

# The Influence of Motivation Practices on Teachers' Job Satisfaction in Public Secondary Schools in Muhanga District

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**Abstract:** This study examined the influence of motivation practices on teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Muhanga District, Rwanda. Grounded in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, the study adopted a descriptive survey design. Data were collected from a sample of 279 teachers selected through simple random sampling and 12 head teachers selected purposively, using structured questionnaires. Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS through both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that motivation practices in the studied schools were largely perceived as inadequate and inconsistently applied. Approximately 72% of teachers reported dissatisfaction with existing motivation strategies, particularly in relation to recognition, rewards, and opportunities for professional growth. Only 21% indicated regular involvement in decision-making processes, suggesting limited participatory leadership, which negatively influenced their job satisfaction. Furthermore, 68% of teachers rated communication from school leadership as ineffective, citing insufficient feedback and lack of clarity, while head teachers expressed more favorable perceptions, indicating a notable perception gap. In addition, 65% of teachers reported inadequate support for professional development, which further diminished morale and satisfaction levels. Conversely, 83% of head teachers rated their leadership and motivational practices positively, reinforcing the discrepancy between leadership self-perception and teachers' experiences. The study concludes that although school leaders recognize the importance of motivation practices, their implementation remains insufficient to meet teachers' needs, thereby undermining job satisfaction and retention. The study recommends strengthening teacher motivation through structured recognition and reward systems, promoting participatory decision-making, improving communication channels, and institutionalizing continuous professional development. These measures are essential for enhancing teacher satisfaction, improving retention, and ultimately strengthening the quality of education in Muhanga District.

**Keywords:** Motivation Practices, Teachers, Job Satisfaction, Public Secondary Schools, Muhanga District.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher job satisfaction remains a critical issue in education systems worldwide, as it directly affects teacher effectiveness, retention, and student outcomes. Motivation practices, both intrinsic and extrinsic, are central to shaping teachers' attitudes toward their profession. These practices include financial rewards, recognition, professional development opportunities, working conditions, and participation in decision-making. When effectively implemented, they enhance teachers' morale, commitment, and job satisfaction (Armstrong, 2020; OECD, 2024).

Globally, recent evidence highlights that teacher motivation is a strong predictor of job satisfaction and retention. According to the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2024), teachers with higher intrinsic motivation, such as enjoyment of teaching and a sense of social contribution, are less likely to leave the profession and report higher job

satisfaction. Additionally, satisfaction with employment conditions, including work environment, benefits, and career progression opportunities, significantly increases teachers' likelihood of remaining in the profession. Teachers who feel valued and supported are considerably more satisfied and committed to their work.

Furthermore, recent findings indicate that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation practices are essential. While salary remains important, non-financial factors such as recognition, autonomy, and supportive working conditions are more consistent predictors of job satisfaction (OECD, 2024). Studies also show that teachers' sense of purpose and professional value strongly contributes to their satisfaction, with a large proportion of teachers reporting that the meaningfulness of teaching enhances their motivation and commitment.

In addition, TALIS 2024 findings reveal that approximately nine out of ten teachers report overall job satisfaction, but this varies significantly depending on school-level factors such as workload, support systems, and working conditions. High levels of stress, heavy workloads, and lack of support negatively affect teachers' well-being and satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of effective motivation practices in improving working conditions.

In the African context, recent studies indicate that teacher motivation continues to be constrained by inadequate remuneration, limited incentives, and insufficient professional development opportunities. For instance, a 2024 study in Uganda found that over 80% of teachers expressed dissatisfaction with their salaries, which negatively affected their motivation and increased turnover intentions. The study further highlights that access to professional development significantly enhances teacher motivation and job satisfaction, yet such opportunities remain limited in many public schools.

Similarly, across East Africa, motivation practices such as timely salary payments, promotion opportunities, and recognition systems have been identified as key determinants of teacher job satisfaction. However, persistent challenges, including heavy workloads, poor working conditions, and lack of career advancement, continue to undermine teacher morale and effectiveness.

In Rwanda, efforts have been made to improve teacher motivation through policy reforms, including performance-based financing, teacher professional development programs, and salary adjustments. Despite these initiatives, challenges remain, particularly in public secondary schools where teachers often face heavy workloads, limited incentives, and insufficient recognition. These factors continue to affect their level of job satisfaction and overall performance.

At the local level, particularly in Muhanga District, teachers in public secondary schools experience varying levels of motivation due to differences in the implementation of motivation practices such as rewards, recognition, and professional support. Limited access to professional development opportunities, inadequate working conditions, and lack of consistent motivation strategies contribute to reduced job satisfaction among teachers.

