

Motivational Factors of Students to Become Teachers: A Phenomenology Study

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Abstract

Being a teacher is a favorite goal lately, in contrary to what happened in the past. This current study aimed at (1) finding out factors that encourage fresh graduates to become teachers, and (2) elaborating the meaning of being teachers. The subjects of this qualitative study were four young teachers who fresh graduates and became teachers less than three years in one of the secondary schools in Makassar. To collect data, researchers used in-depth interview technique. Data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) technique. The results of this study found that the motivational factors of being teachers were to help students reach or realize their future, to get life lessons, as the call of the soul, and to enjoy comfort. The meaning of being a teacher found through this research were as a job or profession, as an expression of belief in religion, and the way to feel as parents for students.

Key words

call of the soul, life lesson, motivational factors, teacher

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INTRODUCTION

In life, humans carry out various activities with the aim of maintaining their survival. According to Huberman (1989) Running a job or profession is a life activity carried out by humans to survive and reach the necessities of life. This means that working is the most fundamental part of life because it is done to maintain existence and obtain social status in society.

However, some people are compelled to work only for playing around, and just to pass the time. Some others even have bad intentions in entering the world of work. These are often found in reporting through mass media such as television and newspapers. Even these all occur in the real world.

According to Maslow (1954) biological need is the first level need before reaching other levels. It refers to the fulfilling of the need to survive, namely eat and continue offspring. Humans cannot survive without eating. To meet these needs, humans strive by working and earning income to eat until they reach other levels of need.

The modern workplace continues to experience changes today. New professions have sprung up so as to shape human perceptions and perspectives in interpreting the job. For example, being a You Tuber or content creator is not bound by rigid rules, namely coming in the morning and going home in the afternoon. As well as being a teacher in a small village, does not have to get an abundant salary because the kindness and friendliness of the villagers can pay for everything. New professions have sprung up with income that cannot be underestimated. The changes of the career orientation have opened up employment opportunities in various sectors.

The emergence of the new professions did not necessarily make all millennial generations follow the trend. Some of them still want a profession that has been long dreamed of by previous generations, namely becoming state civil apparatus or civil servant. However, to become a civil servant now is not easy. It must go through a rigorous selection process and compete with other participants. Many even have to start their struggle by becoming honorary staff. In fact, from a financial perspective, being an honorary worker does not bring prosperity.

This phenomenon is now also found in many young people who work as educators or teachers. Many others also serve as honorary teachers. The question is why they want to become honorary teachers while it does not provide welfare guarantees. Income or salary earned by an honorary teacher is very low. In fact many other jobs can bring in higher salaries, for example working in a private company or entrepreneurship. However, these young people certainly have their own motivation to become teachers, not just for income.

Work activities carried out will form experience. Furthermore, according to Harpaz (2002) work experience shapes the meaning of work for each individual. Morin (2004) added that the meaning of work is not only as an effort to meet economic needs, but also social needs and for self-actualization.

Weber (1987) stated that rationally and argumentatively, a job will connect religious life with work ethic. For example, Protestant religion in Western Europe has played a major role in encouraging human needs to produce an achievement. This is what finally led to the understanding of capitalism. The work ethic is called Protestant ethics, which encourages every human being to do the best and try to achieve.

In essence, the Protestant ethic teaches its adherents to work hard and be serious without being oriented to material rewards (Weber, 1987). That teaching has implications for the hard work attitude of its adherents. Their purpose in working hard is not to find wealth. They work hard is to prepare themselves for heaven.

Work implies a collection of values, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations possessed by someone in a relationship with work (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Understanding the meaning of work for someone will have an impact on their work spirit. The spirit of work is formed from the basis of understanding and spiritual attitude. It finally gave rise to strong motivation to work optimally.

The phenomenon that occurs in Makassar is that alumni of education science department from various universities are less absorbed in schools. One of the universities in Makassar that produces undergraduates with an education bachelor degree (S.Pd.) receives more than 100 new students every year. But there are only a few alumni who work as teachers in schools. Data in 2019, from a total of 90, only four alumni became teachers.

