

# Appreciation Practice and Teacher's Job Performance

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i3/18555>

DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i3/18555

*Published Online:* 15 September 2023

## Abstract

In this era, people tend to seek understanding and acknowledgement in their work. This situation makes appreciation practice in the working environment increasingly important. This study investigates the appreciation practice and the teachers' job performance. The study is a pre-research on the appreciation practice and teachers' job performance among the teachers who study at the National University of Malaysia (UKM). This study is important as people nowadays hope their hard work pays off. When the worker is not encouraging, it might affect their job performance. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy Theory were applied to this study. Quantitative research was conducted with a questionnaire as an instrument. Pilot tests were carried out to validate the questionnaire. Mann Whitney U-Test was carried out to investigate the mean differences in the job performance of the teachers and gender. There are no mean differences between the job performance of the teachers and gender. However, there are some implications for school leaders to improve teacher satisfaction and acknowledgement of their job.

**Keywords:** Appreciation Practice, Acknowledgement, Job Performance, Teacher, Education

## Introduction

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025 (PPPM) aims to increase the quality of the teachers in the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG) (KPM, 2013). The Ministry of Education in Malaysia (MOE) understands that the appreciation and acknowledgement of teachers are very important. Prakosa (2021) mentioned that teachers should be motivated to work with satisfaction and enjoy their job. The MOE is working hard to encourage the teachers to teach, where MOE created the educational policy in various fields with attractive rewards or appreciation to the teachers. In the educational policy by MOE mentioned, the High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) project suggested seven types of strategies. Furthermore, one of them is by giving incentives as an appreciation to teachers who contribute excellent work (KPM, 2017). It is very interesting and can motivate the teacher to participate in the policy or project.

Teachers play an important role in preschool education and levels of education (Ibrahim, 2019). Therefore, teachers are the essential element in education; without teachers the education system will be collapsed. Thus, it is very important to ensure that teachers can

work happily. Holt (2022) stated that appreciation is one of the factors that affects teachers' performance.

Appreciation or recognition for workers is not only focused on employees in private companies, but employees in the government are also important. Teachers are public servants under the MOE. On 30 August 2022, the 9th Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob announced six appreciation initiatives for public servants (Yaakob, 2022). In the real world, appreciation for workers is a norm; however, some conflicts are still happening. Caroline (2022) mentioned that appreciation for employees is important because it is a type of motivation for them. 46% of employees quit because they felt unappreciated, and 65% of employees remained at the company because their colleagues valued their contributions. Therefore, appreciation for an employee is very important. It is to improve employee performance and keep employees working for a long time with a company (Caroline, 2022).

After reviewing previous studies, fewer studies examine the relationship between appreciation practices and teacher persistence. In this study, the researcher examines the relationship between teachers' perception of the experience of appreciation and the level of teacher performance in school. Maslow's Theory of Needs and Herzberg's Two Factor Theory will guide this study. Throughout this research, there are a few research questions brought out:

- i. What is the dominant of appreciation practice?
- ii. What is the level of performance among teachers? (Ibrahim, 2019)
- iii. Is there a mean difference among the level of performance and gender of teachers? (Yusoff, 2022)

Hypothesis research is stated to explain the mean difference among the performance level and teachers' gender.

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant mean difference between the level of performance and teachers' gender.

The objectives of the study are:

- i. To identify the most dominant practices of appreciation.
- ii. To identify the level of teachers' job performance.
- iii. To identify the mean difference between teacher performance and gender.

## **Literature Review**

### *Appreciation Practice*

Appreciation of individuals in their work is very important. The practice of appreciation motivates teachers to improve their performance (Ismail et al., 2019). According to a study by Kamaludin et al (2021), teacher appreciation can significantly affect teacher emotions. It also provides a good atmosphere for students in the classroom. If the appreciation and support for teachers are high, the teachers will also give high commitment (Abdin et al., 2018; Amin et al., 2019; Kamaludin et al., 2021; Yusoff & Abd Rahman, 2020). Recent studies have shown that appreciation practice is essential to teachers.

Besides that, according to the findings of the study by Kamaludin et al (2021), the level of teacher appreciation perception towards students is at a moderate level. There is much room for improvement in giving appreciation to teachers. Meanwhile, the study by Amin et al (2019) examines the Key Performance Indicator (KPI), rewards, and teacher performance. Additionally, the researchers also link rewards and teacher performance. The findings indicate that teachers with high KPI levels will be given higher rewards. The results of this study demonstrate a positive relationship between the provision of rewards and teacher

performance. Therefore, researchers can conclude that teachers' perception towards the practice of appreciation is crucial in their work.

