive problem in organizations. It leads to a decrease in employees' efficiency, an increase in absenteeism and turnover. For an organization to prosper, it is a prerequisite that its employees work in a stress-free atmosphere. To overcome the problems, the management should take steps to minimize stress by redesigning jobs, lower workload, reduce conflict and pay adequate salary to employees. Besides that, the employees should be provided counseling on stress management techniques.

Relating to the measurement of job performance, there are two major dimensions related to teachers' job performance: task performance and contextual performance. Task performance refers to the activities related to teaching and nurturing students. It includes duties such as teaching, organizing curricular and co-curricular activities, handling discipline within the school premises or performing other kinds of technical and administrative tasks directly related to the job of a teacher (Tengku Faekah, 2010). On the other hand, contextual performance refers

to the teachers' extra-role behaviors which positively contribute to the school environment. For example, being helpful, considerate, cooperative, persistent, self-discipline and showing initiative and participating in voluntary activities that are considered to be good indicators of an effective teacher (Tengku Faekah, 2010).

Thus, the above literature indicates that happiness and related factors, such as emotion and motivation have a significant and positive impact on job performance. Therefore, the present study aims to evaluate the impact of happiness on the job performance of primary school teachers in Malaysia. The study focuses on two main research questions:

- What is the level of the job performance of primary school teachers in Malaysia?
- What is the impact of happiness on the job performance of primary school teachers in Malaysia?

3. Data & Methodology

3.1 Data

The target population for the study consists of primary school teachers in the state of Perlis, Kedah, and Penang. The Penang state represents the developed states in Malaysia, whereas the Perlis and Kedah represent the less developed states. The data have been collected from a total of 87 primary schools in the Northern States of Peninsular Malaysia. The multi-stage stratified sampling method is used in the present study. In the first stage, the targeted population is divided by states and their areas, with local authority or areas as sampling units. We include all areas/authorities except Kedah where one rural district is chosen randomly from three rural districts. In the second stage, the selected areas/authority are divided by size of school (small, medium and big) and all the units are included. Third, the schools are divided by types of schools. In this stage, three school(s) are chosen from each type of school and then, all teachers in the selected school have been approached for the survey. Self-administered questionnaires (survey) have been used for data collection.

There are two types of job performance in the present study. First, JP1, the multiple items measurement which is taken from the second Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2013) of OECD (2013). The TALIS is an international survey to solicit inputs from teachers over the world for education analysis and policy development. There are items that measure the job performance of a teacher. Appendix 1 shows multiple items. The TALIS is a well-established survey and the items are already validated and reliable. However, it is subject to the perceptual bias of the respondents and might not directly applicable to primary school teachers in Malaysia. Hence, we use another measurement of job performance which is used by the Malaysian government to measure the primary school teacher's job performance, namely, *Penilaian Pretasi Tahunan* (Annual Performance Appraisal, JP2). Since the annual performance evaluation consists of all teaching and non-teaching tasks and used by the school authority for job performance measurement for promotion and incentives, it is a comprehensive, valid, and reliable. Appendix 2 shows the items of the *Penilaian Pretasi Tahunan*.

Relating to happiness, one-item overall happiness is used. The respondents were asked a single question, "Taking all things together, are you happy with your job.", with a 7-point rating scale (1 being "very unhappy" to 7 being "very happy"). This measurement is taken from the European Social Survey, available at <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>. Previous studies have proven the reliability, validity, and comparability of one-item overall happiness measurement (Lim, Shaw, Liao, and Duan 2020).

3.2 Methods

The multiple regression model of OLS estimation is used for the study (Gujarati, 2009). The model is specified as below:

$$y_i = x_i \beta + \varepsilon_i \text{ ----- (1)}$$

Where;

y = the job performance (multiple items or annual appraisal items (by self-perceived)

x = the independent variables

ε = the error terms

Given the Classical Linear Regression Model (CLRM) assumptions, the estimators of Ordinary Least Square (OLS) are proved to be the best linear unbiased estimator (BLUE).

4. Results & Analysis

4.1. Descriptive Statistic Analysis

Table 1 presents the multiple items measurement for job performance (JP1). It shows the highest mean score is 5.18 for "successful with the student", followed by "weaknesses in teaching are discussed" (5.09), and "assist families to help their children", (5.09).

Table 1: Job Performance (Multiple items) (JP1)

	N	Mi n	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Successful with student	1480	1	7	5.1818	1.03558
Measure weaknesses in teaching are discussed	1484	1	7	5.0943	1.11351
Assist families to help their children	1474	1	7	5.0889	1.05753
Feedback based on assessment on teaching	1483	1	7	4.944	1.15772
Teachers appraisal/feedback-fulfill admin requirement	1482	1	7	4.8745	1.2737
Best performing teachers get the greatest recognition	1476	1	7	4.6308	1.51552
Fluency in English	1478	1	7	4.1008	1.39735

Note: The number of observation (N) are differential across the items due to missing values.

