

Integrating Quranic Principles to Enhance Teacher Motivation in Special Needs Vocational Training: Insights from Pastry and Bakery Educators

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Abstract

Grounded in the Quranic vision of dignity (*karamah*), compassion (*rahmah*), and purposeful labor (*'amal salih*), this study explores how faith-based principles shape teacher motivation in vocational education for learners with special needs. Focusing on the Integration Special Education Program (ISEP) pastry and bakery modules in Kelantan, Malaysia, the research examines the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic motivators through a quantitative survey of 40 special education teachers. Findings reveal that intrinsic motivators, including joy in teaching, pride in student progress, and a sense of divine purpose were consistently stronger than extrinsic influences such as administrative support and professional development opportunities. While teachers valued institutional backing, persistent resource limitations highlighted the need for systemic improvements. Beyond statistical findings, the study provides a deeper interpretive lens by linking motivation to Islamic ethical constructs, demonstrating how Quranic values cultivate resilience, ethical responsibility, and long-term professional commitment. The study argues that integrating spiritual principles into vocational pedagogy not only enhances teacher motivation but also strengthens inclusive educational practices and sustainable outcomes in special needs education.

Keywords: Motivation, Integration Special Education Program, Quranic values, Pastry and Bakery

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher motivation is widely recognized as a cornerstone of effective education, particularly in specialized contexts where pedagogical demands are intensified by the diversity of learners and the complexity of instructional environments. In vocational special education, teachers are required to integrate technical skill instruction with individualized pedagogical strategies, emotional support, and behavioral management. This multidimensional role requires not only professional competence but also sustained motivation and psychological resilience.

In Malaysia, the Integration Special Education Program (ISEP) reflects the government's commitment to inclusive education by ensuring equitable access for students with diverse learning needs. Vocational pathways such as pastry and bakery training are especially significant, as they provide practical, employable skills that enhance independence and social participation. This program also contributes to national human capital development by preparing learners with special needs for meaningful employment and community integration. Pastry and bakery programs within ISEP further serve as platforms for learners with special needs to cultivate fine motor skills, creativity, discipline, and entrepreneurial potential, aligning with global educational priorities that emphasize inclusive and skills-based education. However, the effectiveness of such programs is largely dependent on the motivation of teachers. Motivated teachers are more likely to adopt innovative teaching strategies, maintain positive classroom environments, and foster

strong relationships with students. Conversely, low motivation can lead to reduced instructional quality, disengagement, and burnout. Teacher motivation therefore becomes not only a matter of professional performance but also a determinant of student success and program sustainability.

From an Islamic perspective, teaching is not merely a profession but a form of *عباد*ah (worship) and service to humanity. The Quran emphasizes knowledge, compassion, and justice, positioning educators as agents of transformation. Values such as *ikhlas* (sincerity), *sabr* (patience), and *amanah* (trust) provide a moral framework that sustains teachers in challenging contexts. These values are particularly relevant in special needs education, where teachers often work with vulnerable populations requiring additional care and attention. Islamic educational philosophy further situates teaching as a noble vocation, encouraging educators to view their work as purposeful and spiritually rewarding.

This study therefore seeks to explore how intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors interact within a faith-informed framework, providing a more holistic understanding of teacher motivation in vocational special education. By situating teacher motivation within both psychological and Islamic perspectives, the study aims to contribute to a deeper appreciation of the ethical, spiritual, and professional dimensions of teaching in ISEP vocational program.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Education is universally recognized as a transformative force, equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for meaningful participation in society. For learners with special needs, access to quality education is essential not only for academic development but also for social inclusion and personal empowerment. Vocational education offers practical pathways for independence by equipping learners with special needs with job-related skills and preparing them for meaningful employment.

In Malaysia, the Integration Special Education Program (ISEP) reflects the government's commitment to equity in education by ensuring that learners with special needs gain access to both academic and vocational pathways (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Among these, pastry and bakery training has emerged as particularly valuable, as it provides employable skills while simultaneously fostering independence, dignity, and social inclusion. Such vocational programs align with UNESCO's call for inclusive education that empowers learners with diverse abilities to contribute meaningfully to their communities (UNESCO, 2020).

