

The Influence of Resilience on the Quality of Work Life for Special Education Teachers Specialising in the Learning Problems Context

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The purpose of this paper is to understand how the quality of work life is influenced by resilience among special education teachers. Today's challenges demand high resilience teachers, especially in the special education context. Resilient teachers are essential to producing successful students. However, there are questions at the same time about the impact on the quality of work of the teachers' lives. This study was conducted quantitatively using the survey method. The census sampling technique was used for 60 special education specialists in the Central Melaka District. The data collection was through questionnaire using two adapted instruments namely the Special Education Career Resilience Scale (SECRS) and Teachers' Work Quality Instrument. Data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25.0 for linear regression analysis. The findings show that there is a significant relationship between resilience and the quality of work life. The results revealed that 50.9 percent of participants demonstrated that resilience contributed to the quality of work life. The limitations of this study is that it was only conducted using survey with questionnaire and the results could be developed through suggesting or implementing ideas about how to improve the quality of work life for the teacher other than through resilience. This paper explores ways to understand and further develop suitable resilience-oriented, development programs for special education teachers. The value of the study is that it explores resilience in different fields to improve the overall quality of work life (especially in the special education context).

Key words: *Influence, resilience, quality of work life, Special Education Teacher, Learning Problems.*

Introduction

Special education teachers are highly trained and skilled individuals to be able to meet the requirements of special needs students (Mazlina, 2013). Special education teachers are individuals who are sensitive to the needs of their students (Aiyaleso, 2016). They never assume that every student has the same special characteristics, and always try to meet the individual needs of each student (Noor Aini & Norhafizah, 2015). Therefore, the special education teachers are person who skilled and versatile in dealing with special needs students of various backgrounds.

Special education teachers often face challenges when dealing with special needs students from diverse backgrounds (Aiyaleso, 2016; Nor Hamizan & Ferlis, 2017). Special needs students are different from each other and these individual differences mean inequalities whether based cognitive, emotional, physical, moral, behavioural and or social function or talent; and other aspects of the group may exist (Nor Hamizan & Ferlis, 2017). Negative behaviours that students display as learning problems can become more complex if not addressed early on (Noor Aini & Norhafizah, 2015). Special education teachers who are unable to cope with the fear of failure cannot teach effectively due to these feelings and cause the teacher to feel pressured (Mazlina, 2013).

Special education teachers for students with learning problems need to be constantly mindful of different strategies and techniques when dealing with students (Kannan & Kasran, 2015; Eman et al., 2015; Mazlina, 2013). Teachers of students with special needs should be aware of the problems they face. This phenomenon demonstrates the importance for teachers to have resilience. The role of the teacher in special education is unique and has its own challenges and requires them to have endurance (Nor Hamizan & Ferlis, 2017). This is because they need to take steps to address the problems faced by the students immediately so that they do not miss out on lessons (Kannan & Kasran, 2015). Previous research in Malaysia shows the interest towards resiliency and related intelligence like adversity quotient (Ahmad Zamri & Mohd Effendi, 2017; Mohd Effendi, 2019a, 2019b; Mohd Effendi, Ahmad Zamri, Siti Mistima Maat, Nor Adila, & Effa Rina, 2018; Mohd Effendi & Ahmad Zamri, 2016). Unfortunately, this focus group is lacking as it does not address how teachers' adversities, like work stress, can cause serious problems such as burnout.

Their general role as a mainstream or special education teacher actually demands that they have high motivation, such as resilience, as a source of strength to overcome the pressures in

the teaching profession (Taylor, 2013). Teachers need to have the resilience to achieve satisfaction and success in every aspect of their career and life (Mohd Salmi et al., 2015). Teachers need to be resilient and able to cope with the current development of the education system in Malaysia (Ismail Sabri et al., 2011; Haque & Chandio, 2013). Therefore, teachers who are less resilient in performing the task will have an impact on the quality of work life.

