

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

THE INFLUENCE OF INCOME LEVEL AND REMUNERATION SCHEME ON JOB SATISFACTION AMONG PROFESSIONAL DRIVING INSTRUCTORS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the job satisfaction (JS) level among professional driving instructors (PDIs) in the driver training and licensing system in Malaysia. Specifically, it looks at the influence of income level and remuneration scheme on PDI's satisfaction. The average income of PDI is relatively low with three remuneration schemes: fixed income; fixed income plus commission; and commission only. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey using the 20-item Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (short-form) with end-specified 10-point scale. Analysis of the data revealed that PDIs with higher income are more satisfied with their job, $t(179) = -3.248$, $p = 0.001$. Similarly, three level One-way ANOVA of JS scores with three remuneration schemes revealed a significant difference of JS across these schemes, $F(2,178) = 3.51$, $p \leq 0.032$. Researchers' further exploration found a significant interaction between these two variables (income level vs. remuneration scheme), $F(5,175) = 4.88$, $p = 0.001$. In general, PDIs with higher income are more satisfied with their job only if they received it as a fixed income (regardless of having commission or not). This insightful finding can be a basis for relevant stakeholders in understanding the influence of income and remuneration scheme towards JS among PDIs in Malaysia.

Keywords: Job satisfaction; professional driving instructor; driver training; driver licensing; Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of driver training and licensing in Malaysia entails four main phases (see Figure 1)¹. Tracing back the record from the year of independence in 1957, the country had Driving School (DS; or *Sekolah Memandu - SM*) to train new drivers and riders (hereinafter will be referred to just driver(s) to represent both). In 1990's, driven by the Driving Institute Development Policy, the government, in particularly the Road Transport Department (RTD) introduced the concept of Driving Institute (DI; or *Institut Memandu - IM*).

The idea of rebranding and restructuring the driver training system was to upgrade the capacity and capability of this private services. This is because their outputs or products are pivotal to the country's transportation and socio-economic sustainability. DI is different from DS in terms of facilities since it has its own internal track for in-circuit training and proper classrooms². Based on RTD's 2016 statistics, there are around 200 DIs all over the country, and the number of DS has reduced from around 1,500 to just 230. RTD is set to make DS obsolete in the future by not producing any new 'permit-to-operate' for DS; and by pushing these DSs to merge to becoming DIs. Consequently, the industry is healthier in number.

The new era of driver training and licensing started in the year 2000 when RTD introduced

the Driver Education Curriculum (DEC). Further enhancement of the plan, Enhancement Plan for Driver Education Curriculum (EP-DEC), took place in 2007¹. Through DEC and EP-DEC, both RTD and the Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research (MIROS), as the main road transport agencies in the Ministry of Transport (MOT), have reviewed the ecosystem and re-strategized the delivery of driver training and licensing in Malaysia (see Table 1).

The improvement and new items in the system until today include, among others, the new and enriched text book for both car and motorcycle license class, the introduction of new entry license type for car with automatic transmission (coded as class 'DA'; previously just class 'D' for manual car), the DI star grading system (system, facility and delivery), and courses for the instructors on the new curriculum implementation^{1,3,4}.

Professional Driving Instructor (PDI) In Malaysia's Road Transportation System

Every country has its own unique approach when it comes to the driver training and licensing subject⁵. This include the minimum age to start the licensing process and minimum age to obtain a license, driver training methodology, mechanism for controlling new drivers, provisional period, hours of driving lesson and the testing method. Few countries especially the developed ones, however, shared similar

concepts or approaches such as the “Goals for Driver Education” (GDE) and the “Graduated Licensing System” (GDL)^{6,7}. The former is about a four-level concept known as the hierarchical model of driver behaviour (from basic manoeuvring up to one’s motivation to drive), and the latter highlights the three main stages (‘learner’ - ‘provisional’ - ‘full license’) that must be followed before someone is awarded with the fully licensed status.

Malaysia refers to neither GDE nor GDL approach in its licensing system. Nevertheless, the system is highly acknowledged in the country’s road safety plan (Malaysia Road Safety Plan 2014-2020) and is aligned with the safe system approach in United Nation’s Decade of Action (World Health Organization 2015; Road Safety Department 2014). Furthermore, the driver training and licensing improvement is one of the MIROS’ main agendas and reasons for its establishment⁸.