Teacher motivation is central to the success of these initiatives. While much research emphasizes extrinsic motivators such as salary, recognition, and career advancement, intrinsic and value-based motivators are equally critical, especially in special education contexts. Research indicates that teachers who are intrinsically motivated demonstrate higher levels of commitment, innovation, and resilience. Intrinsic motivation is often driven by personal values, passion for teaching, and the satisfaction derived from student success. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is influenced by external factors such as salary, working conditions, recognition, and professional development opportunities. While these factors are important, they may not be sufficient to sustain long-term commitment in demanding educational environments.

Motivated educators are not only transmitters of knowledge but also mentors who embody compassion (*rahmah*), patience (*sabr*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), and responsibility (*amanah*). The Quran commands Muslims to act with fairness and compassion: “*And do not forget to show graciousness to one another. Indeed, Allah sees what you do*” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:237). This principle resonates deeply in special needs education, where teachers extend kindness and

tailored support to learners. Similarly, the verse “*Indeed, Allah is with the patient*” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:153) underscores the resilience required of teachers who persevere despite systemic constraints.

In Kelantan, where ISEP operates within unique socio-cultural and infrastructural contexts, teachers face distinct challenges including limited resources, heavy workloads, and societal attitudes toward disability (Abdullah et al., 2019; Sharma et al., 2012). Yet, studies in Islamic pedagogy highlight how Quranic values can sustain motivation by fostering ethical responsibility, resilience, and a sense of divine purpose. However, research highlights that teachers in vocational special needs education often encounter systemic barriers that erode motivation. These include limited teaching resources, inadequate facilities, heavy workloads, and insufficient recognition of their contributions (Abdullah & Rashid, 2024; Salleh & Omar, 2025). Opportunities for professional development remain scarce, further constraining teachers’ ability to grow in their roles. Moreover, societal perceptions of vocational education and disability continue to undervalue the importance of these programs, reducing community support and appreciation (Sharma et al., 2012). The consequences of these challenges are significant. Studies in Malaysia and internationally show that burnout among special education teachers is rising, driven by workload pressures and lack of institutional support (Che Ani et al., 2025; Tahar et al., 2023). Burnout not only leads to attrition but also diminishes instructional quality, directly impacting student learning outcomes. From a psychological perspective, self-determination theory emphasizes that both intrinsic motivators (e.g., personal fulfillment, sense of purpose) and extrinsic factors (e.g., recognition, resources) must be balanced to sustain teacher engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When these needs are unmet, motivation declines, resulting in reduced classroom effectiveness (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

From an Islamic perspective, teaching is framed as a noble vocation rooted in service and compassion. The Quran elevates the pursuit of knowledge, beginning with the command “*Read!*” (Surah al-‘Alaq 96:1), while the Prophet Muhammad SAW affirmed: “*The best of people are those who are most beneficial to others*” (al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-Awsaṭ*, no. 5937/5783; graded ḥasan by al-Albānī). These principles underscore the moral and spiritual responsibility of educators to uplift marginalized learners. Yet, when teachers feel unsupported, their ability to embody these values is compromised, weakening both their well-being and their students’ educational experiences.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the intrinsic, extrinsic, and socio-cultural factors influencing teacher motivation in Kelantan’s ISEP pastry and bakery programs. Such inquiry is essential not only for improving teacher retention and instructional quality but also for aligning vocational special needs education with the Quranic vision of justice, inclusion, and purposeful living (*‘amal salih*).

