

An Overview of Quality of Work Life among Teachers and Class Assistants in Little Seed Preschool and Daycare during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: In March 2020, PSBB policy was held due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and education was also affected by the policy. The change of learning method from face-to-face to distance learning is certainly not an easy way to be implemented. Little Seed Preschool and Daycare (LSPD) is one of the early childhood education programs that has been affected by the necessity of implementing distance learning using online platform. This change affected the quality of work-life owned by teachers and class assistants even though it is very important in an educational institution. This study aims to explore the QoWL description of teachers and class assistants of LSPD during the COVID-19 pandemic using the nine QoWL components according to Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy, & Rashmi. These components are the work environment, organizational culture and climate, relationships and cooperation, training and development, compensation and rewards, facilities, job satisfaction and job security, autonomy of work, and adequacy of resources. The total main participants include two teachers and two class assistants. Qualitative research was used with the descriptive writing method. Data were then collected by qualitative interview method and processed using thematic analysis. Data triangulations were also collected by interviews and observation and observation. The results showed the QoWL of Little Seed's teachers and class assistants are still categorized as good although there were still many aspects that can be improved. The relationship between co-workers and superiors strongly supported these results because there was openness and a high sense of understanding to create more family atmosphere. However, it can also have a bad effect if it is not balanced with the nature of professionalism. It is highly recommended for the school to have proper procedures and activities for the teachers and class assistants.

1 INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, Jakarta and its surroundings had undergone the PSBB period due to the COVID-19 pandemic that had hit Indonesia, particularly the JABODETABEK area. Many sectors are affected by this decision, one of which is the education sector (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). The transfer of learning from the face-to-face process to online media is certainly not an easy thing. In their research, (Srihartini & Lestari, 2021) found that online learning is indeed difficult to do at the early childhood education level because children still have a minimal understanding of online media and cannot yet learn independently. At the early childhood education level, parents are still needed to supervise and guide learning as well as submitting assignments for children's learning outcomes. Minicozzi (in Hewi & Asnawati, 2020) explained that kindergarten educators have

more burdens and are difficult because they not only have to prepare for learning but also pay attention to the development of early childhood. This must also be coupled with expertise in reflecting and analyzing teaching activities to develop their abilities and also follow-up plans (Anhusadar & Islamiyah, in Khotimah, Sunaryati, & Suhartini, 2020).

Another challenge for teachers in early childhood education during online learning period is the adjustment of teaching methods that require teachers to be close to children, both psychologically and physically because early childhood education learning is carried out with full play activities that are more concerned on optimizing development than academic achievement targets, thus teachers can form a safe and comfortable atmosphere for children to learn (Maiza & Nurhafizah in Agustin, Puspita, Nurinten, & Nafiqoh, 2020). A safe and comfortable atmosphere in children's learning is important because the future of children is greatly influenced by the experiences of

children at an early age. With a good and strong start at a child's early age, the chances of positive results being obtained in the future also increase. On the other hand, a weak foundation in children will significantly increase the risk in their future (Tickell, 2011).

Little Seed Preschool and Daycare is one of the early childhood education schools that has been affected by the necessity of implementing distance learning using online platform. Little Seed Preschool and Daycare is a school that was established quite recently (in the year 2018), hence the impact the school received during this pandemic period became a fairly formidable challenge due to the lack of stability in income and savings. The existence of these changes can affect the level of quality of work life of teachers and class assistants.

Quality of work life can be interpreted as an environment at work that can provide assistance in improving the quality, happiness and work intention of its workers (Elamparuthi & Jumbulingam, 2014). Emadzadeh, Khorasani, & Nematizadeh (2012) said that determining the level of quality of work life for teachers is very important. This is because the commitment of teachers holds a very important position for the success of an educational institution. With so many demands, high stress levels are possible for teachers. The level of quality of work life can be used as evidence of psychological needs being met or not.

