



Comparative Assessment of Job Satisfaction Levels among Teachers in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Sierra Leone

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Abstract

This study examined job satisfaction levels among teachers in public and private secondary schools in Sierra Leone. Specifically, the study examined key factors, including salary, workload, working conditions, administrative support, professional development opportunities, and interpersonal relationships. The findings indicate that teachers' job satisfaction is relatively higher among those aged 36 to 40 compared to those aged 41 and above, who experience the lowest satisfaction. However, there are no significant differences based on professional seniority. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 380 teachers across various public and private secondary schools in both urban and rural districts. The findings revealed notable differences in job satisfaction between teachers in public and private schools, with public school teachers expressing greater dissatisfaction with salary and promotion prospects. Conversely, private school teachers expressed more concern about job security and workload. Both groups identified poor working conditions, limited professional development opportunities, and insufficient administrative support as significant sources of dissatisfaction. The conclusion is that job satisfaction is vital for teacher retention, motivation, and performance. It is recommended that targeted policy measures and school reforms be implemented to address disparities and improve teachers' working conditions in both public and private schools, thereby enhancing teacher satisfaction and the quality of secondary education in Sierra Leone.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Public Schools, Private Schools, Teachers, Sierra Leone, Working Conditions, Teacher Retention.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji tingkat kepuasan kerja guru di sekolah menengah negeri dan swasta di Sierra Leone. Secara khusus, penelitian ini mengkaji faktor-faktor kunci, termasuk gaji, beban kerja, kondisi kerja, dukungan administratif, kesempatan pengembangan profesional, dan hubungan antarpersonal. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kepuasan kerja guru relatif lebih tinggi di kalangan guru berusia 36 hingga 40 tahun dibandingkan dengan guru berusia 41 tahun ke atas, yang mengalami tingkat kepuasan terendah. Namun, tidak terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan berdasarkan tingkat kepangkatan profesional. Menggunakan pendekatan campuran (mixed-methods), data dikumpulkan dari 380 guru di berbagai sekolah menengah negeri dan

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swasta di daerah perkotaan dan pedesaan. Temuan menunjukkan perbedaan yang signifikan dalam tingkat kepuasan kerja antara guru di sekolah negeri dan swasta, dengan guru di sekolah negeri lebih tidak puas dengan gaji dan prospek promosi. Sebaliknya, guru sekolah swasta lebih mengkhawatirkan masalah keamanan kerja dan beban kerja. Kedua kelompok tersebut mengidentifikasi kondisi kerja yang buruk, kesempatan pengembangan profesional yang terbatas, dan dukungan administratif yang tidak memadai sebagai sumber ketidakpuasan yang signifikan. Kesimpulannya, kepuasan kerja sangat penting untuk retensi guru, motivasi, dan kinerja. Disarankan agar kebijakan yang ditargetkan dan reformasi sekolah diterapkan untuk mengatasi ketidaksetaraan dan meningkatkan kondisi kerja guru di sekolah negeri maupun swasta, sehingga meningkatkan kepuasan guru dan kualitas pendidikan menengah di Sierra Leone.

Kata Kunci: Kepuasan Kerja, Sekolah Negeri, Sekolah Swasta, Guru, Sierra Leone, Kondisi Kerja, Retensi Guru.

Introduction

Bennell (2024)¹ observes that the privatisation of schooling in Sierra Leone has become more prominent over the last decade, driven by the perception of higher standards and better working conditions in private institutions compared to public schools. Consequently, private school teachers are often considered more satisfied with their jobs. Parents' involvement, teaching and learning facilities, and resource availability are generally stronger in private schools, giving them a competitive advantage.² Moreover, students in private schools often come from wealthier socio-economic backgrounds, while students from poorer families are excluded due to tuition fees.³ Private schools also tend to enrich the national curriculum with additional resources such as textbooks and early instruction in English and computer studies.⁴

Teacher satisfaction, however, remains a multidimensional construct. Noori (2023)⁵ examined teachers' satisfaction in both public and private schools and identified salary, benefits, rewards, promotion, job security, working conditions, organisational support, and school culture as critical factors. While Rwigema (2022)⁶ reported that some private schools offer higher salaries and resources, these advantages are inconsistent across regions. In some provinces, private school teachers earn considerably less than their public counterparts.

¹ Paul Bennell, "An Education Revolution: The Privatisation of Schooling in Capital City Conurbations in Sub-Saharan Africa," *International Journal of Educational Development* 105 (March 2024): 102988, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2024.102988>.

² Soheyda Gokturk and Selin Dinckal, "Effective Parental Involvement in Education: Experiences and Perceptions of Turkish Teachers from Private Schools," *Teachers and Teaching* 24, no. 2 (February 2018): 183–201, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2017.1388777>.