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The motivation of teachers plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality and success of education, particularly in specialized settings such as the Integration Special Education Program (ISEP). In Kelantan, pastry and bakery instructors carry a dual responsibility: imparting technical and vocational expertise while supporting the emotional, social, and personal development of students with diverse learning needs. This role requires patience, resilience, creativity, and strong commitment. However, sustaining motivation is often challenged by systemic and contextual factors. Teachers must manage multiple demands, including curriculum adaptation, individualized instruction, and resource coordination, while facing constraints such as limited funding, inadequate facilities, outdated teaching aids, heavy workloads, minimal recognition, and

limited professional development opportunities (Abdullah et al., 2019). These challenges are further compounded by societal attitudes that undervalue vocational education and stigmatize disability, reducing community support for educators (Sharma et al., 2012). As a result, teachers may experience stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction. Therefore, it is essential to examine the interplay of intrinsic, extrinsic, and socio-cultural factors shaping teacher motivation in ISEP vocational settings to identify strategies that enhance resilience, professional satisfaction, and sustainable educational outcomes.

If left unresolved, these challenges can erode teacher morale, leading to burnout, high turnover rates, and a decline in instructional quality, ultimately jeopardizing student outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). The issue is not merely professional but also spiritual and ethical. The Prophet Muhammad SAW emphasized the virtue of teaching with sincerity, stating: “*The best among you are those who learn the Qur’an and teach it*” (al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith 5027). While this Hadith specifically highlights Qur’anic instruction, its essence extends to all forms of education, underscoring the noble status of teachers who dedicate themselves selflessly to the upliftment of others. When educators feel unsupported or undervalued, their ability to embody this calling is compromised, affecting both their well-being and the holistic development of their learners.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

From both educational and Islamic perspectives, addressing these challenges is essential. Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the lives of students with special needs, and their well-being directly affects educational outcomes. When teachers are motivated, they are more likely to innovate, persevere, and create inclusive learning environments that empower students with disabilities to achieve independence and dignity. Conversely, when motivation declines, instructional quality suffers, leading to diminished student outcomes and weakened program sustainability.

This study is significant for several reasons:

- **Educational Impact:** By analyzing the motivational factors influencing teachers in vocational special education, the study contributes to improving instructional quality and student success. It highlights the importance of balancing intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to sustain teacher engagement.
- **Policy Relevance:** Findings will provide insights for policymakers and educational administrators to design more effective support systems, including professional development opportunities, resource allocation, and recognition mechanisms tailored to the needs of vocational special education teachers.
- **Socio-Cultural Contribution:** The study addresses societal attitudes toward disability and vocational education, offering strategies to enhance community appreciation and support for teachers. This has the potential to shift perceptions and foster greater inclusion.
- **Spiritual and Ethical Dimension:** By situating teacher motivation within an Islamic framework, the study underscores the moral and spiritual responsibility of educators. Concepts such as *ikhlas* (sincerity), *sabr* (patience), and *amanah* (trust) provide a faith-informed lens that enriches the discourse on teacher motivation, aligning professional practice with ethical and spiritual values.

Ultimately, this research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing teacher motivation, offering insights for policy improvement, professional development, and community engagement. It contributes to the broader goal of ensuring sustainable educational

excellence in Malaysia's vocational special education programs, while affirming the Quranic vision of justice, inclusion, and purposeful living (*'amal salih*).

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. What intrinsic factors (e.g., personal fulfillment, pride in student progress, sense of divine purpose) contribute to the motivation of ISEP pastry and bakery teachers in Kelantan?
- ii. What extrinsic factors (e.g., working conditions, resource availability, administrative support, and professional development) influence their motivation?
- iii. What is the overall level of motivation among these teachers, and how does it vary across different school contexts?
- iv. How do intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors interact to influence teacher performance, resilience, and long-term commitment within ISEP vocational settings?

6. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative approach utilizing a descriptive survey design. Such a design was considered appropriate as it allows motivational constructs to be measured numerically and enables the identification of statistical relationships among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By employing standardized instruments across a defined population, the survey method provided a systematic means of detecting patterns, trends, and correlations in teacher motivation within vocational special education.

The choice of this design was guided by several considerations:

- It offered a structured framework for assessing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational dimensions.
- It permitted the application of statistical analyses to explore associations between independent variables (e.g., working environment, opportunities for professional growth) and the dependent variable (overall teacher motivation).
- It was practical in terms of cost and time, enabling data collection across multiple schools within a relatively short period.