This phenomenon shows that there is a separate motivation for small amount of education department alumni choosing a career path to become a teacher. What factors motivate them to become teachers? How do they interpret the meaning of work as a teacher? The researchers wanted to find out factors that encourage fresh graduates to become teachers. In addition, the current study elaborated the meaning of being teachers for fresh graduates of education department.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation plays an important role in building the integrity and capability of person's profession. This is also related to the situation and the role of teachers. According to Brown (2000) proper motivation will make a teacher as an inspiration for his/her students. Many factors encourage someone to choose a career as a teacher. Those factors include:

1. love for children
2. desire to share knowledge
3. happy to be a teacher
4. desire to provide services to community

Traditionally teachers have received relatively low salaries (Depdiknas, 2008). In 1963, for example, the average of teachers' salary in dollars today was less than \$ 36,000. In 2005, this figure had risen to more than \$ 52,000. In addition, teachers have the opportunity to increase their income by supervising some extracurricular activities at schools. However, teachers' salaries still tend to be lower than other occupation's.

The biggest variation in teacher salaries relates to the length of teaching and the education level. Teachers who are more experienced in teaching get a higher salary than teachers whose teaching experience is still less. Likewise from the factor of education level, teachers with higher education (for example doctorates), receive more salary than teachers with master degree.

According to Maslow (1954) in his book with the theory of hierarchy needs, there are five layers that form the basis of motivation for everyone. The basis of motivation can also be the basis of the motivation of teachers who affect the integrity of the profession.

1. The first layer is physiological motivation.
This motivation only aims to meet physiological needs such as eating, drinking, resting, and having fun. Teachers who are in this layer are teachers who only want to meet their basic needs. They just hope to work in a relaxed manner and get enough salary for the necessities of life.
2. The second layer is safety motivation.
This motivation aims to get a sense of security both physically and emotionally. They only hope to become civil servants in order to get a sense of security in the future by relying on pension funds.
3. The third layer is social motivation.
This motivation aims to get acceptance, status and relationships. They become teachers just because they want recognition or status. Some people are even forced to become teachers, just because they are not accepted in other fields.
4. The fourth layer is the motivation of appreciation.
This motivation aims to get an award. Teachers at this level are passionate teachers and they have real contribution in the world of education.
5. The fifth layer is self-actualization motivation.
This motivation aims to express and explore their potential. The teacher at this layer will arguably give all the best. For them, being a teacher is their ideals and goals in life. This kind of motivation makes the teacher strong in dealing with all obstacles and the education system that is quite confusing.

Fisher (2007) stated that there are seven challenges faced by teachers at this time, namely:

1. Teaching in multicultural societies
Teachers must be able to teach in communities that have a variety of cultures with multilingual competence.
2. Teaching for meaning construction
In carrying out teaching, teachers are expected to be able to construct concepts.
3. Teaching for active learning
In teaching, teachers are expected to implement active learning.
4. Teaching and technology
The teacher should utilize technology in learning. At present, information and communication technology must be integrated in teaching and learning activities.

5. Teaching with a new perspective on ability

In teaching, teachers should have a new view about the abilities of students. Furthermore, teachers are expected to include all students so that they can get relatively the same learning outcomes even though their abilities are different.

6. Teaching and choice

Teachers are faced with the challenge of choosing, whether they carry out teaching activities only as an obligation or as a soul vocation or because of both.

7. Teaching and accountability

In addition to carrying out their profession of educating, teachers must pay attention to the accountability of the teaching materials they deliver.

Research on motivation and meaning of work has been carried out by several previous researchers. One of them is a research conducted by Berger and D'Ascoli (2012). That qualitative research found several work motivations namely (1) to gain serenity, peace, and happiness, (2) to apply the principle of unity, togetherness, and to avoid disunity, and (3) to preserve cultural values. The researchers also concluded the meaning works as (1) source of blessing, (2) way to success, (3) way to get along with the community, and (4) help to fellow human beings.

Rusdiana and Affandi (2013) conducted a qualitative study to examine the meaning of work for chili pickers in Pare. The results of that study indicated that the meaning of work for chili pickers were (1) as the main source of income, (2) as a part of the free time filler, (3) for increasing the family income, (4) as a form of adaptive attitude to the social environment, (5) an effort to raise capital, and (6) to show self-existence.

The meaning of work as a teacher had been investigated by Tanudjaja (2013) through a quantitative study. The study examines the relationship between family-work conflict, the meaning of work as a soul calling, and the perception of organizational support and work engagement for teachers. The researcher concluded that the family-work conflict felt by the teacher had created pressure in work. However, that pressure was reduced by organizational support. The meaning of the teachers work as a soul call also reduced the stress and increased the work attachment. That indicated that despite conflicts in the family and at work place, the support of peers and the teachers' understanding of the work as a soul vocation has reduced the pressure they were experiencing.