### *Teachers' Job Performance*

Job performance refers to work achievements and work processes (Zulkafli & Mahbob, 2020). An individual's performance will be influenced by various factors such as motivational factors, transfer factors, and ability factors (Zakaria et al., 2020; Zulkafli & Mahbob, 2020). Teacher performance can be linked to academic achievements and professional training (Ismail et al., 2019).

There are some crucial discussions of previous studies, where Zakaria et al. (2020) found that the transfer of training factors has a positive effect on individual skills and attitudes. Meanwhile, Zulkafli and Mahbob (2020) found that ability and motivational factors have a positive effect on job performance. Besides, job performance is also influenced by workload factors, such as work environment and work pressure (Amin et al., 2019). Is the level of performance different between genders? The study by Suhaili (2022) states that there is no significant difference in teacher organizational commitment based on gender.

The study by Amin et al (2019) also found that the provision of fair rewards or incentives can motivate employees and improve work performance. Thus, it is concluded that teacher work performance is influenced by various factors, not only physical factors but also mental factors (Amin et al., 2019; Ismail et al., 2019; Zakaria et al., 2020; Zulkafli & Mahbob, 2020). To ensure teacher job performance, appropriate recognition and rewards should be provided.

Throughout the exploration of the recent studies, the current education environment not only focuses on the students but should also put much effort into making sure the pillars of education (the teachers) where the teacher should be given appropriate appreciation or rewards to encourage or motivate them to perform.

### *Theory and Model*

The application of appreciation or reward to teachers is based on the Herzberg Two-Factor Theory and Maslow's Needs Hierarchy Theory.

#### *Herzberg Two Factor Theory*

The founders of the Herzberg Two-Factor Theory were Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman in 1959 (Alshmemri et al., 2017). The theory has two models, namely the motivation-hygiene theory and the job enrichment theory. Studies show that both models are categorized as intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Fauziah et al., 2014). The introduced models were influenced by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Alshmemri et al., 2017; Bevins, 2018; Jones, 2011). In the Herzberg et al (1959) study, six motivational factors were identified as follows (Mustafa et al., 2022)

- i. Recognition
- ii. Achievement
- iii. Possibility of growth
- iv. Advancement
- v. Responsibility
- vi. The work itself

The abovementioned motivational factors refer to job content (Bevins, 2018; Herzberg et al., 1959). Meanwhile, hygiene factors are external factors for the worker. Hygiene factors are known as extrinsic factors (Wan Yusoff et al., 2014; Zaid-ALKilani & Abdulqader, 2020). Herzberg identified 10 hygiene factors in his study (Mustafa et al., 2022)

- i. Salary
- ii. Relation with supervisor
- iii. Relation with subordinate
- iv. Relation with peers
- v. Supervision of technical work
- vi. Company policy
- vii. Administration
- viii. Working conditions
- ix. Personal life
- x. Status
- xi. Job security

The hygiene factor is used to identify the level of work productivity for the employees (Bevins, 2018). In identifying the level of work motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic factors need to be studied (Badeg, 2020; Yusoff et al., 2014).

In the field of education, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory is used to identify the level of satisfaction and motivation among teachers in schools. Previous studies have shown that employee motivation and satisfaction will increase productivity (Mustafa et al., 2022). Furthermore, Mustafa et al (2022) stated that job satisfaction and motivation in education are significant for long-term development. Kelemnesh (2020) stated that a lack of motivational factors would result in employee dissatisfaction. Therefore, hygiene factors must be provided to employees to increase satisfaction levels. Accordingly, Zaid-ALKilani and Abdulqader (2020) found a positive relationship between job satisfaction and motivational factors in previous studies.