Problem statement

Education Statistics Malaysia (2016) shows that the current ratio of special needs students enrolment to one teacher is five or six. The increase of the number of students with learning problems has made the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers more challenging and burdensome. The workload contributes to the pressure they face. High stress can affect the quality of work and negatively affect the teacher's personal life (Nor Hamizan & Ferlis 2017; Payne & Firth 1987). Stress also causes burnout and a desire for teachers to leave their profession (Kahn, 1993; Khalim & Jamil, 2011). These challenges and obstacles demand high-resilience among special education teachers to be able to cope with all the changes and realise the national education goals. Special education teachers for students with learning problems play an important role as a key determinant in the quality education for their students (Aiyaleso 2016; Gu, 2018). They have been entrusted with the responsibility to provide quality education and to ensure that they have sufficient knowledge, skills, understanding and abilities to deal with their students (Mazlina 2013). Students with learning problems need more creative and unique attention and approaches than typical students. This is because the way they process information is different. Therefore, resilience needs to be present in special education teachers because resilience is an individual's success in adapting to risks and difficulties (Greeff 2005).

Special education teachers need to deal with a diversity of students' learning problems and this increases the difficulty of their role (Nor Hamizan & Ferlis 2017). Teachers must customise their teaching to suit every student with disabilities by providing individual education programs. Anne (2017) stated that special education teachers require physical strength to lift, transport, transfer, feed and take care of their students' biological needs at any time. Special education teachers who teach special needs students require a very high degree of patience to treat their various interests (Mazlina 2013). Resilience is essential to ensure that special education teachers are able to recover from difficult situations and that they do not impact on their quality of work life. Teachers in special education face challenges in terms of parental involvement, level of awareness and parental support for the future of special needs children (Nor Hamizan & Ferlis 2017). The attitude of the parents can place more burden on teachers. This situation is a major challenge in special education (Nor Hamizan & Ferlis 2017). It also affects the quality of work life for the special education teacher and thus motivates them. Therefore, the resilience of the teachers should be enhanced

so that teachers are able to assess negative situations, be aware of options to address problems and be able to solve problems well (Lawrence & Anthony 2009). Teachers with resilience will certainly be able to control the situation, while also being able to continue their professionalism based on their teaching ethics. Poor teacher resilience leads to negative effects such as emotional stress and depression which can eventually result in burnout (Mohd Salmi et al. 2015; Hakim & Kasenda 2018).

Recent studies on the resilience of special education teachers and the quality of work life have been conducted in Malaysia. However, these studies do not focus on the impact of resilience on the quality of work life of special education teachers specialising in the learning problems context. Such studies are very important and should be noted by the teachers and the Ministry of Education especially in order to strengthen the profession of special education in Malaysia. Therefore, the lack of focus on the impact of resilience towards quality of work life leads to investigating the impact of resilience on the quality of work life for special education teachers specialising in the learning problems context.

Literature review

Resilience can be defined as the ability to use the skills, knowledge and strengths to adapt to stress, adversity, and challenge (Richardson et al. 1990). It is said to be capable of coping with challenging situations and recovering from distress (Beltman et al. 2011; Hanifah et al 2018). Resilience also refers to the ability of dynamic systems to adapt to disruptions that threaten system function, viability and development (Masten 2014). Resilience is also associated with increased job performance and job satisfaction (Avey et al. 2011). Glantz and Johnson (2002) explain that resilience is the process of developing the capacity to withstand physical, social and emotional challenges.

Two factors that influence a teacher's resilience are risk factors and protective factors (Nor Hamizan & Ferlis 2017). Risk factors can come from cultural, economic, or environmental factors that put an individual at risk of failure in the face of difficult situations. Risk factors describe several influences that may increase the likelihood of a deviation occurring to more serious circumstances. While protective factors are characteristic of individuals or conditions of family, school, or community that enhance the ability of individuals to cope with the challenges of living well. Protective factors have a high impact on an individual's recovery from the difficulties that they experiences in life. Benders & Jackson (2012) argue that teacher resilience as a variable is related to confidence and effectiveness, efficiency, sense of belonging, and usefulness. Resilience is a contributing factor to teachers' success in the teaching profession (Tait 2008). Resilience is also an important factor of success for a teacher's career and life. Resilience is an important aspect of ensuring that teachers in the country are performing well (Mohd Salmi et al. 2015).