This coupled with the research of Marmoah and Sujarwo (2019) which proved that the level of quality of work life is directly involves with classroom management skills. This is important because with good classroom management, students can explore their abilities and interests freely but still within clear boundaries and with assistance from teachers and class assistants (Stadler-Altmann, 2015). In other words, high quality of work life not only improves the quality of teachers and class assistants but also the quality of school graduates following the achievement goals.

There are nine components of quality of work life according to Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy, & Rashmi. Those nine components of quality of work life are work environment, organizational culture and climate, relationships and cooperation, training and development, compensation and rewards, facilities, job satisfaction and job security, autonomy of work, and adequacy of resources (Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy, & Rashmi, 2015).

1. Work environment: The work environment is where an individual work. This environment is not only where individuals do their job but also a place for individuals to socialize with fellow employees who

work in the same place. A good work environment will support the quality of work of individuals and will improve good relationships between individuals with fellow employees.

2. Organizational culture and climate: Organizational culture and climate is a collection of values, visions, and norms of the individuals who work and the organization. Promotion opportunities and evaluation methods will depend on the organization's policies.

3. Relationship and cooperation: The relationship and cooperation in question is communication between employees and superiors as well as the management of the organization regarding determined decisions, conflicts, and problem management. The good relationship that is formed should be based on the abilities and potential possessed by the individual, not by gender, race, and factors that are not related to the quality of the work provided.

4. Training and development: Training and development are organizational activities aimed at increasing the capabilities and demonstrating the potentials possessed by workers, both as individuals and as groups.

5. Compensation and rewards: Compensation and rewards that are commensurate with the ability and effort gave by workers can motivate these workers as well as other workers. With fair treatment according to what workers give, healthy competition is formed.

6. Facilities: Supportive facilities for workers can not only be good for their physical needs but also emotionally. With good facilities, workers can optimally and comfortably do their job.

7. Job satisfaction and job security: Job satisfaction and security play an important role in how a worker views their job. Jobs that can be profitable and increase the interest of workers in the given task will provide a good and high boost to the quality of one's work. On the other hand, job security is also very important because it can provide a sense of security in the absence of sudden and unclear dismissals.

8. Autonomy of work: Giving autonomy in work, provides creative and independent space for workers to make choices and contribute to the group.

9. Adequacy of resources: The resources provided must meet the standards following the objectives to be achieved. These resources are not only related to the material but also include time, number of workers, and information.

2 METHODS

Qualitative research was used to explore the quality of work life of teachers and class assistants at Little Seed Preschool and Daycare. Qualitative research is a type of research that has a rich context and background so that it deepens understanding and knowledge about the daily lives of different people with different ways of thinking, in different situations (Yin, 2016). The writing method used is the descriptive method. The total main participants include two teachers and two class assistants. Purposive sampling or homogeneous sampling to be exact was used to pick out the participants. Data were then collected by qualitative interview method and processed using thematic analysis.

The interview questions contained open ended questions based on the nine components of quality of work life proposed by Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy, & Rashmi and also an adaptation of the close ended quantitative questionnaires in one of the journals written by Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy, & Rashmi regarding the quality of work life.

The characteristics of the main research participants were

1. Permanent teachers and class assistants who work at Little Seed Preschool and Daycare (Ruko Emerald Avenue 2, Blok EB B No. 8, Bintaro Jaya, South Tangerang, Indonesia, 15227).
2. Carry out the process of classroom teaching with online media during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Has a high school diploma or equivalent

The researcher also interviewed several individuals as triangulation data apart from the main research participants. These individuals were

1. Principal of Little Seed Preschool and Daycare
2. Foundation management and employee coordinator for Little Seed Preschool and Daycare
3. Class assistant in Little Seed Preschool and Daycare who does not meet the criteria as the main participant

3 RESULTS

a. Work Environment

All teachers and class assistants responded positively to the working environment at Little Seed. The

explanation of the conditions of the work environment is about mutual support, not pressured, openness, not blaming each other, and kinship. The condition of the work environment is felt to motivate work for all individuals. This condition also does not only occur with teacher and class assistant from the same class but applies regardless of the limitations per class.

