

The role of job satisfaction in the relationship between sense of calling and teacher performance

Peran kepuasan kerja terhadap hubungan antara *sense of calling* dengan kinerja guru

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ABSTRACT

Teacher performance is a key determinant in enhancing the quality of education, as it significantly influences student achievement and overall school effectiveness. However, previous studies have highlighted consistently low levels of teacher performance across various educational levels. This study investigates the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between sense of calling and teacher performance. Using a quantitative correlational design, the study involved 321 teachers in Lamongan who were over 25 years old and had at least two years of teaching experience, selected through purposive sampling. The instruments used were the Job Performance of Teacher Scale, the Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale, and the Sense of Calling Scale. Data were analyzed using Hayes' mediation analysis method in SPSS. Results indicate that job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between sense of calling and teacher performance (LLCI: 0.0881; ULCI: 0.3341; $p < .05$). These findings suggest that enhancing teachers' sense of calling alone is not sufficient – schools must also foster job satisfaction through healthy work environments, strong professional values, and effective communication with key stakeholders to optimize teacher performance.

ABSTRACT

Kinerja guru menjadi fokus perhatian dalam meningkatkan kualitas dunia pendidikan. Kinerja guru ditemukan mempunyai pengaruh yang besar terhadap prestasi belajar siswa dan juga sekolah, namun demikian beberapa penelitian menemukan adanya kinerja guru yang rendah di berbagai tingkat pendidikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui peran kepuasan kerja terhadap hubungan antara *sense of calling* dengan kinerja guru. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan non-eksperimen dengan metode kuantitatif korelasional. Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah guru di kota Lamongan dengan sampel penelitian sebanyak 321 guru yang berumur di atas 25 tahun dan telah bekerja minimal 2 tahun dengan menggunakan teknik *purposive sampling*. Instrumen penelitian menggunakan *job performance of teacher scale*, *teacher job satisfaction scale* dan *sense of calling scale* yang dianalisis dengan menggunakan metode *hayes* dalam SPSS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepuasan kerja mempunyai peran dalam hubungan antara *sense of calling* dengan kinerja guru (LLCI : 0.0881 dan ULCI : 0.3341, $p < .05$). Untuk meningkatkan kinerja guru dibutuhkan faktor kepuasan kerja melalui pembentukan lingkungan kerja yang sehat dan komunikasi yang efektif.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a crucial role in the academic systems of educational institutions (Khan et al., 2012). However, the role of teachers has become increasingly challenging due to heightened expectations regarding their performance, leading to elevated levels of stress and burnout, as well as tendencies toward reduced professionalism (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008; Hayashi & Ewert, 2006; Khan et al., 2012). Despite these challenges, many teachers remain dedicated to their profession, suggesting the presence of internal factors that influence teacher performance. Research shows that teachers with a strong sense of calling tend to perform better (Wang & Dai, 2017; Lee, 2016), while those with a low sense of calling are more likely to experience role conflict, job stress, and low performance (Park et al., 2019; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Ehrhardt & Ensher, 2021; Zhang & Chen, 2019).

The urgency of this research stems from statistical data indicating that approximately 76.43% of elementary and secondary school teachers in Indonesia demonstrate performance levels categorized as low (Rasto & Maulani, 2019). The gap between expected teacher performance and the reality of underperformance highlights a serious issue. This gap impacts teachers' daily lives, including poor economic conditions, diminished societal regard for the profession, and lack of recognition or appreciation (Bahri, 2011). Given the vital role teachers play in the success of educational institutions, research on factors that can enhance teacher performance is both timely and necessary.

Various factors have been identified as predictors of teacher performance. External factors such as school climate—including the availability of facilities, class size, classroom conditions for teaching, school policies and strategies to achieve institutional goals, and the principal's role in involving teachers and staff in decision-making—have been shown to influence teacher performance (Adejumobi & Kola Ojikutu, 2013). The work environment has also been found to contribute more significantly to the performance of Muhammadiyah teachers than work motivation (Audah, 2020; Muhammad & Wardhana, 2022). In addition, school leadership characterized by charisma, empathy, exemplary conduct, persuasiveness, transformational and democratic approaches, as well as participatory and collaborative styles, has been linked to improved teacher performance (Aunga & Masare, 2017; Kartini et al., 2017; Saleem et al., 2020; Serpieri & Vatrella, 2017).

Other predictors of teacher performance include job autonomy and work-life balance, teacher competence, work motivation, and creativity in task execution (Johari et al., 2017; Ratnasari et al., 2019; Hutabarat, 2015; Lutfah et al., 2019; Nurbaya & Ramly, 2019). Internal factors, on the other hand, include work motivation and emotional intelligence (Li et al., 2018). One particularly significant internal factor is the sense of calling. Teachers with a strong sense of calling are less driven by rewards or status (Wang & Dai, 2017) and are instead intrinsically motivated to act in alignment with their identity and personal values (Lee, 2016).

