

# Relationship between Resilience and Quality of Life (QOL) of Special Education Teachers

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The resilience of the teacher will be tested when faced with conflicts, challenges and problems that occur in the education system. To stay in the teaching profession, teachers' resilience is the most important element that needs to be addressed well. A teacher's ability to control the situation by continuing professionalism and teaching ethics is said to have good endurance. However, the relationship between teacher resilience and the quality of work life of teachers is still underestimated, especially involving special education teachers working with students with learning problems. Therefore, this study is conducted to determine the relationship between the durability and the quality of work life of a special education teacher learning problem. The study was conducted quantitatively using survey as the method. The census sampling technique was used for 60 special education specialists in the Central Melaka District. The data collection was through the questionnaire using two adapted instruments namely the Special Education Career Resilience Scale (SECRS) and Teachers' Work Quality Instrument. Items have been analysed using Pearson product-moment correlation. The findings show that there is a significant relationship ( $r = 0.713$ ) between resilience and the quality of working life of special education teachers. For resilience, the theme acceptance construct reported significant correlation with resilience ( $r = +0.714$ ) followed by support of self-awareness ( $r = +0.657$ ), conversion ( $r = +0.631$ ) and the connectedness ( $r = +0.547$ ) with resilience. For relationship between quality of working life constructs with resilience, the significant highest correlation is psychological need ( $r = +0.720$ ), followed by social need ( $r = +0.691$ ), political need ( $r = +0.515$ ) and the lowest is economical need ( $r = +0.505$ ). The findings suggest that there is a critical need for

teachers to understand certain elements that enhance teachers' resilience. Future research using qualitative approaches are expected to provide information that the Ministry can use as a guide in identifying improvements to boost resilience among special education teachers especially when working with students with learning problems.

**Key words:** *resilience, quality of work life of teachers, special education, learning problems.*

## Introduction

The diverse world of special education teachers can challenge the credibility and resilience of teachers to produce student success. The challenges faced by the teachers not only need to be addressed with patience but also the attitude of empathy. The empathy need to be inculcated in order for students to enjoy being in the classroom. Special Education Learning Disabilities student terminologies are complex due to the variety of courses according to students' abilities such as students with Down syndrome, Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and Smart Intelligence (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2000). This study is more general without distinguishing the capabilities and differences of the students. Although every problem faced by students is different, the challenges that teachers face still requires considerable mental and physical strength. Previous research shows several studies related to adversity (Mohd Effendi, 2019b, 2019a; Mohd Effendi, Ahmad Zamri, Nordin, 2018; Mohd Effendi, Ahmad Zamri, Nordin, & Maslawati, 2017; Mohd Effendi, Ahmad Zamri, Siti Mistima, Nor Adila, & Effa Rina, 2018). However, this recent research is not focusing on teachers but on students themselves.

Teacher resilience when working with special education students with learning problems can affect the quality of work and motivation of teachers if not addressed properly. Some of the problems that students often face are idle sitting, short attention spans, concentration problems, distraction, fast forgetfulness, turn around and impulsive cases (Chiang, 2018). Teachers need to be more patient and calm when dealing with these problems. These special needs students should be treated with special criteria to produce special education teachers and quality students (Razhiyah, 2006; Chang, 2017). The quality of work life of teachers as defined by Nurmawati (2016) identifies that the concept of quality of work life of teachers is closely related to the concept of Quality of Work Life which is the perception of workers towards their work, work environment and organization which can enhance the well-being, satisfaction, and motivation of work to produce good work productivity. This argument is supported by Nordin and Lei (2017) who state that the quality of work life of teachers is a comprehensive construct aimed at developing individual (workers) that involves employee well-being such as providing a

useful and enjoyable work experience, meeting the personal needs of employees as individuals and avoiding stress and negative effects of work.

As a result, studies on the quality of life of teachers and the relevance of teacher resilience when working with special education students should be addressed and studied. This study involves two main contexts, namely the resilience and quality of work life of special education teachers and aims to indicate whether there is a positive relationship between these two contexts. Although there have been previous studies on the resilience of special education teachers as well as the quality of work life of special education teachers in Malaysia, recent studies have found no contribution to resilience in the quality of work life of special education specialists with learning disabilities. Therefore, this study is very important and needs attention from the teachers and the Ministry of Education in particular to further strengthen the profession of special education teachers in Malaysia so as not to be underestimated by the public while increasing the level of public appreciation of this noble profession.

### **Teachers' resiliency**

Connor and Davidson (2003) define resilience as a personal quality that enables one to thrive in the face of adversity. By becoming more resilient you can bring new direction and energy to your career, increase the number of interviews and job offers you receive, and find greater enjoyment in your life (Taylor & Davda, 2015; CHE & Sundjo 2018). Studies on the resilience of teachers and the teachers' quality of work have been conducted both domestically and abroad. The study by Noorashikin and Ruslin (2014) argues that teacher resilience is closely linked to the ability to meet numerous challenges in the teaching profession from various aspects. As teachers' resilience decreases, many negative implications arise that affect the teaching profession. This argument is supported by Norhamizan and Ferlis (2017) state that special education teachers need to deal with a wide range of student disabilities. This, in turn will increase the difficulty as each student is a unique case. So, teachers need to customize their teaching to suit each student with disabilities and provide individual education programs. Therefore, resilience is essential to ensure that special education teachers are able to recover from difficult situations and thus have a positive impact on their quality of life. A study by Downing (2017) that focuses on the concept of resilience for high-endurance special education teachers found that teachers who chose special education were teachers who are very interested in the development of special education students from day to day through direct or indirect observation. In this regard, indirect observation can foster a strong sense of resilience in special education teachers to continue in the field of special education.