A study about some motivations for becoming a teacher had also been conducted by Jungert, Alm, and Thornberg (2014). The objectives of that study were to explore (1) motives for students to become teachers, and (2) the relationship between teachers' motives and their academic engagement. To collect data, the researchers gave questionnaire to 333 student teachers at a Swedish university for measuring motives for becoming a teacher and their academic engagement. That research found three motivational factors as altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic motives. The findings also indicated a negative significant relationship between the altruistic motive and dropout

and were mediated by academic engagement. In addition, the relationships between intrinsic and extrinsic motives and academic engagement were not significant.

Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus (2014) had also conducted a research to investigate the assumption that motivation is relevant for pre-service teachers' engagement to the profession by using the Factors Influencing Teaching (FIT) Choice theory. Data was surveyed from teachers in training for secondary education level and primary education level. The data then was analyzed by using stepwise regression analyses. That research found that working with children and adolescents was the top important motivation to become a teacher. That motivation also predicted many factors relevant for the engagement to the profession namely planned effort, planned persistence, and leadership aspirations.

Another research had been conducted by Nesje, Brandmo, and Berger (2018). The objective of that research was to elaborate further knowledge of prospective teachers' career motivations by validating a Norwegian translation of the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) Scale. In that study, 635 pre service teachers were used as the sample to collect data. The data was analyzed by using the technique of confirmatory factor analyses. The researchers found that self-perception of teaching-related abilities, an interest in teaching, the desire to shape the future of children and adolescents are factors that motivated them to become teachers.

The meaning of work is a set of values, beliefs, attitudes and expectations that a person has in relation to work (Watt, Richardson, & Morris, 2017). A person's understanding of the meaning of work will have an impact on his/her passion to work. The spirit of work is basically formed from one's understanding and spirituality. In the end it will provide strong motivation to work optimally.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative method with an empirical phenomenological approach to determine the motivation and meaning of being a teacher for fresh graduates in Makassar city. This method focuses on experiences that the subject experiences, feels, and understands clearly. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), the phenomenological approach is the researchers' effort to create complex images, by deepening words, studying natural situations, and making detailed reports from the views of the research subject. In essence, an empirical phenomenological approach is used to find out someone's interpretation of their experience in connection with events that they have encountered.

The subjects of this study were four people who were determined by purposive sampling. They were fresh graduates, who had worked under three years as honorary teachers in one of the secondary schools in Makassar, no more than 25 years old. Those four subjects of this research were the data source of this research.

Data collection technique used was in-depth interviews and observations. Interviews were arranged so that they run naturally. Researchers built strong emotional connections in order to obtain in-depth data. Broadly speaking, interview questions

revolved around the reasons for being a teacher, the meaning of being a teacher, what makes them stay as teachers, and how their views on other profession that brings a higher salary.

Observation was conducted by researchers to observe attitudes made by research subjects. The observation was made when researchers visited and talked directly with those teachers. Researchers directly observe their performance. Data from observations are compared with the results of interviews to test the suitability between both.

To analyze data, researchers used interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) technique. The steps were:

- transcribing all interview data
- coding by commenting on each transcript
- rereading all comments to create conceptual labels
- grouping labels based on the similarity of meaning become some sub themes
- analyzing all sub-themes and grouping them into themes based on the closeness of meaning
- concluding the results of the study

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The current study aimed at finding out motivating factors of becoming teachers, and elaborating the meaning of work as a teacher for fresh graduates. Data obtained from interviews and observations were categorized based on themes according to the objectives of the study.

1. Factors motivate fresh graduates to become teachers

From the results of data analysis obtained from interviews and observations, researchers found four motivating factors of becoming teachers.

a. Desire to help students reach or realize the future

The following is an honorary teacher's answer when he was interviewed with the question "What motivates you to become a teacher?"

For me, realizing the future of students is an extraordinary work. Until now I still often communicate with students who have already finished their study. It feels like a bonus. I am called to do better.

This teacher assumed that his work as a teacher was his effort to realize the students' future. Therefore, he then tried to spur himself in order to provide better services to students. Knowing that the students he has educated had reached good future motivates him to remain teaching. This is in line with the theory put forward by Brown (2000) that one of the factors that motivates a person to become a teacher is to provide services to community.

b. To get life lessons

The four honorary teachers interviewed separately in this study had the same answer, namely they became teachers to get valuable lessons in life.