Furthermore, when supported by appropriate sampling strategies and instrument validation, this design enhances the generalizability of findings to the wider population of ISEP pastry and bakery teachers (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

To ensure rigor and reliability, the research was carried out in four sequential phases:

Stage I: Preparation

A thorough review of literature on teacher motivation, vocational education, and inclusive pedagogy informed the development of the questionnaire. The instrument was adapted from established scales, notably the "Work Tasks Motivation Scale for Teachers" (Fernet et al., 2008) and tailored to the realities of ISEP pastry and bakery instruction. To establish content validity, two subject-matter experts, one specializing in educational psychology and the other in vocational education evaluated the questionnaire for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives. Their feedback ensured that the items reflected both theoretical constructs and practical realities of teaching in vocational special education.

Stage II: Pilot Testing

A preliminary test was conducted with eight teachers from a neighboring district excluded from the main sample. The pilot aimed to assess the instrument's reliability, clarity, and contextual suitability. Using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 30, Cronbach's Alpha was computed, yielding a

coefficient of 0.87, which reflects strong internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Participant feedback led to refinements in wording, sequencing, and thematic grouping, thereby improving both technical accuracy and pedagogical relevance. This stage was crucial in ensuring that the final instrument was both psychometrically sound and contextually appropriate.

Stage III: Implementation

After obtaining approval from the Kelantan State Education Department and respective school principals, the finalized questionnaire was disseminated in two formats: printed copies and Google Forms. This dual-mode distribution was intended to maximize accessibility and participation, accommodating teachers who preferred traditional paper-based surveys as well as those comfortable with digital platforms. Respondents were given two weeks to complete the survey, with reminder notices issued midway to encourage participation. Ethical considerations were observed throughout, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of responses.

Stage IV: Data Processing

Returned questionnaires were screened for completeness before being coded and entered into SPSS. Both descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, standard deviations) and inferential analyses (correlation and regression) were conducted. These procedures allowed the study to examine the strength of relationships between motivational factors and overall teacher motivation, thereby addressing the research objectives with precision. The use of inferential statistics provided deeper insights into predictive relationships, while descriptive statistics offered a clear overview of motivational trends across the sample.

6.1 Location and Sampling

The research was conducted across selected secondary schools in Kelantan where ISEP pastry and bakery modules are actively taught. The target population consisted of all 52 teachers engaged in this specialization.

Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table, a minimum of 44 respondents was required. Ultimately, 40 teachers participated, producing a response rate of 76.9%, which is considered satisfactory in educational research (Babbie, 2020). This minor discrepancy from the recommended sample size was due to the limited number of teachers available who were directly involved in teaching the ISEP pastry and bakery modules within the selected schools. Given the specificity of the population and the purposive sampling technique employed, the achieved sample represents the maximum feasible participation, thereby ensuring that the findings remain robust and credible.

6.2 Participating Schools and Number of Teachers

Teachers from 24 secondary schools across six districts contributed to the study, representing both urban and rural contexts. This distribution ensured representation across diverse school settings, thereby enhancing the ecological validity of the findings.

Table 1: Participating schools and the number of respondents

No.	School	Number of Teachers
1	A	2
2	B	2
3	C	1
4	D	1
5	E	2
6	F	1
7	G	1
8	H	2
9	I	1
10	J	1
11	K	2
12	L	1
13	M	1
14	N	1
15	O	1
16	P	3
17	Q	2
18	R	4
19	S	1
20	T	4
21	U	1
22	V	3
23	W	1
24	X	1
Total		40

6.3 Data Collection

The main instrument was a structured questionnaire divided into four sections:

- Section A: Demographic details (gender, age, teaching experience, qualifications, school location).
- Section B: Intrinsic motivation (6 items focusing on personal satisfaction, passion for teaching, and pride in student achievement).
- Section C: Extrinsic motivation (12 items across three dimensions: working conditions/resources, administrative and peer support, and professional development/career advancement).
- Section D: Overall motivation (3 items addressing job satisfaction, teaching commitment, and perceived student impact).