Empirical evidence from recent studies confirms that effective motivation practices, including fair remuneration, recognition, career advancement opportunities, and supportive work environments, are significant predictors of teachers' job satisfaction (OECD, 2024; TALIS, 2024). When teachers feel motivated and valued, they are more likely to be satisfied, committed, and productive. Conversely, inadequate motivation practices lead to dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and high turnover. Therefore, examining the influence of motivation practices on teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Muhanga District is essential for identifying existing gaps and informing strategies to enhance teacher motivation, improve job satisfaction, and ultimately strengthen the quality of education.

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This study adopted descriptive design. This design was suitable because it enabled the researcher to obtain a clear picture of existing conditions, relationships, and practices as they naturally occur in the school setting, without manipulating any variables.

### **2.2 Location of the Study**

The study was conducted in Muhanga District, which is one of the eight districts of Rwanda's Southern Province.

### **2.3 Target Population**

The population for this study consisted of 923 teachers and 45 head teachers (968 in total) from all public day secondary schools in Muhanga District.

## 2.4 Sample Size Determination

Muhanga District comprises 45 public day secondary schools distributed across 12 sectors. To ensure sectoral representation, one school was selected from each sector, resulting in a sample of 12 schools. Consequently, all 12 headteachers from the selected schools were purposively included in the study. The sample size for teachers was determined using Slovin's formula, which is appropriate when the population size is known:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

$n$ = required sample size

$N$ = total population size (923 teachers)

$e$ = margin of error (0.05)

Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{923}{1 + 923(0.05)^2} = \frac{923}{1 + 923(0.0025)} = \frac{923}{3.3075} \approx 279$$

Thus, a sample of 279 teachers was selected for the study. This sample size is considered adequate to ensure reliable and representative findings, capturing diverse perspectives from both teachers and headteachers. The table below presents a summary of the target population and the corresponding sample size.

## 2.5 Sampling Techniques

To ensure robust and representative findings, a combination of sampling techniques was employed. Stratified random sampling was utilized to select 279 teachers from the total 923 teachers in Muhanga District.

## 2.6 Research Instruments

This study employed structured questionnaires as the main research instruments for data collection from both teachers and head teachers.

# 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## 3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Details about gender classification will help assess the balance among respondents. The table below outlines the gender distribution for all respondents.

**Table 1: Gender Distribution of the Respondents**

	Teachers		Headteachers	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Female	144	51.6	4	33.3
Male	135	48.4	8	66.7
Total	279	100.0	12	100.0

**Source: primary data (2025)**

As observed from Table 1, the gender distribution among the teacher respondents shows a relatively balanced representation, with 51.6% being female and 48.4% male. This near parity in gender participation among teachers suggests that the data collected reflects perspectives from both male and female teachers, which enhances the credibility and inclusiveness of the findings related to head teachers' leadership practices and how they influence teacher job satisfaction. The almost equal input from both genders ensures that the responses are not skewed toward the experiences of one group over the other.

### 3.2 Influence of Head Teachers' Motivation Strategies on Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Motivation plays a critical role in shaping teachers' attitudes toward their work and their overall job satisfaction. In this study, motivation strategies refer to both intrinsic and extrinsic efforts made by head teachers to encourage, recognize, and support teachers in their professional roles. This subsection presents the findings related to how teachers perceive the motivational strategies employed by their head teachers and how these strategies influence their satisfaction with their jobs. The analysis is based on teachers' responses to a series of Likert-scale statements measuring their agreement with aspects of motivation as practiced in their schools. The results are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2: Teachers' responses on motivation strategies**

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
My head teacher recognizes and rewards teachers for outstanding performance and effort.	25.1	54.8	5.4	10.4	4.3	2.14	1.04
The head teacher motivates teachers by acknowledging their accomplishments publicly.	20.4	69.9	0.0	4.7	5.0	2.04	0.92
I receive incentives from my school leadership.	15.4	19.0	0.0	47.0	18.6	3.34	1.38
My head teacher provides opportunities that enhance my sense of achievement and growth.	25.8	44.8	0.0	29.4	0.0	2.33	1.15
The leadership practices in my school make me feel valued and appreciated as a teacher.	33.7	38.0	4.7	14.0	9.7	2.28	1.32

**Source:** primary data (2025)

Table 2 presents a detailed look at teachers' perspectives on the motivational practices of head teachers in public secondary schools in Muhanga District. Regarding the first statement, "My head teacher recognizes and rewards teachers for outstanding performance and effort," slightly more than half of the teachers (54.8%) disagreed, while an additional 25.1% strongly disagreed. Only 10.4% agreed and 4.3% strongly agreed, with 5.4% remaining neutral. The calculated mean for this statement is 2.14 with a standard deviation of 1.04, indicating a generally low perception of recognition practices with limited variability in responses. This finding highlights a substantial shortfall in the recognition of teachers' contributions. The absence of recognition can lead to feelings of stagnation and diminished job satisfaction. In educational settings, timely acknowledgment is especially vital for maintaining teacher morale and encouraging sustained effort. When teachers feel their achievements go unnoticed, their engagement and long-term commitment may suffer, ultimately impacting the overall school climate and student outcomes.