## **Quality of Life (QoL) for Special Education Teachers**

Teachers' needs in the quality of work life of teachers can be divided into four dimensions namely psychological, social, political and economic needs (Nordin, 2017; Ching-Sheue, et.al 2017). These aspects need attention from schools and other educational organizations to ensure that teachers' needs are met and that they have a positive impact on teacher productivity and organizational effectiveness.

Through a study of the psychometric characteristics of the instrument and the quality of work life of teachers conducted in primary schools in Aceh and three northern states in Malaysia, Nurmawati (2016) emphasizes that teachers are not only limited to the delivery of knowledge, but should also be able to motivate students to learn and create conducive learning environments in the classroom. This study also states that a good quality of work life of teachers can influence job performance and effectiveness in producing excellent human models based on the aspirations of any country. A study by Organiza (2016) shows that there is a very high correlation between motivation and quality of life of special education teachers and emphasizes that teacher motivation can be enhanced if the quality of work life of teachers is guaranteed. The results of this study also demonstrate a significant relationship between motivation and quality of life of special education teachers.

Based on these studies, there is a need to carry out a study of the relationship between resilience and the quality of work of special education teachers as these two components are crucial for producing quality and capable independent learners. In addition, it is undeniable that the quality of work life of a special education teacher is closely related to job satisfaction (Daniel, 2017).

### **Methodology**

This study used a quantitative approach through the survey research method. The census sampling applied to the population of all 60 special education teachers in special education programs in secondary schools were picked as a sample of this study. Census sampling may be the best approach for small populations as mentioned by Hair, Celsi, Oritinau, & Bush (2017). The location of the study is limited only in the State of Malacca. The reason is that there are international special education centres and active involvement in the field of special education.

### ***Instrumentation***

The researcher has adapted two instruments. The first instrument is the Special Education Career Resilience Scale (SECRS) was created by Arden Sotomayor (2012). This instrument was purposely used to measure the level of resilience of special education teachers. The questionnaire contained 71 items consisting of four constructs named: Theme Acceptance,

Support of Self-Awareness, Conversion, and Connectedness. The questionnaire has also been subjected to review at various stages and is still relevant as no recent version has been released. The measurement for this questionnaire was based on a five-point Likert Scale measurement. The Quality of Life Teacher Work instrument developed by Nordin, Hazri, Mohd Hashim and Mohammad Zohir (2007) was used to measure the quality of work life. There are 63 items in total not including the demographic of the respondents. It contained the four constructs of psychological, social, political and economic. Both instruments used a 6-point Likert scale (0 = strongly disagree, 1 = moderately disagree, 2 = slightly disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = moderately agree, 5 = strongly agree) to determine the extent of agreement.

### ***Item reliability***

Reliability refers to an indication of the stability and consistency with which the instrument measures the concept and help to access the goodness of a measure (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The reliability value for this study was 0.9 and in line with Sidek (2005) that mentioned it was the maximum agreed upon. These values indicated that the items in the instrument of quality of life of a special education teacher are excellent, effective and of high consistency. Hair et al (2017) suggested that all items must have a reliability greater than 0.7 to determine high internal consistency. Therefore, the items reliability are satisfactory and sufficient for research.

### ***Data analysis procedure***

Data were analysed using the software of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. This study used correlation analysis to analyse the relationship between resilience and work quality of life. Pearson correlation is one of the most commonly used methods by scientists to study relationships. The Pearson correlation coefficient is used to measure the linear dependence of the two variables introduced by Karl Pearson. Rule Of Thumb is used to interpret the strength of relationships generated through the Pearson Correlation test. The range of coefficient is based on Hair et al (2017) that stated  $\pm 0.81$  to  $\pm 1.00$  (very strong),  $\pm 0.61$  to  $\pm 0.80$  (strong),  $\pm 0.41$  to  $\pm 0.60$  (moderate),  $\pm 0.21$  to  $\pm 0.40$  (weak), and  $\pm 0.00$  to  $\pm 0.20$  (weak to no relationship).

One of the considerations for analysing the parametric test is assessing the normality. This research used Kolmogorov-Smirnov analysis as Table 1 and revealed that the  $p > 0.05$  with sig. 0.004. If the sig. value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test is greater than 0.05, the data is normal. The data is normally distributed and fulfils the requirements of parametric testing.

**Table 1 :** Test of normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
<b>Quality of life</b>	.095	60	.200*	.938	60	.004

\*. *This is a lower bound of the true significance.*

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

## Results

The findings in Table 2 show that there is a high correlation between resilience and quality of life of special education teachers' ( $r = +0.713$ ).