Quality of work life is a comprehensive framework aimed at developing an individual (employee) that engages employees' well-being, providing a rewarding work experience, meeting the personal needs of employees as individuals and avoiding stress and negative effects of work (Nordin et al. 2009; Nordin & Lei Mee Thien 2017). The quality of work life of teachers is the employee's perception of his / her work environment, work environment and organisation which can enhance job wellbeing, satisfaction, and motivation to produce good work productivity (Nurmawati 2016; Handa, 2018). The quality of work life of teachers is defined as the extent to which teachers evaluate the ability of the school organisation and the schoolwork environment to meet their needs. The quality of work life of teachers was measured using the instrument developed by Nordin et al. (2009). The four dimensions of the quality of work life of teachers are: psychological, social, political and economic needs (Nordin et al. 2009; Nurmawati 2016).

Psychological needs are the extent to which the internal organisation of the school meets the psychological needs of teachers to achieve an acceptable level of self-esteem, self-respect and self-esteem. Nordin & Lei Mee Thien (2017) argue that the basic principle of quality of work life is that individuals want to meet their psychological needs through work that leads to job satisfaction such as respect, recognition and appreciation by the organisation in which the teacher works. Social needs means the extent to which the internal organisation of the school can meet the social needs of teachers, in terms of relationships with colleagues, collaboration and work comfort (Nordin et al. 2009; Nordin & Lei Mee Thien 2017). There are two dimensions of social needs, namely co-workers' relationships and cooperation in performing school or group tasks. Good communication and collaboration between teachers and between teachers and administrators can help schools achieve the goal of producing quality human capital (Nordin et al. 2009; Nordin & Lei Mee Thien 2017). Political needs means the extent to which the internal organisation of the school meets the political needs of teachers, namely democracy and autonomy, the trust and honesty of co-workers and justice and conflict in the school (Nordin & Lei Mee Thien, 2017). Therefore, the dimension of political needs is an important factor in producing a good quality of work life for teachers and should be measured in the context of schools in Malaysia (Nordin & Lei Mee Thien 2017). Economic needs are defined as the internal state of the school organisation that can meet the economic needs of teachers such as salaries, rewards and compensation (Nordin & Lei Mee Thien 2017)

Nordin et al. (2009) stated that the success and effectiveness of a school organisation depends on the ability of the organization to attract, motivate and retain its workforce. Nurmawati (2016) points out that the quality of work life of teachers can influence work performance and effectiveness in producing excellent human models based on the aspirations of any country. Support from the administration has a positive and significant impact on the quality of service as well as the resilience of the special education teacher (Brienne 2017). Several

previous studies on the impact of resilience on the quality of work life of teachers have been conducted such as Brienne (2017) and Travis (2015) that show administrative support has a positive and significant impact on the quality of service and resilience of special education teachers. Research has shown that personal resilience is key to strengthening the existing resilience. The study by Eman et al. (2015) identified the quality of work life for the special education teacher based on three main domains namely social, physical and psychological needs by gender, type of specialisation and highest academic qualifications of the special education teacher. Studies show that the physical and psychological needs domain greatly influences the quality of work life for the special education teacher. They were more focused on mental and physical health than the social domain. The social domain was less responsive because teachers focused on their responsibilities and workload.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative approach through the survey research method. The census sampling was applied and where all 60 special education teachers in special education programs in secondary schools were picked to be the sample of this study. Census sampling may be the best approach for small population as mentioned by Hair, Celsi, Oritinau, & Bush (2017).

The location of the study is limited only in the State of Malacca. The reason is because there are international special education centres and active involvement in the field of special education in this location.

The instruments used in this study consisted of two instruments, the Special Education Career Resilience Scale (SECRS) and the Quality of Life of the Teacher (KKKG). The SECRS instrument is adapted in advance and has undergone a review of various stages. The instrument of this study is divided into three sections, Part A is the demographic profile of the respondents. Part B consists of 71 questionnaire items related to teacher resilience. Part C consists of 63 questionnaire items related to the quality of work life of teachers. Sections B and C were tested using a five-point Likert scale of 1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree. Data were analysed using the software of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. This study used linear regression analysis to analyse the influence of resilience on the quality of work life. One of the considerations for analysing parametric test (linear regression) is assessing the normality. This research used Kolmogorov-Smirnov analysis as shown in Table 1 and revealed that the $p > 0.05$ was 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 requirement of parametric testing.