#### *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory (Maslow Theory)*

Abraham Maslow is the founder of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory. Maslow (1954) introduced a hierarchical system of needs that classified an individual's motives (Pardee, 1990). There are five categories in the hierarchy, as shown in the diagram below (E.E. & Nath. M., 2013; Maslow, 1954; Pardee, 1990; Saud Mira et al., 2019):

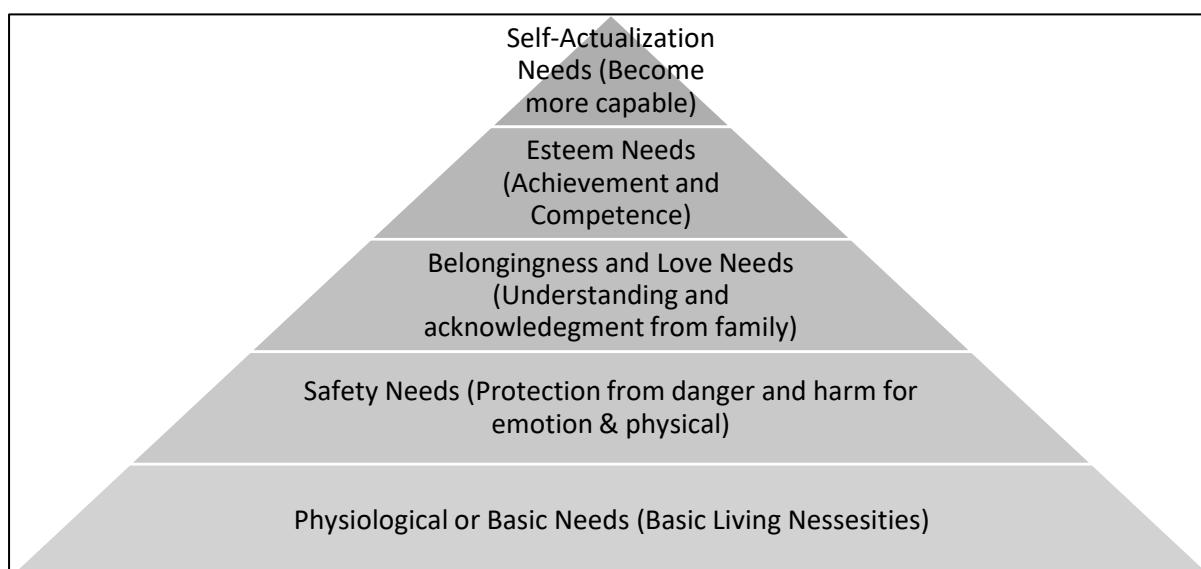


Figure 1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid (E.E. & Nath, 2013)

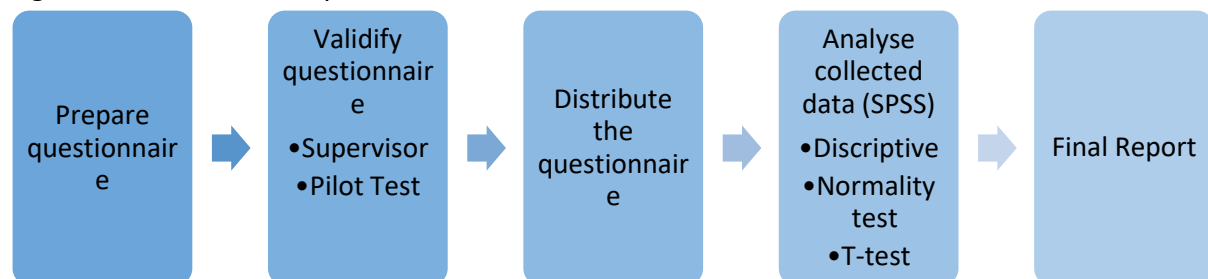
Referring to *Figure 1*, the most important need is the physiological need. If someone does not have physiological needs, they cannot fulfill or achieve higher needs (Pardee, 1990). Therefore, past studies have indicated that Maslow's hierarchy of needs meets an individual's needs rather than driving behaviour (Pardee, 1990; Mira et al., 2019). The highest level is the self-actualization need, which is the realization of one's potential that gives satisfaction and meaning to life (Mustaffa et al., 2017).