Sections B–D employed a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree), enabling quantitative measurement and statistical analysis. The Likert scale was chosen for its simplicity, reliability, and widespread use in motivational research.

6.4 Data Analysis

Data were processed using SPSS Statistics Version 30. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) summarized motivational trends, while mean scores provided insight into levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Inferential techniques

included Pearson correlation to explore associations between motivational dimensions and overall motivation, and multiple regression analysis to determine the predictive strength of specific factors. These methods ensured objectivity, replicability, and robust interpretation of findings (Cohen et al., 2018).

The combination of descriptive and inferential analyses allowed the study to move beyond surface-level observations, providing both a snapshot of current motivational levels and a deeper understanding of the underlying relationships among variables.

6.5 Research Ethics

Ethical integrity was prioritized throughout the study to safeguard participants' rights and ensure compliance with established research standards. Approval was obtained from the Kelantan State Education Department, and permission was secured from school principals prior to data collection. Key ethical considerations included:

- **Informed Consent:** All participants were briefed on the purpose, scope, and procedures of the study. Consent forms accompanied the questionnaires, emphasizing voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.
- **Confidentiality:** Respondents' identities were protected by anonymizing data. Codes rather than names were used during data entry, and results were reported in aggregate form to prevent individual identification.
- **Data Security:** Completed questionnaires and electronic responses were stored securely, with access restricted to the researcher. Digital files were password-protected, and hard copies were kept in locked storage.
- **Non-Maleficence:** Care was taken to ensure that participation did not cause harm, stress, or undue burden. The questionnaire was designed to be concise and respectful of teachers' time.
- **Integrity and Transparency:** Findings were reported honestly, without fabrication or manipulation of data. The study adhered to principles of academic integrity and accountability.

By embedding these ethical safeguards, the research upheld professional standards while fostering trust and cooperation among participants.

6.6 Limitations of the Methodology

While the methodology adopted in this study was carefully designed to ensure rigor, reliability, and validity, several limitations must be acknowledged to provide a balanced perspective on the findings.

Sample Size and Scope

The study focused exclusively on ISEP pastry and bakery teachers in Kelantan. Although this population was highly relevant to the research objectives, the relatively small sample size (40 teachers) limits the generalizability of findings to other regions or vocational specializations. The purposive sampling technique ensured maximum feasible participation, but it may have

introduced selection bias, as only teachers actively engaged in pastry and bakery modules were included.

Self-Reported Data

The use of questionnaires relies on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by social desirability bias, personal interpretation of items, or reluctance to disclose negative experiences. While anonymity was assured, some respondents may have provided answers they perceived as more acceptable to administrators or researchers, potentially affecting the accuracy of motivational measures.

Cross-Sectional Design

The descriptive survey design captures teacher motivation at a single point in time. Motivation, however, is dynamic and may fluctuate due to changes in workload, institutional policies, or personal circumstances. A longitudinal design could have provided deeper insights into how motivational factors evolve over time, but such an approach was beyond the scope of this study.

Instrument Adaptation

Although the questionnaire was adapted from established scales (Fernet et al., 2008) and validated through expert review and pilot testing, contextual modifications may have affected its comparability with other studies. Cultural and religious dimensions of motivation, particularly Islamic values such as *ikhlas* and *sabr*, were incorporated to reflect local realities, but these constructs may not align neatly with conventional motivational frameworks.

External Influences

Factors such as school leadership styles, community attitudes, and broader educational policies were not directly measured, though they may significantly influence teacher motivation. The study's focus on intrinsic and extrinsic motivators may therefore underrepresent the complexity of socio-cultural and institutional dynamics.

7. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

7.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study engaged 40 ISEP pastry and bakery educators drawn from 24 secondary schools across six districts in Kelantan, ensuring representation from diverse contexts. The sample reflected a balanced distribution between urban schools (52.5%) and rural schools (47.5%), which strengthens the generalizability of findings across different educational settings.