The second statement, "The head teacher motivates teachers by acknowledging their accomplishments publicly," elicited an even more negative response from teachers. Here, 69.9% disagreed and 20.4% strongly disagreed, leaving only 4.7% who agreed and 5.0% who strongly agreed; no respondents were neutral. The mean response for this item is 2.04, with a standard deviation of 0.92, reinforcing the overwhelmingly negative perception and relative consensus among teachers. The marked absence of such practices may foster professional isolation, diminish a sense of belonging, and reduce teachers' willingness to invest extra effort or collaborate meaningfully with colleagues. This deficit is more than a leadership oversight; it risks weakening the collaborative culture needed for sustainable school improvement and may undermine the intrinsic motivation critical for teachers' ongoing development.

Regarding material incentives, the third statement, "I receive incentives from my school leadership," yielded a more favorable response than the previous items. The data reveal that 47.0% of respondents agreed and 18.6% strongly agreed, together forming a majority who experience some form of extrinsic motivation. On the other hand, 15.4% strongly disagreed and 19.0% disagreed, reflecting a minority who feel excluded from such incentives. The calculated mean for this statement is 3.34, with a standard deviation of 1.38, indicating a broader range of experiences and greater variability in perception compared to the earlier statements. This mixed outcome suggests that, while financial or tangible rewards are present in many cases, their distribution may not be equitable or sufficiently valued to offset broader motivational deficits.

The fourth statement, “My head teacher provides opportunities that enhance my sense of achievement and growth,” produced less favorable results. Here, 44.8% of respondents disagreed and 25.8% strongly disagreed, while only 29.4% indicated agreement. The mean score for this statement is 2.33, with a standard deviation of 1.15, pointing to an overall perception of inadequacy in the provision of professional growth opportunities, with moderate variation in responses. Teachers who feel that their professional skills are not being developed may lose their sense of purpose, risk falling behind pedagogically, and may even contemplate leaving the profession. Ongoing professional development is not just a motivator; it is a vital tool for both school improvement and educational innovation.

The fifth statement, “The leadership practices in my school make me feel valued and appreciated as a teacher,” drew 33.7% strong disagreement and 38.0% disagreement, resulting in a mean score of 2.28 and a standard deviation of 1.32. Only 14.0% agreed and 9.7% strongly agreed with this statement. This low mean and relatively high standard deviation indicate that feelings of value and appreciation are not widely shared among teachers, and perceptions vary across the staff. Feeling valued is fundamental to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. When teachers perceive that leadership fails to communicate genuine appreciation, they may become disengaged, leading to absenteeism, lower productivity, and higher turnover rates.

Further analysis suggests that these negative perceptions may be rooted in inconsistent or poorly communicated motivational efforts. Even if head teachers believe they are providing recognition or incentives, the teachers’ responses indicate that these efforts are not translating into meaningful, lived experiences for staff. A common cause of such disconnects is the absence of clear communication and transparency regarding the criteria for recognition and rewards. When teachers do not understand how or why recognition is given, the practice loses both its value and legitimacy. Another implication relates to fairness. If recognition, incentives, or growth opportunities are seen as arbitrary or unequally distributed, teachers are likely to perceive injustice, which can breed resentment and reduce collaboration. The high rates of disagreement with statements about being valued and recognized hint at such perceptions of unfairness in motivational practices within schools in Muhanga District.

The data in Table 2 paints a picture of teachers who feel largely under-recognized, under-supported, and undervalued by school leadership. Most teachers disagreed with positive statements about recognition, public praise, and growth opportunities. While some reported receiving material incentives (mean = 3.34), the overall perception of motivation practices remains negative. These descriptive results are strongly reinforced by inferential analysis, as summarized below.

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	9.680	1	9.680	13.500	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	198.613	277	.717		
Total	208.293	278			

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers’ Job Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Motivation Strategies

The ANOVA results in Table 6 indicate a statistically significant model ( $F(1,277) = 13.5, p < .001$ ), suggesting that head teachers’ motivation strategies have a significant positive influence on teachers’ job satisfaction.