The lowest mean scored is "fluency in English" with the mean value of (4.10), followed by "best performing teachers get greatest recognition" (4.63), and "teacher appraisal and feedback for fulfill the administrative requirement" (4.87). This implies that the teachers could perform the best in jobs that are related to students; and the lowest in administrative related jobs. The result shows that lack of fluency in English might be part of the problems faced by the teachers which affect their performance. Fluency in English improves the performance of teachers because the English language provides a lot of reference and guidelines for better teaching and learning. Table 2 presents another measurement of job performance, i.e., annual appraisal items as perceived by the teachers (JP2).

Table 2: Job Performance (annual appraisal by self-perceived) (JP2)

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Discipline	1501	1	10	7.6416 *	1.30822
Collaborative	1491	2	10	7.5842 *	1.30517
Punctuality	1502	1	10	7.5799 *	1.43198
Job knowledge and skills	1500	2	10	7.4573	1.30486
Effectiveness of communication	1501	1	10	7.4457	1.30864
Implementation of policy	1498	2	10	7.3658	1.31725
Quality of work (note 2c)	1474	3	10	7.3453	1.29473
Effectiveness of work	1492	2	10	7.3418	1.30152
Leadership Characteristics	1502	3	10	7.2996	1.30575
Quality of work (note 2b)	1496	3	10	7.2727	1.27773
Ability to handle	1498	3	10	7.2603	1.32759
Quantity of work (note.2a)	1492	1	10	7.0851	1.37775
Proactive and Innovative	1494	2	10	6.9906	1.27679

Note:

1. The number of observation (N) are differential across the items due to missing values
2. a. such as total, number, rate, frequency, etc as compared to the targeted quality of work
b. completion, in order and tidy
c. effort and initiative to achieve the completeness of work outcomes

From Table 2, it is found that the highest mean scored is "discipline" with the mean value of 7.64, followed by "collaborative", (7.58) and "punctuality", (7.58). The lowest mean score is "proactive and innovative", (6.99), followed by "quantity of work", (7.09) and "ability to handle", (7.26). Overall, from Table 2, the Job performance of the teachers is very high because all the items have mean values of 7 and above (in a 10-point rating scale). This implies that the teachers

are comfortable with their task performance and contextual performance. However, they still lack skills in a proactive and innovative area. These skills could be mastered by attending courses/training related to creativity and innovation.

Table 3 presents the total and mean scores of JP1 and JP2. It shows that the total score and mean score of JP 1 are 33.87 and 4.83 respectively, while for JP2 the total and mean scores are 95.82 and 7.37 respectively.

Table 3: Job performance [multiple items (JP1) and Annual appraisal self-perceive (JP2)]

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Job performance (total)	1449	10.00	49.00	33.8799	5.84840
Job performance (mean of all 14 items)	1485	1.43	7.00	4.8458	0.83886
Job performance (total)	1426	41	130	95.8226	14.67156
Job performance (mean of all 13 items)	1426	3.15	10	7.3710	1.12858

4.2. Econometric Analysis

Referring to our second research objective, we estimated the influence of happiness on the job performance of primary school teachers in Malaysia. The empirical findings indicate that happiness can influence the job performance of primary school teachers in Malaysia for self-perceived job performance only (feedback, student assist, and annual appraisal). The effects are highly significant and positive (Table 4). This result is consistent with the findings of Yoke and Panatik (2015) and Jalali and Heidari (2015). In short, happiness will increase job performance. Thus the findings endorse the commonly held view that a happy teacher is a productive teacher and tends to have high performance in terms of teaching, administrative duties, quality of supervision.

Table 4: Effect of happiness on job performance

	Job Performance					
	Feedback (multiple items)		Student assist (multiple items)		Annual appraisal self-perceived	
	Coef.	P> t	Coef.	P> t	Coef.	P> t
happyhat1	0.2007942	0.000***	.1590451	0.000***	.298103	0.000***
cons	-1.130217	0.000***	-.8686331	0.000***	5.818402	0.000***

Note: *** represents 1%, significant level

5. Discussion and Conclusion

There are limited studies on the impact of happiness on job performance. According to our knowledge, there is no study on the determinant of happiness and its impact on job performance in the context of Malaysian school teachers. This study aims to fulfill the research

gap in this important area. Results reveal that the overall job performance of the teacher is very high. By multiple items measurement of job performance, the highest job performance dimension is “successful with student”. The lowest job performance dimension is “fluency in English”. By self-perceived annual appraisal, the highest job performance dimension is “discipline”. The lowest job performance dimension is “proactive and innovative”. Results of estimated regression models indicate that happiness can influence the job performance of primary school teachers in Malaysia. The effects are highly significant and positive. The result also shows that the lack of fluency in English is one of the problems faced by the teachers which can affect their job performance. The findings imply that the teachers are comfortable with their task and contextual performance. The Malaysian government should provide incentives to the primary school teachers to keep them happy and thereby ensure better performance.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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