³ Désirée Acholla, "Low-Fee Private Schooling: A Framework to Define the Scope of These Non-State Actors in Education," *Paper Commissioned for the 2021/2 Global Education Monitoring Report*, 2021, <https://gvf.la.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2022/12/Acholla-low-cost-private-schools.pdf>.

⁴ F. K. Kwami, "The Status of Integrated Science Teaching and Learning in Selected Public and Private Senior High Schools in the Ho Municipality" (Thesis, University of Education, 2023), <http://41.74.91.244:8080/handle/123456789/3990>.

⁵ Abdul Qawi Noori, "Job Satisfaction Variance among Public and Private School Teachers: A Case Study," *Cogent Education* 10, no. 1 (December 2023): 2189425, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2189425>.

⁶ Pierre-Celestin Rwigema, "Impact of Teacher's Welfare on Quality of Education in East African Community: Theoretical Perspective," *Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management* 9, no. 1 (March 2022): 675–713, <https://doi.org/10.61426/sjbc.m.v9i1.2217>.

Furthermore, Brand (2025)⁷ highlighted the precarious nature of employment in private schools, where teachers are often dismissed without due process, reflecting the dominance of temporary contracts.

Existing research has addressed teacher satisfaction broadly but has not always differentiated between specific determinants such as salary, workload, working conditions, administrative support, professional development opportunities, and interpersonal relationships. Most of the literature has focused on the context of developed countries, such as the literature by Baroudi et al. (2022)⁸ and Pepe et al. (2017),⁹ leaving a significant gap in developing countries such as Sierra Leone. For example, Rezai et al. (2022)¹⁰ in Iran, and Metaferia et al. (2023)¹¹ in Ethiopia, found organisational climate and leadership styles to be pivotal for teacher satisfaction, but these studies were conducted in contexts with stronger education infrastructures. Comparative studies, such as those by Andrade and Westover (2023)¹² in the U.S. and Sultana et al. (2017)¹³ in Bangladesh, revealed either no significant differences or inconsistent patterns between public and private teachers, raising questions about the transferability of such findings to fragile systems.

Professional development (PD) also emerges as a consistent predictor of job satisfaction. Effective PD is collaborative, sustained, and linked to practice.¹⁴ Studies indicate that PD opportunities enhance motivation and reduce attrition (Pasiq & Maguate, 2023; Abdallah & Alkaabi, 2023).¹⁵ Yet, in many developing countries, PD is irregular and

⁷ Elizabeth E. Brand, "A Qualitative Study Examining the High Turnover Rate of High School Principals in Southwest Georgia and Northwest Florida" (PhD Thesis, Valdosta State University, 2025), <https://www.proquest.com/openview/b1f1846378b95143442a9792da2622d6/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>.

⁸ Sandra Baroudi et al., "Examining Elementary Preservice Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Satisfaction in Online Teaching during Virtual Field Experience," *Cogent Education* 9, no. 1 (December 2022): 2133497, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2133497>.

⁹ Alessandro Pepe, Loredana Addimando, and Guido Veronese, "Measuring Teacher Job Satisfaction: Assessing Invariance in the Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale (TJSS) Across Six Countries," *Europe's Journal of Psychology* 13, no. 3 (August 2017): 396–416, <https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v13i3.1389>.

¹⁰ Afsheen Rezai, Ehsan Namaziandost, and Fidel Çakmak, "Job Satisfaction of Iranian EFL Teachers: Exploring the Role of Gender, Education Level, Teaching Experience and Service Location," *Teaching English Language* 15, no. 2 (January 2022): 201–28, <https://doi.org/10.22132/tel.2022.142825>.

¹¹ Tigist Metaferia, Zenebe Baraki, and Belete Mebratu, "Transformational Leadership Practices and Its Influence on Teachers Job Satisfaction in Addis Ababa Government Secondary Schools," *Cogent Education* 10, no. 2 (December 2023): 2249658, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2249658>.

¹² Maureen Snow Andrade and Jonathan H. Westover, "Job Satisfaction – An International Comparison of Public and Private Sector Employees," *International Journal of Public Administration* 46, no. 16 (December 2023): 1151–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2022.2076696>.

¹³ Arifin Sultana, Md Nazirul Islam Sarker, and AZM Shafiullah Prodhan, "Job Satisfaction of Public and Private Primary School Teachers of Bogra District in Bangladesh," *Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 1, no. 1 (July 2017): 41–46, <https://doi.org/10.12691/jsa-1-1-6>.