"Nah aku di little seed ini, baru nemu juga, maksudnya nyaman juga di aku. Orangnyanya pada baik-baik, pada welcome gitu saling bantu." -TC

"I finally found what I was searching for here in Little Seed, I mean I feel comfortable. The coworkers are nice and are very welcome. We also help each other" -TC (translation)

On the other hand, there was only one individual who feels the work environment does not support their productivity. The class assistant felt that her productivity could be further increased if there was a clear to-do list for everyone. This was stated because she had to do work that should not be her responsibility and her original responsibility sometimes had to be replaced or resigned as a result of this. In addition, there was only one teacher who felt that her school responsibilities negatively affected her personal and family life. This is very likely to happen because, in addition to serving as a teacher, she is also a school principal so that complaints from parents will be accepted by her more often.

b. Organizational culture and climate

The majority of teachers and class assistants described the organizational climate in Little Seed positively with words such as flexibility but responsible, openness, mutual support and that there is a clear division of tasks. There was only one class assistant who mentioned that the organizational climate at Little Seed still needed improvement. She explained the school's organizational climate by using the word disorganized. This is very different from the explanation given by one of the teachers, namely the existence of a clear division of tasks.

"saling melengkapi lah kan sebenarnya yang penting" -TC

"complementing each other is actually what's important" -TC (translation)

"acak-acakan, ya itu lah. Gimana ya aku tuh bingung ngomonginnya gimana, aku tuh orangnya suka yang rapi" -MA

"disordered, yes that's it. I don't really know how to say it but I'm a tidy person" -MA (translation)

The differences that exist between teachers and class assistants may very well occur because of the different needs and habits of the two individuals. The class assistant prefer neat schedule and division while the teacher doesn't need it. This is under the results of the researchers' observations while undergoing an internship. The researcher found that the class assistant asked in sufficient detail about the schedule and activities and the teacher was often still confused and had not thought that far because it was still a future activity and could still be negotiated first.

Apart from the organizational climate, all teachers and class assistants agree that there were no special procedures imposed in school. The procedures for job rotation, promotions, and rewards are not owned by the school because these things do not exist yet. However, procedures for providing comments and suggestions were not available because each teacher and class assistant can voice their opinions in a relaxed and open manner between each other and superiors.

c. Relationships and cooperation

All teachers and class assistants felt that they have a close relationship and good cooperation with co-workers and superiors. Every teacher and class assistant also said that they already had a high attachment to Little Seed. All individuals also feel that they are treated fairly and are often verbally appreciated by their superiors.

"Anggep aja kita kayak temen tapi kita punya kelas masing-masing gitu. tapi selesai ngajar apa ya kita kumpul-kumpul aja gitu dah kayak temen aja, cerita-cerita gitu." -VO

"Let's just say we're like friends but we have our own classes to teach, but after class, we just get together like friends, tell stories, something like that." -VO (translation)

Unfortunately, a class assistant still felt that the school principal is less able to carry out her role as the main leader and only played the role of a friend in situations that require the role of a leader such as when making decisions. Often many things can be decided by superiors alone or there may be clear benchmarks from the school, but this has not been done. This sometimes leads to poor coordination and miscommunication. In addition, communication about changes is also sometimes done suddenly so that it become less structured and lack clear roles. However, the same individual stated that she was very understanding of the conditions of her superiors and was ready to help.