The selection of sense of calling as the independent variable in this study is grounded in several theories and prior research findings. Sense of calling refers to a strong internal

motivational drive that compels individuals to engage in a particular line of work (Lee, 2016). Teachers with a high sense of calling tend to demonstrate better job performance (Park et al., 2019), as they are able to derive meaning from their actions and find significance in various aspects of life, including their profession. Additionally, sense of calling is positively associated with job achievement, career development, and social interactions (Duffy et al., 2015), and it fosters positive attitudes and behaviors toward colleagues and organizations (Park et al., 2019). This suggests that individuals who feel called to their work tend to be more engaged, and that calling plays a specific role in supporting work engagement, which in turn contributes to achieving organizational goals (Hirschi, 2012). Therefore, sense of calling has strong potential in explaining variations in teacher performance.

Several prior studies have examined the link between sense of calling and performance, as well as between job satisfaction and performance. Park et al. found that teachers with a strong sense of calling demonstrated better performance, mediated the relationship between role conflict and performance, and influenced the connection between role conflict and job burnout (Park et al., 2019). Other studies have also shown that sense of calling affects both performance and job satisfaction (Park et al., 2019). Regarding job satisfaction, teachers who feel satisfied with their work tend to perform better, are more motivated to fulfill their duties, and strive for higher achievement (Yee, 2018; Ballarta & Roberto, 2020; Baluyos et al., 2019; Jain & Kaur, 2021). High job satisfaction related to job security also positively impacts teacher performance, indicating that greater satisfaction results in better outcomes (Verma & Emirates, 2018).

Although many studies have examined the factors influencing teacher performance—and found that external factors are more dominant predictors (Li et al., 2018)—there remains a gap in understanding how internal factors, particularly sense of calling, interact with other variables to influence performance. Previous research has primarily focused on the direct relationship between sense of calling and performance, or between job satisfaction and performance. However, the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable between sense of calling and teacher performance has not been widely explored. This study aims to fill that gap by testing whether job satisfaction mediates the relationship between sense of calling and teacher performance.

The novelty of this research lies in its analysis of job satisfaction as a mediating factor within the relationship between sense of calling and teacher performance in the Indonesian context. The study specifically focuses on teachers over the age of 25 who have at least one year of teaching experience. This sampling criterion is based on the assumption that by this age and experience level, teachers are likely to have a more mature understanding of their profession and responsibilities, as well as exposure to various dynamics in the work environment that may affect their sense of calling and job satisfaction.

Existing research shows that teacher performance plays a vital role in improving student achievement and educational outcomes. However, to fully understand what drives teacher

performance, additional predictors – particularly internal ones – need to be considered. This study, therefore, aims to examine the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between sense of calling and teacher performance.

2. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative correlational approach to examine the role of job satisfaction in the relationship between sense of calling and teacher performance. The research population consisted of teachers working in Lamongan Regency, with a total sample of 321 individuals teaching at kindergarten, elementary, junior high, and senior high school levels. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, targeting teachers aged over 25 years with a minimum of two years of teaching experience. These criteria were chosen to ensure a heterogeneous sample that had established work involvement and clear professional orientation.

Teacher performance was measured using the Job Performance of Teacher Scale adapted by Sultana (2020), consisting of 17 items with a reliability coefficient of 0.893. Sense of calling was assessed using the Sense of Calling Scale developed by Jain & Kaur (2021), which contains 10 items and has a reliability of 0.93. Job satisfaction was measured using the Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale adapted by Pepe et al. (2017), consisting of 9 items with a reliability of 0.897. The data were analyzed using Hayes' PROCESS macro in SPSS to test for mediation effects.

3. RESULTS

The subjects of this study were 321 teachers from kindergarten, elementary, middle and high school levels, with details in the table below.

Table 1. Description of research subjects

	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage
Age	25 – 35 years	106	33,03%
	36 – 45 years	127	39,56%
	46 years and above	88	27,41%
Marital Status	Unmarried	47	14,64%
	Married	274	85,36%
Gender	Female	209	65,11%
	Male	112	34,89%
Years of Service	2 – 10 years	91	28,35%
	11 – 20 years	177	55,14%
	21 years and above	53	16,51%
Teaching at	Kindergarten	74	23,05%
	Elementary School	103	32,09%
	Junior High School	89	27,73%
	High School	55	17,13%

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Table 1 shows that the majority of research subjects were between 25 and 45 years old, indicating that they were in their productive working age. Most of the respondents were married, which suggests they had household responsibilities that could influence their work orientation. In terms of gender, the number of female participants was higher than that of males. Regarding work experience, most respondents had worked for 11 to 20 years, indicating a substantial level of professional experience. Educational level data showed that most participants were elementary school teachers, who play a strategic psychological role in guiding students through critical developmental phases from childhood to adolescence, thus contributing significantly to character formation.