¹⁴ Özlem Canaran and İsmail Hakkı Mirici, "An Overview of the Recent Views and Practices in Teacher Professional Development," *Eğitimde Kuram ve Uygulama* 15, no. 4 (December 2019): 350–62, <https://doi.org/10.17244/eku.559281>; Frances Sokel, "The Effectiveness of a Professional Development Course: Teachers' Perceptions," *ELT Journal* 73, no. 4 (December 2019): 409–18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccz022>.

¹⁵ Dalton A. Pasiq and Guarin Maguate, "Challenges And Opportunities Among Educators in The Implementation of Continuing Professional Development," *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)* 5, no. 4 (November 2023): 36; Asma Khaleel Abdallah and Ahmed M. Alkaabi, "Induction Programs' Effectiveness in Boosting New Teachers' Instruction and Student Achievement: A Critical Review,"

underfunded, especially in public schools.¹⁶ In Sierra Leone, the Teaching Service Commission has initiated PD programs, but they are constrained by resources and weak follow-up support.¹⁷

Job satisfaction is not only linked to retention but also to teachers' health, well-being, and student outcomes. Peprah et al. (2025)¹⁸ argue that satisfaction predicts commitment and effectiveness, while Zhang et al. (2024)¹⁹ find it to be the strongest determinant of teachers' intent to remain in the profession. Stress and dissatisfaction, by contrast, are associated with illness and burnout.²⁰ Studies in Sub-Saharan Africa similarly note that low pay, weak status, and poor working conditions undermine morale and performance.²¹

Despite these insights, most empirical work has concentrated on primary school teachers,²² leaving secondary education relatively underexplored. Additionally, not much is known about how Sierra Leone's secondary school teachers, both public and private, perceive their job satisfaction in relation to particular aspects like remuneration, workload, working conditions, administrative support, opportunities for professional growth, and stress levels brought on by the 2014 Ebola outbreak.

Previous studies provide valuable comparative insights into teacher job satisfaction across countries, but they have two key limitations. First, most have been conducted in developed or better-resourced education systems, limiting their relevance to fragile systems such as Sierra Leone's. Second, where developing-country studies exist, they often address satisfaction in general terms, without disaggregating specific dimensions or focusing on secondary schools.

This study addresses these gaps by conducting a comparative analysis of job satisfaction among public and private secondary school teachers in Sierra Leone, with a particular emphasis on salary, workload, working conditions, administrative support, professional development, and interpersonal relationships. Its novelty lies in (a) situating the

International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research 22, no. 5 (May 2023), <https://www.ijlter.org/index.php/ijlter/article/view/7593>.

¹⁶ Richard Ingersoll and Gregory J Collins, "The Status of Teaching as a Profession," in *Schools and Society: A Sociological Approach to Education*, 6th ed. (Sage Publications, 2018), 199–213.

¹⁷ Chris McBurnie et al., *Advancing Data-Driven Decision-Making for School Improvement: Findings from the One Tablet Per School User Testing Programme in Sierra Leone* (MBSSE, EdTech Hub, Lehigh University, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.53832/edtechhub.0066>.

¹⁸ Maxwell Peprah Opoku et al., "A Cross-National Study of Teacher Retention and Job Satisfaction in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth* 69, no. 2 (April 2025): 137–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2024.2361874>.

¹⁹ Huiyu Zhang, Yayu Shi, and Lin Sophie Teng, "Exploring Relationships of Job Satisfaction and Burnout with Turnover Intention Among Chinese English Language Teachers," *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 33, no. 3 (June 2024): 587–601, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-023-00755-9>.

²⁰ Payal Mehta, "Determining the Antecedents of Job Stress and Their Impact on Job Performance: A Study Among Faculty Members," *The IUP Journal of Organizational Behavior* 15, no. 2 (October 2016): 7–24; Ajay Bhatia and Farhat Mohsin, "Role of Workplace Happiness in Achieving Teachers' Sustainable Academic Performance: A Study on Selected Private Universities in Delhi NCR," *World Review of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development* 19, no. 3/4/5 (2023): 416, <https://doi.org/10.1504/WREMSD.2023.130614>.

²¹ Rose Nafula Situma, "Motivational Factors Affecting Employees' Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Bungoma North Sub County, Kenya," *Open Access* 1, no. 5 (2015): 140–61.

²² Agape Kanyiri, "School Climate and Teacher Attrition Intentions: A Case Study of Junior High Schools in Bole District, Ghana," *Journal of Social and Scientific Education* 2, no. 1 (February 2025): 51–72, <https://doi.org/10.58230/josse.v2i1.280>.

inquiry within Sierra Leone’s unique post-war, resource-constrained education system, (b) focusing specifically on secondary school teachers rather than primary education, and (c) combining satisfaction dimensions into a comprehensive framework to highlight actionable insights for policy and practice.