These things may very well occur due to the thoughts of superiors who feel that giving freedom and

always having discussions is very important and can increase abilities and kinship at Little Seed. This treatment is certainly not wrong and is indeed proven by the feeling of kinship felt by all teachers and class assistants, but it is also important that there is a clear structure and professional attitude as workers, particularly if there are individuals who prefer neatness and clear schedules.

d. Training and development

All teachers and class assistants have felt that there is an opportunity given to develop their abilities with the freedom and support provided. However, there were no activities specifically organized by the school. In addition, almost all teachers and class assistants stated that they had attended training from school before the pandemic. The training was said to be following the needs but unfortunately, it has only been done once. This creates high demand, particularly from class assistants.

"pengen sih lebih sering ya. Ya paling kalau misalkan dalam setahun ada lah beberapa kali yah." -EA

"I want it more often, at least like for example there are several times in a year" -EA (translation)

e. Compensation and rewards

All teachers and class assistants thought that the salary given by the school is in accordance with the responsibilities given. This suitability is based on the comparison of teachers and class assistants with their old schools, as well as with other schools. Those opinions of course does not reduce the fact that the salary reduction that occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic is troubling and increases the desire to get the original salary, particularly for class assistants who have high financial responsibilities for their families. This opinion is also supported by the absence of additional salaries, compensation, and promotions that have been felt by teachers and class assistants. However, all teachers and class assistants can understand the conditions experienced by the school hence the cuts that occurred are also captured with a sense of understanding and gratitude for being able to work.

"nah kenapa kok bisa bilang fair enough karena memang dengan dengan nominal yang diberikan dan jam kerja dan load yang diberikan sesuai" -TO

"I can say it's fair enough because the salary given with the working hours and load given are accordant" -TO (translation)

The need of more stable salary was most felt by one of the class assistants who was entrusted by her family to be the main source of income in the family. This does not cover the fact that she felt that the salary given is deemed to be in accordance with the responsibilities given. On the other hand, there is also thoughts from other class assistants that there should be a complete explanation of the additional salary that can be obtained if you do extra work. The explanation had indeed been explained orally at the time of admission as a class assistant, but there were no written details so there was less evidence of this.

The existence of a salary that is deemed sufficient in accordance with the existing responsibilities is probably supported by the openness of the school, teachers and class assistants. From the beginning when negotiating salary, the school also looked up the condition of the teachers and class assistants. When there is a salary cut during this pandemic, the same thing is also done.

f. Facilities

There are only few facilities that are felt by teachers and class assistants at Little Seed. This is because the money for transportation and food is already included in the monthly salary given. However, with minimal facilities, almost all teachers and class assistants feel that their needs have been met.

One of the class assistants felt that their needs are barely met. The same individual also received input from outsiders that schools should provide clear facilities for their workers. This difference may very well occur because of a higher financial need than other individuals.

The security facilities at the school are deemed to have met the minimum criteria. There is simple but not too many security tools that can also be taught because the school is in a shop house so that the evacuation route is only one door. In addition, for teachers and class assistants, there are two meanings of employee welfare. Some individuals explain it with the suitability of what is given with what is obtained and there is an explanation with comfort in working.

Unfortunately, there was no clear activity for improving the employee welfare. Some class assistants felt that schools should provide a special place for teachers and class assistants to complain and share their experiences while teaching. Those opinion arises from the lack of special activities carried out to improve the welfare of employees from the school and usually talking about complaints has indeed occurred but only in a relaxed and not coordinated manner. By bringing up this idea, it does not mean that teachers

and class assistants don't have time to talk and relax together, but that there isn't a clear platform.

"sejauh ini belum ada. Maksudnya ya itu balik lagi, karyawan itu kurang di maintenance, maksudnya apa sih, secara serius ya maksudnya. balik lagi wadahnya itu belum ada." -MA

"So far nothing has been done. I mean, the employees are lacking in maintenance, I mean there are no special occasions made for the employees." -MA (translation)

g. Job satisfaction and job security

All teachers and class assistants felt happy, comfortable, safe, and proud to work at Little Seed. In addition, all participants also felt that there is an opportunity to use their abilities. Some of the teachers and class assistants also compared their experiences at their old school or friends' schools with their current experiences at Little Seed. In this comparison, Little Seed was found to be much more supportive and emotionally bringing happiness. This is in accordance with the results of the researchers' observations while undergoing an internship. All the teachers and class assistants entered the school building with smiles. When there was a discussion, each individual gave suggestions and opinions in a relaxed manner and other individuals will give opinions or appreciation for these suggestions. Teachers and class assistants also often shared stories and unpleasant experiences at the old school and compare them to Little Seed.