A closer look at the demographics reveals that female teachers formed the majority (70%), consistent with global and national patterns in the teaching profession where women often dominate vocational and special education roles. The largest age bracket was 35–44 years (45%), suggesting that most participants are mid-career professionals who combine experience with continued adaptability. Teaching tenure was concentrated in the 5–10 years range (42.5%), followed by those with over 10 years of service (35%), indicating a relatively seasoned workforce. In terms of academic qualifications, bachelor's degree holders (62.5%) formed the majority, complemented by master's degree holders (20%) and diploma holders (17.5%).

This demographic profile points to a stable, qualified, and experienced teaching force, which is crucial for sustaining vocational excellence in special education. The Quran elevates the role of educators, declaring: "*Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees.*" (Quran, 58:11). This verse underscores the dignity of

teachers regardless of gender, age, or location. The balance between urban and rural respondents also reflects the inclusive spirit of ISEP, resonating with the Quranic principle of *shumuliyyah* (comprehensiveness), which emphasizes equitable access to education across all communities.

7.2 Intrinsic Motivation Factors

Findings revealed high levels of intrinsic motivation, with an overall mean score of 4.40 (SD=0.59). The strongest motivator was pride in contributing to student learning and growth (M=4.50), followed closely by motivation from observing student progress (M=4.47) and personal satisfaction (M=4.42). Even the lowest-rated intrinsic item align with personal passion (M=4.28) was still positively endorsed.

This dominance of intrinsic motivation highlights teachers' emotional and moral investment in their students' success. According to Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), intrinsic motivation is the most sustainable driver of professional commitment, fostering resilience and long-term satisfaction. Within an Islamic framework, this resonates with the concept of *ikhlas* (sincerity), where teaching is performed for the sake of Allah rather than material reward. The Prophet Muhammad SAW emphasized this ethic of service: "*The best among you are those who learn the Quran and teach it.*" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 5027).

Teachers who derive joy from student achievement embody the Quranic values of *rahmah* (compassion) and the prophetic model of *sabr* (patience). Their intrinsic motivation reflects a faith-informed ethic of care, where teaching is not merely a profession but a spiritual and moral calling. This finding is consistent with Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017), who demonstrated that intrinsic motivators such as personal fulfillment and meaningful student relationships are more strongly associated with teacher resilience and reduced burnout than extrinsic rewards. Similarly, Kholifah et al. (2024) found that vocational special education teachers often rely on compassion and patience as intrinsic motivators to sustain their commitment despite systemic challenges.

7.3 Extrinsic Motivation Factors

Extrinsic motivation was also rated positively, with an overall mean of 3.92 (SD=0.70). The most influential external factor was administrative and peer support (M=4.02), followed by professional development opportunities (M=3.90). Working conditions and resources (M=3.85) scored slightly lower, highlighting areas that require systemic improvement.

The significance of administrative and peer support reflects the importance of collaborative and affirming environments. This aligns with the Qur'anic injunction of *ta'awun 'ala al-birr wa al-taqwa* (cooperation in goodness and piety) (Quran, 5:2). Collegiality and supportive leadership not only enhance morale but also strengthen collective resilience among teachers.

Professional development opportunities, though moderately high, underscore the need for continuous training in vocational pedagogy. The Prophet Muhammad SAW emphasized lifelong learning: "*The seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim.*" (Ibn Majah, 2007). This hadith reinforces the necessity of ongoing professional growth, which directly supports teacher motivation. However, the relatively lower ratings for resources and facilities point to structural challenges such as underfunded workshops, outdated equipment, and limited teaching aids that could undermine motivation if left unaddressed. These findings echo Abdullah and Rashid (2024) and Salleh and Omar (2025), who reported similar constraints in Malaysian vocational special education programs.

7.4 Comparison Between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

The comparison revealed that intrinsic motivation ($M=4.40$) outweighed extrinsic motivation ($M = 3.92$), confirming that internal drivers such as pride, satisfaction, and purpose are more powerful than external supports. This finding is consistent with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which posits that intrinsic motivators (achievement, recognition, personal growth) have a greater impact on job satisfaction than extrinsic "hygiene" factors. Within an Islamic worldview, the Qur'an emphasizes the enduring value of internal intentions: "*And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion*" (Quran, 98:5). Here, *ikhlas* (sincerity) parallels the intrinsic motivation observed among teachers.