Research Method

The study employed a survey design with a Mixed-Methods approach, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from respondents in five district headquarters towns: Freetown in the Western Area, Pujehun in the Northwest, Bombali in the North, Bo in the South, and Kenema in the East. Mixed methods research design is organised into four categories: triangulation mixed methods design, embedded mixed methods design, explanatory mixed methods design, and exploratory mixed methods design (see Figure 1).

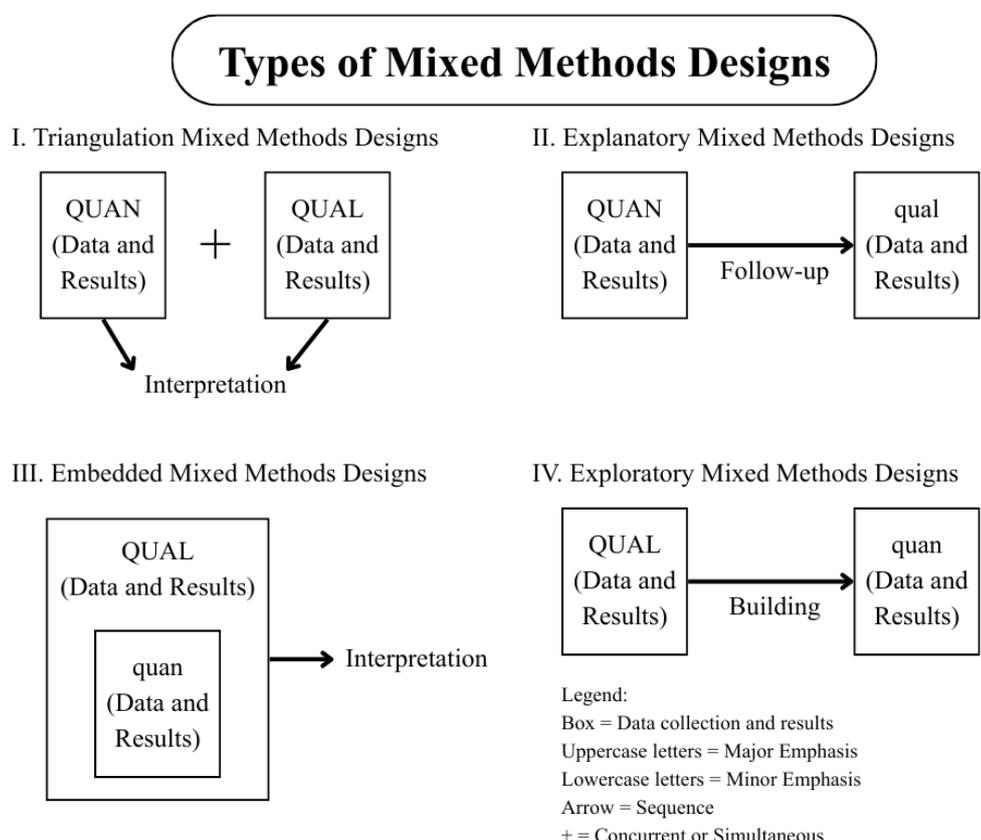


Figure 1. Types of Mixed Methods Designs

This study employed an embedded mixed-methods methodology, triangulating both quantitative and qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of the fundamental interpretations of work satisfaction and excellent education. The quantitative component of the study employed a descriptive survey approach to investigate teachers’ perceptions and experiences in Sierra Leone’s public and private schools. The qualitative component of the study included interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) to compare teachers’ job satisfaction in public and private schools, with a focus on consciousness and direct experience. In total, 380 questionnaires were distributed to 60 school authorities, 170 public

school teachers, 100 private school teachers, 30 non-pincoded teachers, 5 Sierra Leone Teachers Union (SLTU), 5 Community Teachers' Association (CTA), 5 officials from the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary School Education (MBSSE), 5 officials from the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), and 15 FDGs (3 in each district). According to the study's design, two separate data analyses of the findings were presented: the survey results, which were evaluated using Microsoft Excel 2019, and the interview replies, which were analysed using MAXQDA for thematic and context analyses. The quantitative and qualitative assessments were compared based on statistical and thematic findings.

Results and Discussion

This study analyses job satisfaction among teachers in five Sierra Leone districts, focusing on factors such as salary, administrative support, student behaviour, and work environment, and identifying patterns influenced by sector, geography, and institutional culture. The result of this analysis is presented in Figure 2 below.