Table 1: Test of normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Quality of work life	.095	60	.200*	.938	60	.004

* This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Results and discussion

Tables 2, 3 and 4 below show the results of linear regression analysis on the impact of resilience on the quality of work life of teachers. Table 2 show the Model Summary table, as shown below The R value represents the simple correlation and is 0.713, which indicates a high degree of correlation. The R² value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable (quality of work life) can be explained by the independent variable (resilience). In this case, 50.9% of quality of life can be explained by the resilience score.

Table 2 : Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std Error of the Estimate
0.713^a	0.509	0.500	0.48580

a. Predictors: (Constant), Resilience

b. Dependent variable: Quality of work life

Table 2 shows that there was a strong positive and significant relationship between resilience and quality of work life of special education teachers specialising in the learning problems context with values of $r = 0.713$, $p < 0.05$. These results make it clear that teachers with high resilience may have a better quality of work life. Based on Table 2, the findings revealed that the variables of resilience can significantly account for 50.9% of the variance in quality of work life variables ($R^2 = 0.509$). The remaining 49.1% was contributed by other factors to the quality of work life that were not investigated in this study. The results in Table 3 from regression model was significant with F values $(1, 58) = 60.036$, $p < 0.05$ and $R^2 = 0.509$.

Table 3 : ANOVA^a

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	14.168	1	14.168	60.036	0.000 ^b
Residual	13.688	58	0.236		
Total	27.856	59			

a. Dependent variable: Quality of work life

b. Predictors: (Constant), Resilience

Table 4 : Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.042	0.476		0.088	0.930
Resilience	0.936	0.121	0.713	7.748	0.000

a. Dependent variable: Quality of work life

Table 4 shows the coefficients table provides the necessary information to predict quality of work life from resilience, as well as determine whether resilience factor contributes statistically significantly to the model. The results found that resilience ($\beta = 0.713$, $t = 7.748$, $p < 0.05$) was a significant predictor of the quality of work life for the special education teacher specialising in learning problems. Resiliency contributed positively to the quality of work life. This finding explains that the respondents with high resilience can influence their quality of work life. The expected quality of work life is $0.042 + 0.936$ (resilience). The quality of work life increased by 0.042 per percentage of resilience. The simple linear regression formula for this model is **Quality of work life = 0.042 + 0.936 (resilience)**.

The results show that resilience has influenced the variance of work quality of 50.9% of participants and positively contributed to the quality of work life. It is almost half of the quality of work life for a special education teacher influenced by resilience. The resilience is a significant predictor of the quality of work life. This situation explains that teachers with high resilience will have a better quality of work life. This proves that resilience is an essential element for a special education teacher specialising in learning problems. Lack of resilience in special education teachers makes it easy for them to experience emotional stress, depression and thus burnout symptoms (Mohd Salmi et al. 2015).

Conclusion and recommendations

Overall, the results show that resilience influences the quality of work life among special education teachers specialising in the learning problems context. Teachers who have a high degree of resilience in their work will have a better quality of work life. Therefore, teachers with high resilience can achieve great success in their careers and lives. This study has provided important information to officials from the Special Education Division of the Ministry of Education Malaysia, State Education Department, District Education Office, school administrators and special education teachers to identify the impact of resilience on the quality of work life of Special Education Learning Disorders. The findings of this study enable the Ministry of Education Malaysia, the State Education Department and the District Education Office to better plan the intervention programs needed in an effort to nurture and



enhance resilience among special education teachers. Administrators and the Division of Counselling & Counselling Unit can design and implement motivational courses that will help nurture and maintain teacher resilience. Mentoring programs for special education teachers need to be developed in order to increase their resilience. Collaboration and support from administrators, teachers and local communities also contribute to the resilience and quality of work life of teachers. The study also indirectly provided useful information to educational institutions and the Ministry of Education Malaysia to collect data related to the challenges experienced by special education teachers. The findings of this study can then serve as a guide for measuring the resilience of special education teachers. Therefore, the findings of this study are very important to facilitate the Ministry of Education Malaysia to detect factors that cause burnout symptoms among teachers. This study also provides awareness to special education teachers on the importance of resilience in improving the quality of work life as educators. Further research can be done to see the impact of resilience on the quality of work life of teachers in other districts or states. This study can also be conducted on primary or secondary teachers in preschool or primary school.

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