While external supports such as leadership encouragement and professional development remain important, the sustainability of teacher motivation ultimately depends on internalized values and purpose. Teachers motivated by pride in student success embody a faith-informed ethic of service, where their work is both professionally fulfilling and spiritually rewarding. This reinforces the conclusions of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) and Kholifah et al. (2024), who found that intrinsic motivation consistently outweighs extrinsic factors in sustaining teacher engagement across diverse educational contexts.

7.5 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive picture of teacher motivation among ISEP pastry and bakery educators in Kelantan. The demographic profile revealed a stable and experienced teaching force, with female teachers forming the majority (70%), reflecting national and global trends in vocational and special education. Most respondents were mid-career professionals aged between 35 and 44 years, with teaching tenures concentrated in the 5–10 year range (42.5%) and a significant proportion exceeding 10 years of service (35%). In terms of qualifications, bachelor's degree holders dominated (62.5%), supported by master's degree holders (20%) and diploma holders (17.5%). The balance between urban (52.5%) and rural (47.5%) respondents further strengthens the representativeness of the sample, underscoring the inclusivity of ISEP programs across diverse contexts.

Intrinsic motivation emerged as the strongest driver of teacher engagement, with an overall mean score of 4.40 ($SD=0.59$). Pride in contributing to student learning ($M = 4.50$), observing student progress ($M=4.47$), and personal satisfaction ($M=4.42$) were the most influential motivators. Even the lowest-rated intrinsic item—alignment with personal passion ($M=4.28$) was positively endorsed. These findings highlight teachers' emotional and moral investment in their students' success, consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and Islamic values such as *ikhlas* (sincerity), *rahmah* (compassion), and *sabr* (patience).

Extrinsic motivation was also rated positively, though at a lower overall mean of 3.92 ($SD=0.70$). Administrative and peer support ($M=4.02$) was the most influential external factor, followed by professional development opportunities ($M=3.90$). Working conditions and resources ($M=3.85$) scored slightly lower, pointing to systemic challenges such as underfunded workshops, outdated equipment, and limited teaching aids. These findings echo earlier studies (Abdullah & Rashid, 2024; Salleh & Omar, 2025), which identified similar constraints in Malaysian vocational special education programs.

A comparative analysis confirmed that intrinsic motivation ($M=4.40$) outweighed extrinsic motivation ($M=3.92$). This supports Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which emphasizes the greater impact of intrinsic motivators on job satisfaction compared to extrinsic "hygiene"

factors. Within an Islamic worldview, the emphasis on sincerity (*ikhlas*) and purposeful service reinforces the enduring value of internalized motivation over external rewards.

Overall, the study demonstrates that ISEP pastry and bakery teachers in Kelantan are motivated primarily by intrinsic factors rooted in personal fulfillment, student success, and faith-informed values. While extrinsic supports such as administrative encouragement and professional development contribute positively, systemic challenges related to resources and facilities remain areas of concern. Sustaining teacher engagement therefore requires a dual approach: nurturing internal values while simultaneously addressing external constraints.

7.6 Implications of Findings

The findings of this study carry important implications for educational policy, institutional practice, and future research in vocational special education. They highlight the centrality of intrinsic motivation in sustaining teacher commitment, while also drawing attention to the systemic challenges that constrain extrinsic motivators.

From a policy perspective, the results underscore the need for greater institutional recognition of vocational special education teachers. While intrinsic motivation remains strong, the relatively lower ratings for extrinsic factors such as resources and facilities point to structural deficiencies that require urgent attention. Policymakers should prioritize funding allocations to improve teaching aids, workshop facilities, and classroom environments. Furthermore, professional development opportunities must be expanded and tailored to the unique demands of vocational pedagogy, ensuring that teachers remain equipped with both technical expertise and inclusive teaching strategies. Such measures would not only enhance extrinsic motivation but also reinforce intrinsic motivation by validating teachers' professional contributions.