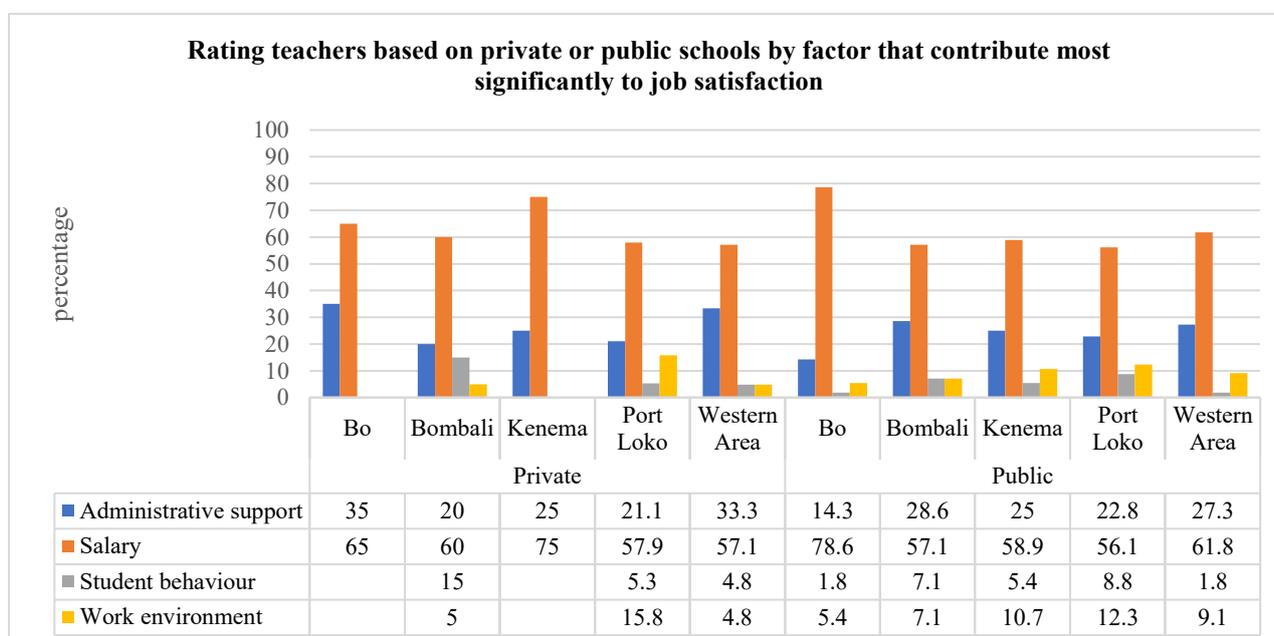


Figure 2. Respondents' Ratings on Factors Contributing Most to Job Satisfaction in Public and Private Schools

According to the study, more than half of the respondents in both private and public schools attributed work satisfaction to compensation, with each group exceeding 50%. The results from the FGDs supported the quantitative results, with an experienced male participant in Bo stating the following:

“For me, as long as my salary is high, I am satisfied. This is what we don't get in public schools. I am a senior teacher earning Le 1,900, while my counterpart in a private school is earning almost double.”

To understand teacher satisfaction more comprehensively, the study further examined how teachers described their work environment in public and private secondary

schools in Sierra Leone. The data was analysed using Microsoft Excel, and the results are presented in Figure 3 below.