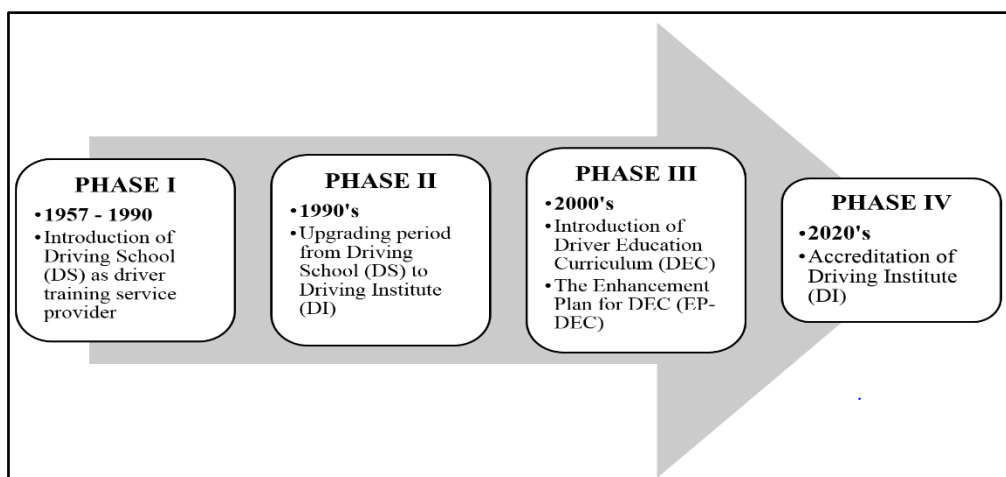


Figure 1 - The evolution of driver training and licensing in Malaysia

Table 1 - Sectors in DEC/EP-DEC and the progress status

Sector	Enhancement	Status
Institutional Improvement	Upgrading of DS to DI	About 200 DI's established, DS reduced to only 230
Content & Syllabus Improvement	The earlier version of DEC (or <i>Kurikulum Pendidikan Pemandu - KPP</i>) has been enhanced in EP-DEC	New DEC implemented nationwide in 2014
Quality Control & Auditing	Upgrading the previously “inspectorate system” to “star grading system”	Pilot phase has commenced in 2015, and full accreditation in the future
Testing Improvement	<i>Developing a more objective and effective method (e.g. E-testing) and strengthening testers' competency - both Qualified Testing Officer (QTO-RTD) and Instructor (QTI-DI)</i>	<i>E-testing and “Accredited Tester” program are still in proposal stage</i>
Teaching Improvement	<i>Strengthening instructors' competency in both theoretical and practical segments</i>	<i>Upgrading process has commenced together with new DEC in 2014 and further refinement is still in progress</i>

Literature review reveals that professional driving instructor (PDI) not only trains novice drivers for entry license and license class upgrade⁹, but also involves in the advanced driving courses such as emergency situations driving, new technology in newest vehicles, occupational specialization (chauffeur, ambulatory, funeral, etc.) and other specialised driving situations. In other countries, another related job specialisation is the Occupational Therapist Driver Assessor (OTDA), who normally performs the fitness-to-drive assessment on

recovering patients of certain illnesses¹⁰. However, this study zooms only on PDI as trainers of novice drivers.

Additionally, since the current system does not take into account of the contribution of parents and family members in guiding and training the new drivers^{9,11}, the term “lay instructor” (or any similar concept) is almost unheard of in the current system in Malaysia. Therefore, PDIs are the main actors of Malaysian drivers’ training system. As teachers to children, teaching from

the basic of alphabet until writing dissertations, is PDIs to novice drivers. Their huge responsibilities include from simply teaching a person on how to hold a steering wheel to training a driver of other complex skills such as perceiving hazards, or negotiating winding roads during heavy downpour¹². Would you risk your life to be inside a car on the road driving by a driver who still confuses between accelerator and brake paddles? They would.