At the institutional level, school leadership and administrative practices play a pivotal role in sustaining teacher morale. The high ratings for administrative and peer support suggest that collegiality and affirming leadership are critical external motivators. Principals and administrators should therefore foster collaborative cultures that emphasize teamwork, mentorship, and shared responsibility. Structured peer-support programs, recognition initiatives, and participatory decision-making processes can further strengthen teacher engagement. These practices align with the Qur'anic principle of *ta'awun* (mutual cooperation), reinforcing the moral and spiritual dimensions of educational leadership.

For classroom practice, the dominance of intrinsic motivation highlights the importance of nurturing teachers' sense of purpose and fulfillment. Teachers who derive joy from student progress embody values of *ikhlas* (sincerity), *rahmah* (compassion), and *sabr* (patience), which are central to Islamic pedagogy. Schools should therefore create environments that allow teachers to witness and celebrate student achievements, reinforcing the intrinsic rewards of teaching. This may include showcasing student work, organizing community exhibitions, or integrating reflective practices that highlight the transformative impact of vocational education on learners' lives.

The findings also carry socio-cultural implications. Persistent societal attitudes that undervalue vocational education and stigmatize disability remain barriers to teacher motivation. Public awareness campaigns, community engagement initiatives, and partnerships with local industries can help shift perceptions, elevating the status of vocational special education and affirming the dignity of both teachers and students. By aligning educational practice with the

Quranic vision of justice and inclusion, these efforts can foster greater societal appreciation and support.

Finally, the study offers several directions for future research. Given the cross-sectional nature of the design, longitudinal studies are needed to explore how teacher motivation evolves over time in response to policy changes, institutional reforms, or personal circumstances. Mixed-methods approaches could also provide richer insights by triangulating quantitative findings with qualitative narratives of teacher experiences. Comparative studies across different vocational specializations or states in Malaysia would further enhance the generalizability of results, while cross-cultural research could situate Malaysian findings within broader international contexts.

8. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that teacher motivation in vocational special education is most powerfully sustained by intrinsic values which include pride in student progress, joy in teaching, and a sense of purpose, while external supports play an important but secondary role. Islamic principles such as *ikhlas* (sincerity), *rahmah* (compassion), and *sabr* (patience) mirror this intrinsic motivation, reminding us that teaching is not only a profession but also a moral and spiritual calling.

The dominance of intrinsic motivation among ISEP pastry and bakery teachers in Kelantan echoes international findings. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) demonstrated that intrinsic motivators are more closely tied to resilience and reduced burnout than external rewards, while Kholifah et al. (2024) highlighted how compassion and patience sustain vocational special education teachers despite systemic challenges. By situating these global insights within an Islamic pedagogical lens, this study contributes something distinctive: it shows how faith-based values amplify intrinsic motivation in culturally specific contexts, offering teachers both strength and meaning in their work.

At the same time, the findings remind us that external supports cannot be overlooked. Leadership encouragement, peer collaboration, and professional development opportunities remain vital for sustaining morale, while gaps in resources and infrastructure must be addressed to prevent burnout. Teachers may be driven by purpose, but they also need practical support to thrive.

In short, sustaining teacher motivation requires a balanced approach: nurturing the inner values that give teachers pride and resilience, while also building the external systems that allow them to do their work effectively. This dual strategy not only supports teacher well-being but also ensures the continued success of vocational special education programs in Kelantan. By weaving together empirical evidence and Quranic principles, the study offers both global relevance and local resonance, showing that motivated teachers are the cornerstone of inclusive, compassionate, and transformative education.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that sustaining teacher motivation in vocational special education requires a dual strategy: strengthening intrinsic values through recognition of teaching as a moral and spiritual vocation, while simultaneously addressing extrinsic challenges through improved resources, professional development, and supportive leadership. By integrating educational policy with Islamic pedagogical principles, Malaysia's ISEP programs can ensure that teachers remain resilient, fulfilled, and committed to empowering learners with special needs.

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