"Karena udah pengalaman di beberapa sekolah, Jujur aku tertekan dan tidak happy. Jadi begitu sekarang aku happy sih." -VO

"Based on my experience in teaching, I used to feel pressured and not happy while working. When I moved here, I feel happy." -VO (translation)

The difference was in situations that can cause stress. The teachers felt that dealing with some parents becomes something that can be an unpleasant event because of parents dissatisfaction which was sometimes not the fault of the school. Meanwhile, the class assistants felt that the sudden changes and some technical actions on the part of Little Seed were sometimes a burden. This difference is likely because it is the teachers who communicated with parents more often and that the two class assistants who expressed their thoughts were individuals who prefer structured things.

h. Autonomy of work

Every teacher and class assistant said they received great flexibility and freedom in carrying out their

responsibilities at Little Seed. Almost all decision making is done by discussing beforehand with fellow teachers and class assistants. In addition, all of them also believe that they have enough time to carry out their responsibilities outside of school and are ready to accept more responsibilities from Little Seed. The school even gave freedom to have other jobs outside of school, as long as the school responsibilities are completed properly.

"bener-bener udah bisa kerja sendiri sih, sebenarnya. Udah sefleksibel itu." -TO

"I can actually work on my own. It's that flexible." -TO (translation)

i. Adequacy of resources

All teachers and class assistants felt that the information provided is sufficient to carry out their responsibilities well. How to get this information is also quite easy. Information can be obtained by casual discussion either online or when meeting in person.

There were differences of opinion between teachers and class assistants on the adequacy of resources. Teachers felt that they have enough resources to carry out their responsibilities, but class assistants felt they are lacking the resources needed. This deficiency is based on the supply of materials used to make student activities. Before the pandemic period, these materials were usually provided by the school so that they could be taken immediately when they had to make activities. These do not mean they were not provided during the pandemic, but supplies run out faster and the school does not speed up stocking times hence class assistants often have to buy their materials first and then get their money back from the school later on.

"Nah itu harus kita beli dulu gitu, beli dulu sendiri habis itu nanti pakai uang, kita habis itu baru di reimburse gitu." -TC

"So, we have to buy it ourselves first, then we'll just get reimbursed later on." -TC (Translation)

4 DISCUSSION

From the results of the study, it can be concluded that the quality of work life among teachers and class assistants at Little Seed Preschool and Daycare can be categorized as good but of course there were still many things that can be improved. In general, all questions related to emotion were answered positively. If there was a deficiency, the individual who expressed this has an explanation that is not only about personal needs but more for school development. The

researcher categorized the quality of work life as good because there are five dimensions that can be categorized as good, two dimensions can be categorized as moderate, and two dimensions are categorized as poor.

Five dimensions that were already good are work environment, compensation and rewards, relationships and cooperation, job satisfaction and security, and autonomy of work. Two dimensions that are categorized as moderate are organizational culture and climate and adequacy of resources. The striking thing from the results found was that the nature of kinship and the freedom provided by the school can indeed increase the sense of attachment and concern for each other but if it is too excessive, it can disturb individuals who prefer order in work. This was seen repeatedly during interviews, such as when there were concerns about the absence of a clear schedule even though it was a routine activity, as well as the lack of complete written administrative files regarding student data and employee job descriptions.