**Table 2 :** Relationship between resilience and quality of life of special education teachers using Pearson correlation test

	Resilience	Quality of life	Sig.(2-tailed)
<b>Resilience</b>	1	0.713	.000
<b>Quality of life</b>	0.713	1	.000

\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The results shows a high positive correlation and indicate a significant relationship between resilience and quality of life. Therefore, special education teachers with high resilience are more likely to have a high quality of work life. This finding indicates that the quality of work quality of a special education teacher can be expected through the degree of resilience of the special education teacher themselves.

Table 3 display the relationship between the construct of resilience (theme acceptance, support of self-awareness, conversion and connectedness) and the quality of life using Pearson correlation test.

**Table 3 :** Relationship between the construct of resilience and quality of life of special education teachers using the Pearson correlation test

	Quality of life	Sig.(2-tailed)
<b>Resilience</b>	0.713	.000
▪ <b>Theme Acceptance (TA)</b>	0.714	.000
▪ <b>Support of Self-Awareness (SSA)</b>	0.657	.000
▪ <b>Conversion (CV)</b>	0.631	.000
▪ <b>Connectedness (CN)</b>	0.547	.000

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on Table 3, the results show a correlation between the constructs of resilience and the quality of work life of special education teachers. The data generally points out that there is a significant relationship between all the conceptual constructs of quality of work life of special education teachers with resilience. The theme acceptance construct reported significantly very strong correlation with resilience ( $r = +0.714$ ). The support of self-awareness ( $r = +0.657$ ), and conversion ( $r = +0.631$ ) classified as strong correlation with resilience and connectedness has been reported as a significantly moderate correlation ( $r = +0.547$ ) with resilience.

Table 3 shows the correlation analysis between the quality of work life constructs and resilience. The significant highest correlation is psychological need ( $r = +0.720$ ), followed by social need ( $r = +0.691$ ), political need ( $r = +0.515$ ) and the lowest is economical need ( $r = +0.505$ ).

**Table 3 :** Relationship between the construct of quality of life of special education teachers with resilience using Pearson correlation test

	<b>Resilience</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
<b>Quality of life</b>	0.713	.000
▪ <b>Psychological need (Psy)</b>	0.720	.000
▪ <b>Social need (Soc)</b>	0.691	.000
▪ <b>Political need (Pol)</b>	0.515	.000
▪ <b>Economical need (Econ)</b>	0.505	.000

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Psychological need with the resilience of special education teachers showed a high positive correlation with a value of  $r = 0.720$  and was the highest value compared to the other constructs. Results also specified that there is a significant relationship between the psychological needs with the resilience of special education teachers. In addition, it shows the resilience of special education teachers can be expected to have a significant impact on the psychological needs for their quality of work life (Chen, 2016).

Furthermore, the results of the analysis involving the correlation between social needs and the resilience of special education teachers with significant high positive correlation with a value of  $r = 0.691$ . This value is slightly lower than the psychological needs construct. For political constructs with the resilience of special education teachers showed a moderate positive correlation with a value of  $r = 0.515$ . This value is slightly lower compared to the construction of psychological and social needs. It was believed that there is a significant relationship between the construction of political needs and the resilience of special education teachers. For economic need with the resilience of special education teachers showed a significant moderate positive correlation with  $r = 0.505$ . This construct is the lowest  $r$  value constructor among the other constructs.

## **Discussion**

The strong correlation between resilience with quality of work life for special education teachers explained that special education teachers with high resilience are also likely to have a high quality of work life. This indicated that the quality of work life for special education teacher can be expected through the level of resilience. It means that if a special education teacher is more exposed to factors that contribute to resilience, then teachers can work productively according to the natural profession in where they work. This is in line with the motivation of special education teachers as stated by Organiza (2016) that high levels of motivation also lead to increased quality of work life of teachers. Theme acceptance from resilience is the highest correlation with the quality of work life of teachers. According to Sotomayor (2012), theme acceptance is defined as the use of resilience theory to guide organizational activities and programs. This is practiced among education staff, professional development groups and policy makers. For itself, it is only the staff in the education sector who are able to handle the pressures and changes that often occur in their work. This is in line with the findings of this study that prove the theme acceptance constructs is sufficient domain in driving the resilience of special education teachers. While connectedness construct is the most not dominant but it is still within the moderate relationship with the quality of work life of special education teachers. This concept of connectivity enables special education teachers to experience a community that supports and engages with members of the same community. However, this study still shows that this construct of connection also contributes to resilience with modest positive values as few of these constructs provide guidance on the day-to-day stress contributors where special education teachers work to strengthen problem-solving skills (Sotomayor, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

The career as special education teacher is a very rewarding as only a selected few peoples are willing to sacrifice their mental and physical resources to educate these special children. Special education teachers should always inculcate an attitude that is not easy to give up as it is a demanding profession that instils a high degree of patience and a strong resilience. This is to ensure that teachers are able to maintain their productivity and continue contribute to the special needs group. The impact of this will indirectly increase the quality of work life of special education teachers with learning disabilities.

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