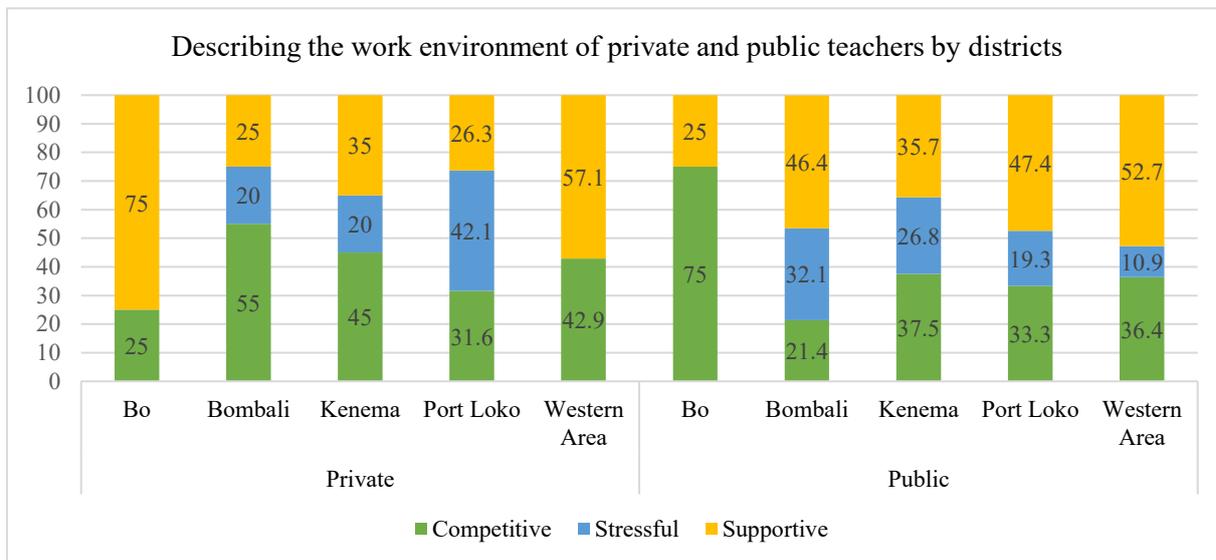


Figure 3. Respondents’ Description of Their Work Environment in Public and Private Schools

Figure 3 reveals that 75% of respondents in Bo private schools viewed their work environment as supportive, followed by the Western Area with 57.1%. For public schools, Bo considered the work environment to be competitive (75%).

The analysis also assessed the extent to which teachers in public and private secondary schools were satisfied with the professional development opportunities available to them. The results are presented in Figure 4 below.

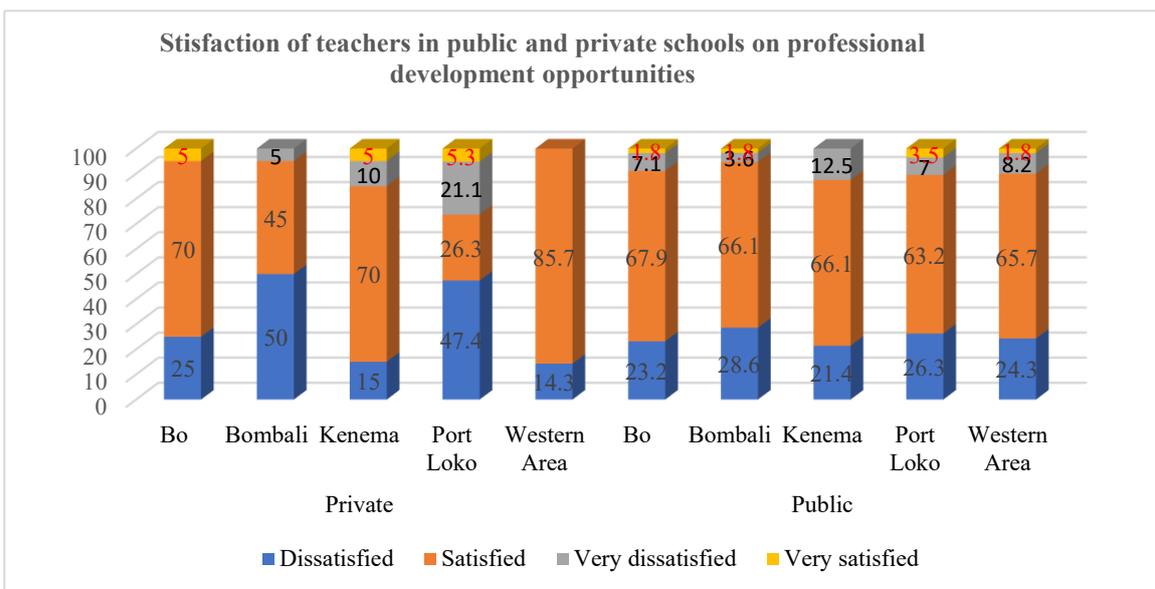


Figure 4: Comparative Analysis of Respondents’ Satisfaction with Professional Development Opportunities in Public and Private Schools

Figure 4 reveals that the majority of respondents (above 50%) found professional development opportunities satisfactory in private schools, which is consistent with the

percentage of respondents in public schools. A senior teacher revealed in the FGD in Kambia as follows:

“We are given study leave to go and study, and sometimes we organise workshops for our teachers.”

The findings on the factors most significantly contributing to job satisfaction indicate that a high salary was the major determinant of job satisfaction among teachers in both private and public secondary schools, with more than 50% of respondents identifying salary as the primary driver. However, the focus group discussions with representatives from the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) highlighted an important nuance: although public school teachers often receive higher nominal salaries and pension entitlements due to government pay structures, regular salary delays and arrears remain a major source of dissatisfaction, effectively negating the benefits of the formal compensation package. In contrast, teachers in private schools reported more consistent monthly payments, which improved their sense of financial stability in the short term. This pattern is consistent with Rwigema’s (2022)²³ assertion that in Sub-Saharan Africa, public sector instructors frequently confront systemic payment inefficiencies, whereas private schools may pay promptly but offer less long-term financial security. These findings mirror broader regional evidence showing that teachers in several African countries report low morale not only due to low wages, but due to wage unreliability, inconsistent payment timetables, and delayed or incomplete salary transfers.²⁴ Together, these results reinforce the position that the timeliness of remuneration—not merely salary level—plays a decisive role in determining job satisfaction.