The Influence of Income on Job Satisfaction & Study Objective

Despite the criticality of this job not only to the economic development of the country, but also to the safety of thousands others, it receives less attention neither deserved appreciation. To the best of the authors' knowledge, there has been an absence of any study about PDIs' satisfaction on their job in Malaysia. In fact, there is very little research had been published internationally with regard to PDI and the available research thus far is highly dispersed¹³. This fact supports the need of the study, especially in supporting the current endeavour of Malaysia to strengthen the driver training and licensing system.

Job satisfaction (JS) is one of the key subjects in the Industrial-Organization Psychology (I/O Psychology)¹⁴. One of the early definitions of JS is "any combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that cause a person truthfully to say - I am satisfied with my job"¹⁵. Besides, it is closely associated with many other occupational issues including motivation, productivity, general life satisfaction and accidents. Further, JS does have the link to job performance (JP), though the link is still arguable among researchers¹⁶. Thus, it is important for the employer (DI) and owner of the system (RTD) to study potential factors that influence PDI's job satisfaction in Malaysia. While the RTD has begun the process of improving the entire drivers' training system, especially on PDIs' related last two rows of Table 1, the effort is still at the nascent stage.

Previous study shows that the majority of PDIs went only until secondary level education at most (i.e. the Malaysia Education Certificate or SPM - *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*)². Consequently, most of them earned monthly only within the range of Malaysian Minimum Wage^{2,17}. The discussion on relationship between income and subjective well-being is not without debate¹⁸, as some would argue that "the pay is not the most important factor" in determining job satisfaction¹⁹. Maslow's hierarchy of needs, however, take a different position on this: *a set of basic needs must be fulfilled in order to be motivated to acquire the next level of needs*²⁰; and certainly, PDIs go to work every day to earn money to fulfil their basic needs.

Besides, increase in pay and the chance of being promoted can boost up employee's motivation to improve their performance²¹. With regard to PDIs, they not only are having unclear promotional mechanism or career path, but also have to face the different remuneration scheme depending on which driving institutes they work for. Three remuneration schemes that PDIs are currently involve include fixed scheme, fixed-and-commission scheme and commission-only scheme.

Therefore, present study, as part of a bigger study regarding PDI as a career, intends to analyse JS among PDIs with regards to their income level and remuneration scheme. The specific objectives and hypotheses are as the following:

(i) Is income level influence job satisfaction among PDIs in Malaysia?

H1: *PDIs with higher income (more than MYR 2,000) are more satisfied relative to PDIs with lower income.*

(ii) Is remuneration scheme influence job satisfaction among PDIs in Malaysia?

H2: *PDIs with fixed income are more satisfied relative to PDIs with non-fixed (commission-based) income.*

(iii) Are income level and remuneration scheme interacting to influence job satisfaction among PDIs in Malaysia?

H3: *PDIs with fixed and higher income (more than MYR 2,000) are the most satisfied group(s).*

METHODS

This study adopted quantitative approach using questionnaires to PDIs in Malaysia. To increase the validity, data collection commenced through the support of the Malaysia Driving Instructors Association (MyDIA) instead of the official RTD or DI channels to avoid any "top-bottom", hierarchical, or authoritative employer-employees' situations.

The inaugural and current president of MyDIA trained his committee members at state level on how to conduct the survey using purposive random sampling (homogeneous) method resulting to a total of 181 responses. At this level of exploration with financial limitation, this is the best design that the researchers can come out with. With the help of MyDIA committee members across Malaysia, this cross-sectional study involved different zones of the country i.e. West Malaysia - Northern (n = 30), Central (n = 75), Southern (n = 61) and East Coast (n = 7); and East Malaysia (n = 8). Table 2 provides other descriptive information of the respondents.

Measures of Job Satisfaction

The short-form version of Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)²², employed in this study, offers a quicker assessment that is suitable among PDIs in Malaysia. Additionally, this measure is also known as multiple-item measures, as opposed to the single question approach such as asking the respondents “*On the whole, would you say you are satisfied or dissatisfied with your job?*”²³. The short-form MSQ consists of 20 items and is originally based on 5-point Likert scale (1 for “very dissatisfied” to 5 for “very satisfied”). For this study, however, the authors used the interval-based 10-point scale with both extremes are denoted by “very dissatisfied” and “very satisfied”. According to Cummins and Gullone²⁴, expanding

the scale beyond the original 5-point does not damage the reliability, rather increases its sensitivity. Also, the end-defined scales preserved the data as interval to meet the assumption for parametric analysis^{24,25}.