Model	Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error				
	(Constant)	1.798	.215		8.361	.000
1	Motivation Strategies	.316	.086	.216	3.674	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers’ Job Satisfaction

The regression coefficient for motivation strategies is positive ( $B = 0.316$ ) and statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that for every unit increase in perceived motivation strategies, job satisfaction increases by approximately 0.316 units. The standardized Beta ( $\beta = 0.216$ ) reflects a moderate effect size.

The study concludes that head teachers' motivation strategies significantly influence teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Muhanga District. Despite teachers reporting generally low recognition and growth opportunities, the regression results ( $B = 0.316$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta = 0.216$ ) confirm a positive and statistically significant relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis that motivation practices do not significantly influence job satisfaction is rejected, affirming that motivation remains a key contributor to teacher satisfaction, though it accounts for only a modest share of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.046$ ).

Below, Model summary is presented:

**Table 4: Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model R	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.216 <sup>a</sup>	.046	.043	.84677

a. Predictors: (Constant), Motivation Strategies

b. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Job Satisfaction

The regression analysis examining the influence of head teachers' motivation strategies on teachers' job satisfaction reveals a statistically significant but modest relationship. The model summary shows a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.216 and an R Square of 0.046, indicating that motivation strategies explain only 4.6% of the variance in job satisfaction. Despite this limited explanatory power, the ANOVA results ( $F(1,277) = 13.5$ ,  $p < .001$ ) confirm that the model is statistically significant. Furthermore, the coefficients table shows a positive regression coefficient ( $B = 0.316$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that improvements in motivation strategies are associated with increased job satisfaction. The standardized Beta ( $\beta = 0.216$ ) reflects a moderate effect size, reinforcing that while motivation alone may not be the strongest predictor, it remains a meaningful contributor to teacher satisfaction.

The regression analysis confirms and quantifies what the descriptive responses have already suggested: Motivation strategies employed by head teachers significantly predict job satisfaction among teachers. Although overall perceptions of motivational practices (especially intrinsic ones like recognition and appreciation) are low, the strong statistical relationship underscores the potential impact that modest improvements in these practices have on teacher satisfaction.

**Table 5: Head Teachers' Responses on Motivation Strategies**

Statement	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Recognize and reward teachers for efforts and achievements	25.0	58.3	16.7	3.67	0.89
Encourage and motivate teachers to enhance satisfaction	8.3	50.0	41.7	4.25	0.62
Provide financial and non-financial incentives	0.0	75.0	25.0	4.25	0.43
Motivation tailored to individual needs and aspirations	16.7	83.3	0.0	3.67	0.65

**Source:** primary data (2025)

Table 5 presents head teachers' self-assessment of their motivation strategies and how these relate to teachers' job satisfaction. When compared with the responses of teachers in Table 5, a striking perceptual gap emerges, with head teachers generally rating their efforts more favorably than do the teachers themselves. This divergence is at the heart of the study's objective, to assess the influence of head teachers' motivation practices on job satisfaction, and reveals important challenges for leadership and policy.

For the statement "Recognize and reward teachers for efforts and achievements," 58.3% of head teachers agreed and 16.7% strongly agreed that they carry out this practice. The mean score (3.67) reflects a moderately high self-rating. Yet, in Table 5, only 14.7% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their efforts are recognized and rewarded, while nearly 80% disagreed. This sharp difference highlights a communication or implementation gap: while head teachers may believe they are acknowledging teacher contributions, most teachers do not perceive it that way.

Similarly, when head teachers were asked if they “encourage and motivate teachers to enhance satisfaction,” half agreed and 41.7% strongly agreed (mean = 4.25).

These high self-assessments stand in stark contrast to teachers’ views, with Table 5 showing that most teachers feel unmotivated, under-recognized, and lacking encouragement. The implication here is that motivational messages or actions from leadership may be insufficiently targeted, inconsistently delivered, or not communicated in ways that resonate with teachers’ needs and expectations.

The provision of incentives, “financial and non-financial”, was also perceived very positively by head teachers (75% agreed, 25% strongly agreed; mean = 4.25). In comparison, teachers’ responses were mixed: 65.6% agreed or strongly agreed they received incentives, but a significant minority did not. While this area shows some alignment, it still suggests that not all teachers benefit equally from incentive systems, raising concerns about fairness and transparency. A key area of divergence is the tailoring of motivation to “individual needs and aspirations.” Here, 83.3% of head teachers agreed that they differentiate their approach. Yet, Table 5 suggests most teachers do not feel individually valued or supported, particularly in relation to personal growth and achievement opportunities.