The lack of fulfilment of the above administrative requirements may very well occur because several individuals hold more than one role in the school. Individuals who hold positions as administrators also hold positions as employee coordinators as well as teachers. Another individual who also holds more than one role is a teacher who also serves as the principal. This happens often to a new school like Little Seed. However, it is very important for the individual who holds the position as a leader to also carry out her role as a leader. The results of research conducted by Lewis (in Sudarnoto, 2015) reveal that the leadership style or leadership behavior plays a very important role in determining the quality of work life.

Gaol & Siburian (2018) say that six efforts can be made by principals as leaders to improve teacher performance. The six efforts are focusing on improving teacher competence, providing sufficient allocation of funds to increase teacher professionalism, providing professional advice and guidance to teachers, creating a professional and conducive school organizational culture, creating innovation and excellence, and finally giving awards to teachers who have good performance. Of the six efforts, the principal at Little Seed is still lacking in awarding, there is an allocation of funds to improve teacher competence and in general behave professionally as a leader

The adequacy of resources was categorized as moderate because even though the information and human resources needs are met, the necessity of teachers and class assistants to buy their activity materials disturbs all class assistants. Before the

pandemic, materials were readily available at schools and could be used immediately. The existence of these differences may lead to role ambiguity. Wayan & Yasa (2017) found that role ambiguity affected work stress levels and employee performance. In their research, it was proven that if the level of role ambiguity is high, the level of job stress will be high and employee performance will be low.

Two dimensions that were categorized as poor are training and development and facilities. There was a need to have special activities carried out to improve abilities and a forum for every teacher and class assistant to complain. Returning to the familial nature that has been discussed, this trait also has an impact on this aspect. Even though there were no special activities, teachers and class assistants still feel happy and comfortable, it would be even better if there were activities that were specifically designed for it. Those activities are needed to increase the awareness of teachers and class assistants on how their superiors care for them. Sudarnoto (2015) said that the high level of reciprocity was caused by the quality of work life. Thus, this awareness is built to provide a reciprocal feeling of the efforts expended by teachers and class assistants with the school providing development to teachers and class assistants to improve the quality of work life of teachers and class assistants.

During this pandemic, financial aspect was also an aspect that can significantly reduce the quality of the work life of teachers and class assistants. In an online discussion by Anwar Sanusi, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Manpower said that there were 29.4 million people affected by this pandemic. This figure includes individuals who have been laid off and have their working hours reduced (Triatmojo, 2021). Teachers and class assistants, particularly those who have responsibilities as the main source of income, were quite anxious about the deductions given. The school has also explained the conditions of the school and allowed teachers and class assistants to have jobs outside of teaching, but it still does not provide peace of mind because their payments were still cut and there were no bonuses for the past year.

5 CONCLUSION

Further research suggestions:

Based on the results of the researchers' discussions that have been described, there are several suggestions that can be made to improve research, future research, or similar research, including:

1. The research should be carried out in a not-too-distant period so that the data obtained is not polluted with activities or actions that may occur during the research period. The interview period of this study was approximately one month and during that time there was an activity from the school which could change the participant's answers.
2. Face-to-face interviews should use an audio-visual recording device that is sophisticated enough to be able to get all of the conversations and movements clearly without disturbing the participants.
3. The next quantitative research can be done to see the big picture of the quality of work life of early childhood education teachers and class assistants in JABODETABEK.
4. Subsequent research regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on early childhood education teachers can be investigated further.
5. Subsequent research on the method of teaching social skills to early childhood education students in an online setting can be investigated further.

Practical advice:

Based on result of this presented study, Little Seed Preschool and Daycare can:

1. Allocate funds and special time for the development of teacher and class assistant. This can be in the form of training, discussion sessions and leisure activities together.
2. There should be a written administrative file that is quite complete and neat. The file includes job descriptions and bonuses for teachers and class assistants as well as complete student data.

There should be special teaching and habituation for individuals who serve in superior positions (principals and employee coordinators) thus they can carry out their roles as leaders of the school.

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