The MSQ questionnaire was translated and adapted into the Malay language. Even though it was applied in other fields, use of MSQ in several domestic studies suggests its validity and reliability in local context²⁶. The total score, calculated through summation or the average value, denote the magnitude of JS: the lower the score, the lower the satisfaction (in the case of this study, the total score is 200 based on 10-point scale). All items of the scale achieved high internal reliability (Cronbach’s alpha of .959).

Table 2 - Descriptive information of the samples (n = 181)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	148	81.8
	Female	33	18.2
Education (highest)	Secondary and lower	128	70.7
	Tertiary (cert., diploma, degree)	53	29.3
Age	30 and below	14	7.7
	31 to 50	105	58.0
	51 and above	62	34.3
Years in Service	10 and below	93	51.4
	11 to 20	71	39.2
	21 and above	17	9.4

Data Analysis

The data was analysed using the SPSS software beginning with managing for missing data. The income level is divided into two categories, i.e. below and above MYR 2,000 based on the previous study².

Independent Sample t-Test was adopted to compare means of JS for the two groups of income level (first hypothesis). The remuneration scheme consists of three levels requiring One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to compare means of JS. Post-hoc analysis further explained the results (second hypothesis). For the third hypothesis, the authors recoded the two variables into six groups (income level vs. remuneration scheme), and adopted ANOVA for the analysis.

RESULTS

The mean of overall JS score among the sampled PDIs was 151.99 (out of a possible score of 200), with a standard deviation of 25.39. Table 1 shows the descriptive results of JS score based on the level of income and remuneration scheme. Less than 60% of responded PDIs earned less than MYR 2,000 a month and the majority of them were based on fixed-and-commission

scheme. PDIs who earned more than MYR 2,000 a month reported higher means of JS relative to its counterpart.

The t-Test further supports this observation, $t(179)=-3.248$, $p=0.001$. Meanwhile, PDIs who are in fixed-and-commission scheme have highest JS whereas PDIs on commission-only scheme have the lowest JS. JS of PDIs with fixed income fell in between.

The three level One-way ANOVA of the overall JS scores based on the remuneration schemes showed that the difference in scores between the groups was statistically significant, $F(2,178)=3.51$, $p=0.032$. Further, post-hoc test showed that fixed-income-related PDIs (fixed and fixed-and-commission) are more satisfied than those with commission only scheme.

Additionally, the One-way ANOVA confirmed the existence of interaction between income level and remuneration scheme, $F(5,175) = 4.88$, $p \leq .001$. The post-hoc test revealed that the fixed-income-related PDIs (fixed and fixed-and-commission) have higher JS relative to the non-fixed income group.

Figure 2 explains the interaction. Note that the arrows indicate significant differences between two groups. Both JS scores of PDIs with “fixed-

above-2k” and “fixed-and-commission-above-2k” groups are significantly higher than the other groups. Between these two fixed-income-related groups, however, the difference is not significant despite JS of fixed-and-commission is marginally

higher. Interestingly, there is no significant different between JS among PDIs who are in commission-only scheme despite different in income level.

Table 3 - Descriptive results of overall JS score based on income level and remuneration scheme (n = 181)

Item	Category	Frequency (%)	Mean (JS)	Std. Dev. (JS)
Income level	MYR 2,000 and below	108 (59.67)	147.08	24.59
	MYR 2,000 and above	73 (40.33)	159.26	24.97
Remuneration scheme	Fixed	44 (24.31)	151.89	22.99
	Fixed-and-commission	97 (53.59)	155.67	25.87
	Commission-only	40 (22.10)	143.20	25.14