Comparing both tables, it becomes evident that, despite head teachers’ self-perceived strengths in recognition, encouragement, and incentive provision, these practices are not reaching or being experienced by most teachers. The disconnect could result from a variety of factors: insufficient frequency or visibility of recognition, unclear criteria for incentives, or simply differences in what teachers and leaders define as effective motivation. Finally, the comparison points to a need for structured, participatory feedback mechanisms. Without regular opportunities for teachers to share their experiences, and for head teachers to adjust their strategies accordingly, the cycle of misperception and dissatisfaction may persist.

While head teachers report strong confidence in their motivational practices, most teachers do not experience these efforts as meaningful or sufficient. The implications for the research objective are clear: for motivation practices to positively influence teachers’ job satisfaction, they must be not only enacted, but also perceived, communicated, and continually refined based on direct teacher feedback. Bridging this perception gap is essential for building a supportive and motivating school culture.

### **3.3 Discussion of Findings**

The findings show that teachers perceive motivation practices in their schools as largely inadequate, especially regarding recognition, public acknowledgment, feeling valued, and opportunities for professional growth. While material incentives (extrinsic motivators) were reported by some, these alone did not lead to higher job satisfaction. This aligns with contemporary research applying the two-factor model in education: for example, a study across multiple countries in online teaching found that intrinsic motivators (achievement and growth) mediated the effect of hygiene factors (salary/incentives) on teacher satisfaction (Springer, 2024).

Teachers’ low scores on being valued and acknowledged underscore the importance of intrinsic motivation. Recent work emphasizes that when teachers’ needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are supported, job satisfaction and commitment improve. For instance, Ngala et al. (2025) found that intrinsic motivation significantly affects performance and satisfaction in educational institutions.

The perceptual gap between head teachers’ self-ratings (which were generally optimistic) and the teachers’ perceptions suggests an implementation or communication gap. Recognizing and rewarding teachers can be inconsistent or not aligned with teachers’ values and expectations. A recent Kenyan study showed that recognition practices were weak and yet strongly correlated with teacher performance (Omondi & Wanjiku, 2023). The discrepancy may also relate to fairness: when teachers view recognition or incentives as uneven or lacking transparency, the motivational effect may be lost, as emphasized by organizational justice literature (Colquitt, 2022).

Although the regression analysis in this study indicates a statistically significant positive effect of motivation strategies on job satisfaction ( $B = 0.316$ ,  $p < .001$ ), the explanatory power is modest ( $R^2 = 0.046$ ). This suggests that while motivation matters, job satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors such as working conditions, leadership style, and professional development opportunities. These findings are consistent with recent systematic reviews of teacher job satisfaction which show that organizational, social, and individual factors all play roles (Musendo et al., 2022; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2023).

### 3.4 Conclusion

This study concludes that motivation practices are key determinants of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Muhanga District. While school administrations often assume that adequate motivational mechanisms are in place, the findings reveal a clear gap between these perceptions and teachers' actual experiences. Motivation practices such as recognition, rewards, and support are inconsistently applied, leading to reduced morale and a sense of undervaluation among teachers. This inconsistency weakens teachers' commitment and overall satisfaction with their work.

The study further establishes that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation practices are not effectively balanced. Although extrinsic factors like salary and job security exist, they are not sufficiently reinforced by intrinsic motivators such as appreciation, career growth, and meaningful engagement in school activities. As a result, teachers experience only moderate levels of satisfaction, indicating that financial incentives alone are inadequate to sustain motivation and professional fulfillment.

In addition, limited involvement of teachers in decision-making processes significantly undermines their motivation and job satisfaction. When teachers are excluded from participating in school-level decisions, their sense of ownership and belonging diminishes. This lack of participatory management contributes to disengagement, lower productivity, and in some cases, increased intentions to leave the profession. Greater inclusion would enhance commitment and strengthen workplace relationships.

The study finds that non-monetary motivation practices and professional development opportunities are insufficiently provided. Teachers expressed the need for regular recognition, supportive supervision, constructive feedback, and access to continuous professional development aligned with their needs. The absence of these elements restricts their professional growth and reduces job satisfaction. Therefore, a more structured and consistent approach to motivation, integrating both financial and non-financial incentives, is essential to improve teacher satisfaction, retention, and overall educational quality in Muhanga District.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical standards outlined by Mount Kigali University and in accordance with Rwanda's Data Protection Law (No. 058/2021 of 13/10/2021).

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