



A Study on Teachers' perception on their Socio-Economic Status and Social Recognition in Northern Sri Lanka

R. Mangaleswarasharma*

Department of Secondary and Tertiary Education, Faculty of Education, Open University of Sri Lanka, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

**Corresponding author: Email: rmang@ou.ac.lk*

1 INTRODUCTION

High quality education is essential for the development of young citizens, with the skills and competencies they need to adapt to the 21st century. The success or failure in achieving quality education lies primarily on teachers. Nyakundi (2012) explains teacher motivation is the most important factor in the promotion of teaching and learning excellence. According to Michaelowa (2002), several factors negatively influence teacher motivation and job satisfaction in developing countries. Guajardo (2011) identifies these factors as workload and challenges, learning materials and facilities, remuneration and incentives, recognition and prestige, accountability and institutional environment and career development. An investigation into the factors that affect teachers' motivation and job satisfaction is therefore necessary to achieve educational goals.

According to the general examination results, in the recent years, the educational achievements of students in northern Sri Lanka have been decreasing dramatically. According to the 2015 December General Certificate in Education (Ordinary Level) results, the Northern Province was ranked last among the nine provinces in Sri Lanka. Further, only 60.38% of the students from Northern Province were eligible to follow Advanced Level classes. Therefore it is necessary to explore the

reasons for this decrease in educational achievement. Several studies have found that teacher motivation and job satisfaction play a crucial role in the educational achievements of students. However in the northern Sri Lankan context, research studies on teachers' motivation and job satisfaction and the factors that influence teacher motivation have not been carried out. Therefore the present study tries to explore the socio economic status and social recognition of teachers in relation to their motivation and job satisfaction in three districts in northern Sri Lanka.

1.1 Conceptual Framework

According to Richardson (2014) teacher motivation is an internal and external factor that stimulates desire or energy in teaching, to be continuously interested and committed to support students' learning goals. Therefore, in order to perform well in their teaching activities, teachers need to be motivated. The American Psychological Association (2007) defines socio economic status as the social standing of a person or a group which can be measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. Literature on the socio economic factors that influence teacher motivation reveals that motivational influences to teach depend on a complex array of personal,



social, cultural, economic and geographical conditions. According to Herzberg Hygienic theory, interpersonal relations, working conditions, and pay are hygiene factors, and absence of these factors can create job dissatisfaction. Issues associated with job satisfaction would adversely influence teacher motivation (Nyam and West, 2014). The review of empirical studies on teacher motivation in low income countries indicate that teacher motivation and job satisfaction are low and negatively impact students' learning in such contexts.

1.2 Research Objectives

The key objective of this study was to explore the socio economic status and social recognition of teachers in northern Sri Lanka. To achieve this, the following specific objectives were formulated.

1. To investigate the socio economic status of the teachers in Northern Sri Lanka
2. To study the social respect and recognition of teachers in Northern Sri Lanka
3. To examine the teachers' views in relation to their self confidence
4. To suggest measures to improve the economic status, social respect and recognition of teachers

2 METHODOLOGY

The study used a survey research design, which came out of a quantitative and qualitative data collection framework. This study involved the population of teachers in Northern Sri Lanka. The target population was teachers in three districts namely Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu in northern Sri Lanka. A total of 150 teachers who participated in a workshop were purposively selected for this study. A researcher designed survey questionnaire was used to collect data

from teachers. For the design of the questionnaire survey, the language used in the survey instrument was Tamil as Tamil is the mother tongue of the teachers in this study. The quantitative data from the questionnaire survey was analyzed using simple descriptive techniques such as frequencies and percentages. The qualitative data for the open ended questions were analyzed by coding and categorizing into emerging themes.

2.1 Participants

A total of 150 teachers were sampled for this study. Among them 46 teachers from Jaffna district, 15 teachers from Kilinochchi and 11 from Mullaitivu responded to the questionnaire survey. The following table describes the characteristics of the sample.

Table 1: Characteristics of the sample

Main characteristics	Sub Group	Total	
		N	%
Gender	Male	16	22
	Female	56	78
Age	>30 years	48	67
	<30 years	24	33
Experience	>10 years	17	23
	<10 years	55	77
Educational qualification	Advanced level	11	15
	Graduates	61	85
Professional qualifications	Professionally trained	47	65
	Not trained	25	35
Subjects	Arts	41	57
	Science	7	10
	Commerce	18	25
	Other	6	8



Table 2: Economic status of teachers

Statements		Jaffna		Kilinochchi		Mullaitivu		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Have a reasonable salary	Y	34	74	4	27	5	45	43	60
	N	12	26	11	73	6	55	29	40
Receive less salary as compared to the work being done	Y	26	57	9	60	6	55	42	58
	N	20	43	6	40	5	45	30	42
Income affects teaching work	Y	1	2	6	40	3	27	10	14
	N	45	98	9	60	8	73	62	86
Income is sufficient to meet my basic financial requirements	Y	28	61	2	13	4	36	34	47
	N	18	39	13	87	7	64	38	53
Involve in other supporting jobs for earning	Y	9	20	5	33	2	18	16	22
	N	37	80	10	67	9	82	56	78
There are other earning hands in the family	Y	35	76	11	73	8	73	54	75
	N	11	24	4	27	3	27	18	25
Satisfied with economic level of the family	Y	21	46	5	33	4	36	30	42
	N	25	54	10	67	7	64	42	58
Present economic status should be improved	Y	46	100	13	87	11	100	70	97
	N	0	0	2	13	0	0	2	3