**Methodology**

This study uses a quantitative approach, and the researcher employs a survey research design. The selection of this approach is to utilise statistical software to analyse and measure the relationship between two or more variables of the study. The researcher uses a survey research design for data collection and employs a questionnaire instrument. Previous studies have used this method to assess teacher performance (Amin & Hamzah, 2021; Ibrahim, 2019). The population of this study is teachers who are pursuing further studies. The sampling of the study is teachers who are pursuing further studies at The National University of Malaysia. This study uses a simple random sampling method. The questionnaire was adapted from previous studies by (Amin et al., 2021; Amin et al., 2019; Ibrahim, 2019). Google Forms was used to create and distribute the questionnaire. The researcher modified and refined the questionnaire used by previous researchers and developed a questionnaire consistent with the current study. The questionnaire consists of three parts as follows

- i. Part A: Respondents' demographics
- ii. Part B: Teachers' perceptions of appreciation practices (5 points Likert scale)
- iii. Part C: Teachers' performance level at school (5 points Likert scale)

*Figure 2* Data collection procedure



*Figure 2* shows the procedure for data collection. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the researcher received assistance from a supervisor to validate the research instrument. Meanwhile, the reliability test of the questionnaire was tested using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28.0 software. The pilot study was conducted in SPSS and obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value. There are categories of Cronbach's Alpha values that indicate the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, as follows

Table 1  
*Cronbach's Alpha Value Table (Olaniyi, 2019; Taber, 2018)*

Cronbach's Alpha Value ( $\alpha$ )	Level of Validity and Reliability
$\alpha > 0.93$	Excellent
$0.70 < \alpha < 0.93$	Good
$0.58 < \alpha < 0.70$	Acceptable
$0.45 < \alpha < 0.58$	Low Satisfactory
$\alpha < 0.45$	Not Valid

## Results and Discussion

This research is preliminary research on the practice of appreciation and teachers' work performance. Pilot tests were carried out to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. There were 34 pilot study respondents who completed the questionnaire. The table below shows the findings of the pilot study's Cronbach's Alpha value.

Table 2

*Questionnaire Pilot Test Cronbach's Alpha Value*

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
Appreciation Practice	10	0.94
Level of Teachers' Work Performance	10	0.865
Average Cronbach's Alpha Value	20	0.939

After conducting the pilot study, the researcher distributed the link to the questionnaire ("Google Forms") in the telegram group "Siswazah FPend Sem 1 2022/2023". The group consists of 283 teachers who are pursuing their studies at *Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* (UKM). Only 35 teachers completed the questionnaire. The researcher used SPSS to conduct a descriptive analysis of the demographic data. The findings of the data analysis are presented in Table 3, which shows the descriptive analysis of the overall respondent demographics.

Table 3

*Descriptive Analysis of Respondent*

	A1. Gender	A2. Marriage Status	A3. Age	A4. Highest Education Level	A5. Teaching Experience	A6. Teaching in current school (Year)
N Valid	35	35	35	35	35	35
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	.83	.80	1.03	3.14	.51	.17
Std. Deviation	.382	.406	.453	.355	.507	.382

*Descriptive Analysis of Appreciation Practices and Levels of Teacher Work Performance*

Table 4

*Descriptive Analysis of Appreciation Practice*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
B1. I feel that receiving recognition from the company is important to me.	35	4.74	.611
B2. I feel that giving support/encouragement to other teachers is a form of recognition for others.	35	4.71	.519
B3. I feel that support/encouragement from the principal is a form of recognition for me.	35	4.83	.382
B4. I feel that receiving a certificate in a school assembly is a form of recognition for me.	35	4.57	.850
B5. I feel that receiving cash is a form of recognition for me.	35	4.37	.973
B6. I feel that being given flexibility to continue my studies is a form of recognition for me.	35	4.86	.692
B7. I feel that an end-of-year school feast is a form of recognition for me.	35	4.29	.957
B8. I feel that receiving a thank you message from the director/others is a form of recognition for me.	35	4.69	.796
B9. I feel that expressing gratitude to the director/others is a form of recognition for others.	35	4.66	.802
B10. I feel that recognition from the company/administration highly motivates me to work harder.	35	4.89	.323
Average Mean		4.66	

There are 10 items contained in *Table 4*. The highest mean is 4.89 for item B10, while the lowest mean is 4.29 for item B7. Through these findings, the researcher can conclude that the most dominant practice among teachers who continue their studies at UKM is recognition from the company or administration which greatly motivates the teachers to strive in their work. These findings are consistent with studies by Kamaludin et al (2021); Ismail et al (2019) which indicate that recognition provides work motivation for teachers. The objective of the study has been achieved.