The findings on teachers’ perceptions of their work environment reinforce the significance of institutional culture in shaping levels of job satisfaction. While 75% of private school respondents in Bo and 57.1% in the Western Area described their work environment as supportive, respondents from Bo’s public schools largely described their work atmosphere as competitive and stressful. Interviews with Sierra Leone Teachers Union representatives further revealed that the most persistent differences between the two educational systems relate to working conditions and instructional environments, with overcrowded classrooms posing a significant challenge in public schools. These outcomes align with Noori (2023),²⁵ who found that private school instructors experienced a more responsive and supportive administration that allowed flexibility in instructional strategies, whereas public school teachers faced bureaucratic constraints and limited autonomy in lesson delivery. The findings also support Metaferia et al. (2023),²⁶ who argue that transformational leadership styles—more common in private schools—contribute to

²³ Rwigema, “Impact Of Teacher’s Welfare On Quality Of Education In East African Community.”

²⁴ Teacher Task Force, “Closing the Gap – Ensuring There Are Enough Qualified and Supported Teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa,” UNESCO, July 21, 2021, <https://teachertaskforce.org/knowledge-hub/closing-gap-ensuring-there-are-enough-qualified-and-supported-teachers-sub-saharan>; Fei Yuan, David K. Evans, and Deon Filmer, *Are Teachers in Africa Poorly Paid?: Evidence from 15 Countries* (World Bank, Washington, DC, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-9358>.

²⁵ Noori, “Job Satisfaction Variance among Public and Private School Teachers.”

²⁶ Metaferia, Baraki, and Mebratu, “Transformational Leadership Practices and Its Influence on Teachers Job Satisfaction in Addis Ababa Government Secondary Schools.”

enhanced job satisfaction by cultivating empowerment, trust, and professional support. In a broader comparative context, recent international studies report that teacher well-being and job satisfaction are strongly predicted by organizational climate, collegial support, leadership style, and the extent to which schools encourage innovation and collaboration.²⁷ This positions institutional culture as a foundational factor in employment satisfaction, at times even outweighing material incentives.

The comparison of teacher satisfaction with professional development (PD) opportunities shows that instructors in both public and private schools were satisfied overall. Survey results revealed that PD contributed to a sense of professional growth, validation, and career fulfillment. However, focus group discussions uncovered nuanced differences: public school teachers occasionally had more access to government-sponsored PD initiatives—often formal, accredited programs—whereas private schools conducted more frequent in-house workshops that were shorter, less formal, and more aligned with immediate school needs. These findings on professional development and job satisfaction are supported by a growing body of recent empirical research. A large-scale cross-national analysis by Eryilmaz et al. (2025)²⁸ revealed that school working conditions — especially supportive leadership, manageable workload, and disciplined student behavior — are strongly associated with higher teacher job satisfaction; importantly, participation in professional development was also positively correlated with satisfaction. Similarly, Lu et al. (2025)²⁹ showed that for educators, institutional support, quality of work environment, and opportunities for career development often exert a stronger influence on job satisfaction than salary or pay alone. Evidence from Diagne (2023)³⁰ further underscores that sustained and structured participation in continual professional development programs significantly enhances teacher job satisfaction, whereas insecure contracts or part-time status tend to reduce it. In more context-specific settings, Karyati et al. (2025)³¹ demonstrated that teachers who perceive their school climate as open, supportive, and collegial report higher job satisfaction compared to those in more constrained environments. Taken together, these studies suggest that while access to professional development is important, the quality of the school environment, leadership support, stability of employment, and institutional backing significantly shape how PD (and other extrinsic rewards) translate into real job satisfaction.

²⁷ Canan Demir-Yıldız, “Unveiling Job Satisfaction of Teachers through a Blend of Methodologies,” *Sustainability* 15, no. 18 (September 2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151813986>; Joy C. Nwoko et al., “A Systematic Review of the Factors That Influence Teachers’ Occupational Wellbeing,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 20, no. 12 (June 2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20126070>.

²⁸ Nurullah Eryilmaz et al., “Teacher Job Satisfaction: International Evidence on the Role of School Working Conditions and Teacher Characteristics,” *Studies in Educational Evaluation* 86 (September 2025): 101474, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2025.101474>.

²⁹ Yuwen Lu et al., “Professional Development, Work Environment, and Job Satisfaction in Higher Education: Implications for Teacher Education,” *International Journal of Innovative Research and Scientific Studies* 8, no. 6 (September 2025): 2200–2213, <https://doi.org/10.53894/ijirss.v8i6.10093>.