Table 3: Social respect and recognition of teachers

Statements		Jaffna		Kilinoch		Mullaitivu		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
My ideas are considered in decision making in school related tasks	Y	29	63	9	60	8	73	46	64
	N	17	37	6	40	3	27	26	36
I have enough freedom in planning and implementation of classroom teaching	Y	37	80	8	53	10	91	55	76
	N	9	20	7	47	1	9	17	24
My valuable works are appreciated by the government or educational administration or school administration	Y	34	74	9	60	8	73	51	71
	N	12	26	6	40	3	27	21	29
I have good relationships with students, teachers, parents and the community	Y	46	100	13	87	11	100	70	97
	N	0	0	2	13	0	0	2	3
I feel that I have given importance in the society	Y	46	100	13	87	10	91	69	96
	N	0	0	2	13	1	9	3	4
Total	Y		83		70		86		81
	N		17		30		14		19

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to table 2, 60% of the teachers agreed that they have a reasonable salary. However, most of the teachers from Kilinochchi (73%) and Mullaitivu (55%) stated that they are not receiving a reasonable salary. Further, 58% of the teachers who participated in the study expressed the view that they receive less salary compared to the work they do. However they did not feel that their low income affected their teaching. 61% of the teachers from Jaffna district agreed that their income is sufficient to meet their basic financial requirements. However, most of the teachers from Kilinochchi (87%) and Mullaitivu (64%) did not agree with this statement. Further, 22% of the respondent teachers said that they were involved in other supporting jobs to fulfil their basic financial requirements. For the open ended question regarding the supporting jobs, 13.9% of the respondent teachers indicated tuition, 4.2% listed

tuition and agriculture and 1.4% stated self-employment as the supporting jobs they do. 58% of the respondent teachers are not satisfied with the economic level of their family and 97% of them felt that their present economic status should be improved.

From the table 3, 64% of the respondent teachers agreed that their ideas are considered in decision making in school related tasks. Further, 76% of them expressed that they have enough freedom in planning and implementation of classroom teaching. Similarly, 71 % of them accepted the fact their valuable work was appreciated. 97% of the teachers stated that they have a good relationships with students, teachers, parents and the community. Further, 96% of them feel that they are given importance in the society. This results revealed that the social respect and recognition of teachers in Northern Sri Lanka is high and teachers felt their importance in the society.

Table 4: Teacher’s self-confidence

Statements		Districts						Total	
		Jaffna		Kili		Mullai			
		Y	N	%	Y	N	%	Y	N
I like myself as a teacher	Y	44	95	13	87	10	90	70	97
	N	2	5	2	13	1	10	2	3
I think I have a lot of abilities	Y	46	100	13	87	11	100	70	97
	N	0	-	2	13	0	-	2	3
I am satisfied with my present performance	Y	46	100	12	80	10	90	68	94
	N	0	-	3	20	1	-	4	6
I have self-confidence	Y	46	100	14	93	11	100	71	98
	N	0	-	1	7	0	-	1	2
I feel myself better than others	Y	46	100	10	67	11	100	67	93
	N	0	-	5	33	0	-	5	7
Total	Y		99		83		96		96
	N			1		17		4	4

According to the table 4, 97% of the respondent teachers said that they like themselves and they have lot of abilities. 94% of them stated that they are satisfied with their own performance, while 93% of

them feel themselves to be better than others. Further, 98% of the teachers are confident about themselves. These results revealed that teachers have positive views regarding their self-concept.



The findings of the study indicate that the economic status of the teachers in northern Sri Lanka is not high. But their social respect and recognition are high and their self-concept as teachers is also therefore high.

For an open ended question on the ways to improve the socio economic status of their lives, 28 teachers responded. Their responses are summarized below:

1. Salaries of the teachers should be increased and fixed according to their qualifications and experiences.
2. Incentives should be provided to the better performing teachers.
3. Flexible loans should be introduced to enhance the economic status of teachers.
4. Awareness should be raised in the society to recognize the important role played by the teachers in the development of the nation
5. Special concern should be given during their deployments.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that most of the teachers are not satisfied with their salaries and economic status. They preferred to improve their economic status. A good number of teachers felt that society respects them, recognize them and their service. Further, most of the teachers have positive views about themselves. As teachers expressed their aspirations to improve their economic status, it is recommended that salaries of the teachers should be increased according to their qualifications and incentives should be provided to those who show better performances and good teaching practices. Further, for the teachers who teach in the out stations an additional allowances should be provided to meet their extra expenses.

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