Table 2. Description of research results

Variables	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Sense of Calling	Low	59	18,4
	Moderate	133	41,4
	High	129	40,2
Job Satisfaction	Low	69	21,5
	Moderate	107	33,3
	High	145	45,2
Teacher Performance	Low	20	6,2
	Moderate	173	53,9
	High	128	39,9

The research results can be described as follows:

Table 2 illustrates that 81.6% of the research subjects had a moderate to high level of sense of calling, indicating a relatively strong intrinsic motivation toward the teaching profession. Job satisfaction among the respondents was also notably positive, with 78.5% falling into the moderate to high categories. Additionally, teacher performance was reported to be fairly high, with 93.8% of the respondents demonstrating performance levels within the moderate to high range.

Table 3. Correlation Test

The results of the correlation test analysis show that each research variable has a significant correlation as written in the table below:

	Y	X	M
Y Pearson Correlation	1	0,626	0,574
Sig		0,000	0,000
X Pearson Correlation	0,626	1	0,661
Sig	0,000		0,000
M Pearson Correlation	0,574	0,661	1
Sig	0,000	0,000	

Table 2 illustrates that 81.6% of the research subjects had a moderate to high level of sense of calling, indicating a relatively strong intrinsic motivation toward the teaching profession. Job satisfaction among the respondents was also notably positive, with 78.5% falling into the moderate to high categories. Additionally, teacher performance was reported to be fairly high, with 93.8% of the respondents demonstrating performance levels within the moderate to high range.

Table 4. Hayes model test

The results of the data analysis show that job satisfaction has a significant role in describing the relationship between sense of calling and teacher performance. This can be seen in the table below.

Effect	Standart Error	t	LLCI	ULCI
0.1213	0.0640	3.7040	0.0881	0.3341

Description: the number of respondents was 321 people., $p < .05$

4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the role of job satisfaction in the relationship between sense of calling and teacher performance. The findings indicate that job satisfaction significantly mediates this relationship. Specifically, when teachers have a strong sense of calling and high job satisfaction, their performance tends to increase. This highlights the crucial role of job satisfaction in enhancing the impact of calling on teacher performance.

Calling is a psychological state characterized by a deep sense of meaning, responsibility, and passion for one's work. According to Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas (2012), calling is a powerful internal mental structure and subjective experience that drives individuals to pursue meaningful contributions in their specific fields. Those with a strong sense of calling often exhibit unwavering commitment, losing interest in other career paths and sometimes viewing their work as their life's purpose. Such individuals are marked by high levels of internal motivation and enthusiasm, perceiving their profession as a moral duty that inspires meaningful contributions (Hagmaier & Abele, 2012).

This sense of calling emerges from the alignment between one's job, social interest, and self-worth, which leads to positive attitudes and behaviors toward work (Wang & Dai, 2017). Various studies have shown that a strong sense of calling enhances meaning, responsibility, and performance in both individual and organizational contexts, as well as in the broader work environment (Ehrhardt & Ensher, 2021; Cardador et al., 2011; Xie, 2008; Lee, 2016).

Other studies have also shown that individuals with a strong sense of calling tend to experience higher job satisfaction and stronger career commitment (Park et al., 2019; Kaminsky & Behrend, 2015). Teachers who feel called to teach are often more motivated and dedicated to their work, holding a more positive perception of their profession. This, in turn, fosters positive work attitudes and a greater sense of job satisfaction (Zhang & Chen, 2019). Such

individuals are more likely to identify with their profession and the organization where they work, which encourages deeper engagement and contributes to increased job satisfaction (Cao et al., 2019; Kent et al., 2016; Faletahan et al., 2021).

These findings reinforce the evidence that sense of calling, job satisfaction, and teacher performance are interrelated as predictor and outcome variables. The current study has successfully demonstrated the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between sense of calling and teacher performance. According to Duffy et al. (2012), teachers with a high sense of calling are more likely to experience greater job satisfaction. In turn, job satisfaction contributes to enhanced prosocial work motivation, which has been shown to improve work performance and efficiency (Jiayi et al., 2019).

This study involved teachers across all levels of education as research participants. Each educational level presents distinct roles and responsibilities for teachers, suggesting that teachers at different levels may also possess unique characteristics. This highlights a limitation of the study, as it does not provide specific insights tailored to each educational level.

5. Conclusion

The research findings indicate that job satisfaction plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between sense of calling and teacher performance. To improve teacher performance, it is essential to foster job satisfaction—particularly in aspects related to the principal's leadership, relationships with students' parents, and student behavior. To enhance job satisfaction, schools should improve communication with stakeholders, cultivate a healthy work environment, and promote professional values that align with spiritual principles.

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