Table 5

*Descriptive Analysis of Level of Teachers' Work Performance*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
C1. I am knowledgeable about the sources used for teaching.	35	4.46	.561
C2. The frequency of work given can help me produce quality work.	35	3.89	1.157
C3. I can produce work in school according to the set time.	35	4.43	.502
C4. I plan my work so that it is done on time.	35	4.69	.471
C5. I remember what I need to achieve in my work.	35	4.57	.502
C6. I actively participate in meetings at school.	35	4.29	.667
C7. My work inspires me.	35	4.57	.608
C8. Effectiveness in producing work is my main objective.	35	4.66	.482
C9. I feel happy when I work hard.	35	4.66	.639
C10. I ensure that my work knowledge is up to date.	35	4.74	.443
Average mean		4.5	



Based on *Table 5*, the average mean level of job performance is 4.5. The researcher can interpret that the level of job performance among teachers who continue their education at UKM is high. This finding is consistent with the study by Ibrahim (2019) which stated that the mean value of job performance level between 3.67 to 5 indicates a high level of job performance. However, one item where respondents are less agreeable is item C2, which states "The frequency of work given can produce quality work for me." Respondents feel that the frequency of work given causes them to produce work not of high quality. The research objective has been achieved.

*Analysis of Mean Differences between Teacher Job Performance Level and Gender of Teacher*  
Analysis of mean differences between teacher job performance level and teacher gender using SPSS software. The Mann Whitney U-Test is used to correlate teacher job performance level and teacher gender. *Table 6* shows the Mann Whitney U-test results.

Table 6a

*Mann Whitney U-Test Ranks*

		A1. Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Level of Teachers Job Performance	Male		6	23.00	138.00
	Female		29	16.97	492.00
	Total		35		

Table 6b

*Mann Whitney U-Test Statistics*

		Level of Teachers Job Performance
Mann-Whitney U		57.000
Wilcoxon W		492.000
Z		-1.319
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.187
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]		.202 <sup>b</sup>

a. Grouping Variable: A1. Gender

b. Not corrected for ties.

The Mann-Whitney U-Test was used to test for mean differences in performance level and gender among teachers. The Mann-Whitney U-Test is a t-test for data that does not follow a normal distribution. According to the findings, the p-value is 0.187. This p-value exceeds the significance level of 0.05. The researcher can conclude that there is no significant difference in teacher performance levels based on gender. This finding is consistent with a previous study by (Yusoff, 2022).

*Implication*

This study has several implications for school principals and teachers. Principals should identify relevant issues and practice appropriate leadership styles. They should adhere to Maslow's theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory to meet the needs of teachers, thereby improving their performance. Previous studies have shown that principals who adopt the right leadership style have a positive impact on teacher performance. The leadership theory



used by principals to improve teacher performance in schools can be further examined and improved by focusing on contextual factors in school leadership and their relationship with school success (Amin et al., 2021; Bohari & Alias, 2021; Ismail et al., 2019; Maisarah & Lai, 2021; Noor, 2018; Othman et al., 2018; Zulkafli & Mahbob, 2020).

Meanwhile, the implications for teachers were found in the study's findings. The results clearly prove that the organizational commitment of teachers is largely influenced by their work performance and highly influenced by school administrators. The commitment of teachers to communicate with administrators is crucial to providing ideas or opportunities for administrators to solve problems. Additionally, the ability of school leaders to lead and manage the school wisely is crucial. Equal distribution of tasks based on teachers' skills and giving autonomy, especially in matters related to teaching with students, is an important foundation for discussing teacher commitment and performance (Yusoff, 2022).

### *Future Research*

The aim of this study is to examine the prevalence of appreciation practices and the performance level of teachers. A survey questionnaire was conducted to obtain information on appreciation practices and the performance level of teachers who are pursuing their studies at UKM. The study findings revealed the most dominant appreciation practices, work performance level, and the relationship between work performance level and gender. However, this study did not include all teachers in Malaysia. Therefore, there are several recommendations for future studies.

Firstly, increasing the number of survey items. In this study, only 10 items were presented regarding the practice of recognition and the level of teacher performance. Researchers conducting related studies can refer to other survey items and refine them. Secondly, increasing the number of respondents to improve accuracy. In this study, only 35 respondents answered the survey. Future researchers can use statistical methods to calculate the minimum number of respondents needed for the population. Thirdly, further studies can focus on the effects of implementing recognition. After implementing something, it is important to know its effects on teachers or the target group.

This study has been conducted, and the findings have addressed the research questions. All the study findings have met the research objectives and are consistent with previous studies. It is hoped that researchers who wish to conduct related studies should consider the study recommendations that have been stated.

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