The following is a quote from one of the teachers' answers.

I learned many things from students. Many events I found that I can then make them as experiences. One example is in terms of reprimanding students. We often say harshly when rebuking. In fact, almost all people are not careful in saying the words when reprimanding their children. However, just one word with incorrect placement can have a huge impact.

The teacher thinks that being a teacher is an effort to learn again. He actually learns many things from his students. In his view, a bad response to students will have a negative impact on them. This shows that teachers are required to continue learning so that their skills in educating and communicating improve. This is in line with the theory put forward by Brown (2000) that one of the factors that motivates a person to become a teacher is to share knowledge

c. To fulfill the call of the soul

One of the teachers interviewed answered:

I never regret that I studied at education and teacher science department and then became a teacher. By becoming a teacher, I have fulfilled my soul vocation. By becoming a teacher, I can know myself better. I am happy to be a teacher even though my salary is low, only 1 million rupiah per month.

This teacher argued that although the salary he earned was small, he was grateful for being a teacher. For him, being a teacher means coming to the call of the soul.

Another teacher responded:

When talking about profits, I might work somewhere else since long ago, which is a workplace with more salary. As a honorary teacher at this school, my salary is very low, just enough for transportation costs.

This teacher makes a statement that he remains consistent to be a teacher even with a salary that is only enough for transportation costs. For him, a small salary is not a problem, because becoming a teacher has become a soul call for him.

Another teacher when he was asked “why did not you work in a private company that gives more salary?” answers:

Working in a private company is not my interest. My interest is in the world of education. I was called to practice and spread knowledge. At the moment I can only contribute my knowledge. I can't donate property yet.

This teacher is motivated by the desire to practice and share knowledge. This is in line with the theory put forward by Fisher (2007).

d. To enjoy comfort

The teachers interviewed said that they were comfortable when interacting with students at school. They said that there was pleasure when they succeeded in helping students face difficulties. Another teacher revealed that comfort is one aspect that can improve mental well-being. The mental health will have an impact on the effectiveness of teachers' performance.

2. Meaning of work as a teacher for fresh graduates

From the results of data analysis obtained from interviews and observations, researchers found three meanings of being a teacher.

a. As a job or profession

For the teachers interviewed, becoming a teacher is a safe job or profession. They do not want to work in a private company because they are afraid of being fired or overburdened. Being a teacher is a safe profession. They are not worried about dismissal and overtime work. In addition, according to them, the teacher is a profession that has a lot of holidays. When students are free, the teacher is also free, depends on the condition of the school.

b. As an expression of belief in religion

One of the teachers interviewed said:

I work as a teacher because I believe that what I do becomes a charity of *Jariyah* in the hereafter. Everything I do I intend because of God. I made these as my worship deed.

This teacher thinks that being a teacher is worship. The teaching that he conducts becomes charity (*Jariyah*) for him. This shows that the teacher works as a teacher is a form of belief in religion. This is actually a culmination of the formation of an Islamic work ethic that emanates from Islamic faith.

c. The way to feel as parents for students

Four teachers interviewed at different times and places have the same view that in school, teachers are actually parents for all students. By working as teachers, they feel comfortable being parents. A female teacher who was asked “what does the teacher mean to you” answered:

The teacher is a parent for everyone who needs it. Some of my students feel conflict in their families. They received less attention from their father and mother at home. A guidance system in my school that ultimately requires teachers to become real parents to students. Some teachers act as fathers, and I become a mother to students. It was something that was enjoyable for me.

The teacher explains the condition of her school and considers that all teachers are parent to students in the true sense. Many students lack of affection from their parents. For her, being parents for students is an activity that makes her feel comfortable.

CONCLUSION

From the results of data analysis obtained from interviews and observations conducted to four fresh graduates who work as teachers, the researchers found motivation to be a teacher and the meaning of work as a teacher. Factors that motivate them to become teachers are:

1. Desire to help students reach or realize the future
2. To get life lessons
3. To fulfill the call of the soul

4. To enjoy comfort

Furthermore, the researchers found the meaning of work as a teacher namely:

1. As a job or profession
2. As an expression of belief in religion
3. The way to feel as parents for students

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