³⁰ Djily Diagne, “Factors Associated with Teacher Job Satisfaction: An Investigation Using TALIS 2018 Data,” *Schweizerische Zeitschrift Für Bildungswissenschaften* 45, no. 3 (2023): 265–77, <https://doi.org/10.25656/01:28797>.

³¹ Faridah Karyati, Alpha Ariani, and Nadya Astuti, “The Correlation Between School Climate and Teacher Job Satisfaction at Inclusive School in Martapura,” *International Journal of Business, Law, and Education* 6, no. 1 (June 2025): 991–97, <https://doi.org/10.56442/ijble.v6i1.1120>.

Furthermore, international evidence shows that teachers who perceive PD as relevant, empowering, and effectively supported by school leadership display significantly higher job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions.³² Thus, while PD is appreciated in both educational spheres in Sierra Leone, the design, consistency, and perceived value of PD appear to shape differences in satisfaction levels across the two sectors.

Taken together, the study's findings highlight a complex interaction between financial and non-financial determinants of job satisfaction. Although salary remains an influential factor, dimensions such as school climate, leadership style, working conditions, and opportunities for professional development contribute equally—if not more powerfully—to teachers' overall satisfaction. This aligns with recent systematic reviews indicating that teacher job satisfaction is multidimensional and strongly influenced by both tangible rewards and psychosocial factors within the workplace.³³ Moreover, research increasingly suggests that satisfaction has far-reaching implications beyond teacher morale, including effects on instructional quality, student learning outcomes, teacher retention, and burnout rates.³⁴ Consequently, strategies to improve job satisfaction in Sierra Leone must balance financial incentives with improvements in school management, leadership practices, classroom environments, and career development pathways.

Finally, the study's findings are limited by several factors. First, only teachers teaching in the five district headquarters towns—Freetown in the Western Area, Port Loko in the North West, Bombali in the North, Bo in the South, and Kenema in the East—were sampled, excluding teachers in remote towns and rural communities. This restricts the generalizability of the findings to urban and peri-urban school environments only. Second, the study was not longitudinal; data were collected at one point in time during a single academic year. Given that job satisfaction can fluctuate due to policy reforms, economic shifts, and school leadership transitions, a longitudinal design may yield deeper insights into how satisfaction evolves over time. Future studies may therefore benefit from wider geographical coverage, rural inclusion, and multi-year tracking.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that salaries and benefits are major determinants of job satisfaction among teachers in Sierra Leone's public and private secondary schools. Although teachers in both sectors value professional development opportunities, persistent challenges such as low and inconsistent remuneration, limited allowances, and heavy workloads continue to undermine their commitment and motivation. Work environment also emerged as a significant factor, with private school teachers describing their institutions as more collaborative and supportive compared to their counterparts in public schools, who

³² Gyde Wartenberg et al., "Satisfied and High Performing? A Meta-Analysis and Systematic Review of the Correlates of Teachers' Job Satisfaction," *Educational Psychology Review* 35, no. 4 (December 2023): 114, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-023-09831-4>; Nwoko et al., "A Systematic Review of the Factors That Influence Teachers' Occupational Wellbeing."

³³ Yaju Zhou et al., "Antecedents and Outcomes of Teacher Job Satisfaction: A Systematic Literature Review," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* VIII, no. X (2024): 674–90, <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRIS.2024.8100057>; Nwoko et al., "A Systematic Review of the Factors That Influence Teachers' Occupational Wellbeing."

³⁴ Wartenberg et al., "Satisfied and High Performing?"

reported overcrowded classrooms and stressful administrative conditions. These findings indicate that teacher satisfaction in Sierra Leone is shaped by the interplay of financial stability, organisational climate, and opportunities for professional growth.

To improve job satisfaction and strengthen teacher retention, the study recommends that the government and private school proprietors urgently review and enhance teacher salary structures, ensure timely payment, and introduce performance-based incentives. Creating a more conducive work environment—through improving physical facilities, reducing workloads, and cultivating transparent and collaborative leadership—will further support teacher motivation. Finally, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) and school management should institutionalize regular continuing professional development programs that focus on pedagogical innovation, digital literacy, and inclusive education to strengthen professional competence and elevate instructional quality. This study has limitations in terms of its limited sample size and geographical scope, so the results do not yet fully represent all secondary school teachers in Sierra Leone. In addition, the data obtained through questionnaires are subjective and have not thoroughly considered the influence of external factors such as education policies and economic conditions on teachers' job satisfaction. Future research should expand to additional districts across Sierra Leone to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teacher job satisfaction and generate evidence-based strategies for national education reform.

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