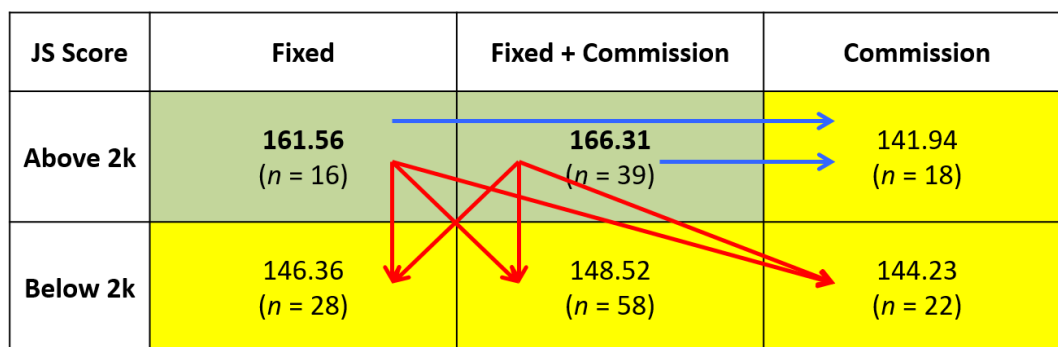


Figure 2 - The interaction based on income level vs. remuneration scheme

DISCUSSION

This study reveals that, relative to previous reported figure², PDIs income level is almost stagnant even after almost a decade (majority of them earned less than MYR 2,000 a month). The proportion of PDIs for different remuneration scheme, however, is not comparable because of the absence of historical records. Relatedly, the results suggest that PDIs with higher income (more than MYR 2,000 a month) are more satisfied than the lower income group. This argument, however, does not hold when taking into account its interaction with the remuneration scheme. More accurately, higher income PDIs are only more satisfied with their job when they receive the income in any fixed scheme (regardless with or without commission). This indicates that, fixed income is the driving factor in influencing job satisfaction among PDIs.

The result had also supported the second hypotheses, in which PDIs who are employed on fixed income basis (fixed and fixed-and-commission) are more satisfied than those with commission-only scheme. The third hypothesis was also supported, and this showed that fixed income really matters in the PDI environment in the country. Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that PDIs with higher income and under the fixed-related income were more satisfied being in the job. This is not something

unexpected since higher income may directly and indirectly influence one’s well-being by giving “more room” to spend for his or her needs and desires. Additionally, fixed income has the element of security and anticipation (at least on monthly basis) as compared to commission-based income, which can be associated with one-sided contract deal, and daily or per service wages without other benefits.

Since this is the first time that the JS level being measured among PDIs in Malaysia, the outcome can be described in two ways: the result can stand as the baseline for similar measurement in the future (non-probability design which cannot be generalized); and secondly it is still premature to endorse or recognize the higher JS overall score - among the fixed-based income group who earned more than MYR 2,000 a month - is already at the saturation level. This also can be regarded as one of the limitations in this particular study.

Alternatively, the score can be further converted into percentage (this study employed 10-point scale instead of 5-point), in which the JS score of 163 (crude average of the two higher JS level groups) is actually at 81.5% out of a possible score of 200 (100%). What’s remain as an intriguing question is whether or not the score of 145 or 72.5% (crude average of the remaining four groups in Figure 2) is actually a bad result.

The answer to this is related to the need to explore the relationship of JS and job performance (JP), since at the end of the day JP is what matters (e.g. what is the threshold of JS that is associated with anticipated JP among PDIs?)

Moreover, it has been theorized that employees tend to be satisfied with their current job because they are already in it for a considerable amount of time, because of their own natural commitment, or they are tolerating their displeasure^{27,28}. Therefore, they are responding with reference to their own situation rather than comparing or benchmarking it with other occupations.

Nonetheless, the study findings can be a benchmark if RTD, as the owner of the system, would like to set a standard on the remuneration scheme and minimum pay for PDIs. More studies are needed, especially involving other perspectives or facets of occupational subjects, in order to help RTD and the industry to create a more sustainable and competitive career for PDIs in Malaysia.

CONCLUSION

This study has looked into the influence of income levels and remuneration schemes among PDIs in Malaysia's driver training and licensing industry. The result is somewhat expected, in which PDIs with fixed-based income will be more satisfied with their job, though the income level is relatively low (cut-off line at MYR 2,000) when compared to similar occupations in either educational or transportation industry. This study also can be the baseline of similar research in the future, and also setting a benchmark - for RTD as the system owner, as well as the DIs as the direct employers - to re-strategize the industry's layout.

ABBREVIATIONS

PDI-Professional Driving Instructor, MSQ-Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, DI-Driving Institute, DEC-Driver Education Curriculum.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

There is no conflict of interest.

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