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Intrinsic Motivation of Kindergarten Teachers in the Workplace

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Abstract

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The study aimed to find out what kindergarten teachers' thoughts about their intrinsic motivation are and offer valuable information to professionals in the early childhood education field, to enhance the well-being of kindergarten teachers in the workplace.

The severe shortage of early childhood education professionals has resulted in hundreds of unfilled vacancies throughout Finland. Focusing on the work motivation of early childhood education teachers becomes more and more important. As a future social worker, I will be a new kindergarten teacher very soon. I would like to learn and gain some inspiration from experienced teachers. What keeps kindergarten teachers enjoying working in the early childhood education field? The main question of this study is: What factors influence the intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace?

This thesis was a qualitative study. The method for collecting data was survey and participant observation. Four kindergarten teachers were the participants of this study. Data were analyzed by thematic analysis and self-determination theory was used as a theoretical framework of the study.

The results of the study suggested that the factors influencing intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers include work autonomy, competence, challenge, colleague relationships, accomplishment, recognition, self-development, and work attitude. The results of this study might help in strengthening the intrinsic work motivation of kindergarten teachers. In addition, professionals responsible for developing the field of early childhood education might benefit from the results of this study.

Keywords: intrinsic motivation, self-determination, recognition, challenge, colleague relationship, kindergarten teachers

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1 Introduction

Day-cares in Finland have issues with teacher shortages and high employee turnover. (Yle, 2019) Kindergarten teachers' motivation is very important for the quality of teaching and children's cognitive development in early childhood education. As we always say, teachers can be seen as models to children, they offer guidance to children in the best way to set up a positive view of the world and value. Children are the future of our society, they will use what they have learned from their teachers to influence society, thus, focusing on the work motivation of early childhood education teachers becomes more and more important.

As a future social worker, I will be a new kindergarten teacher very soon. I would like to learn and gain some inspiration from the experienced early childhood educators. What keeps teachers enjoying working in the early childhood education field.

This thesis examines 'Intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace. The study is based on the framework of self-determination theory. The chosen research method is qualitative research by a survey form and participant observation to four kindergarten teachers, to answer the main study questions: What factors influence the intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace?

The aim was to find out what kindergarten teachers' thoughts about their intrinsic motivation are and offer valuable information to professionals in the early childhood education field, to enhance the well-being of kindergarten teachers in the workplace.

2 Background Information

In this section, I would describe an overview of early childhood education and care in Finland and who could be a qualified kindergarten teacher in Finland as the target group for this study.

2.1 Early Childhood Education and Care

The Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care is based on an integrated approach to care, education, and teaching, the so-called “educare” model, with particular emphasis on pedagogy. In Finland, the municipalities are responsible for arranging the early childhood education and care services. Early childhood education in Finland covers children age from nine months until seven years old. (Finnish National Agency for Education 2021)

The early childhood education and care providers follow the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care and local curricula. Each child has his or her own individual early childhood education plan. It consists of the objectives and measures to support the child's development, learning, and wellbeing, and the need for special support where necessary. Kindergarten teachers are responsible for pedagogical documentation and observation form which are the basis for the evaluation (ECEC, 2018).

The early childhood education and care teachers are responsible for planning the activities for the child group, achieving the objectives set for the activities, and the evaluating and developing of the activities. (Finnish National Agency for Education 2021)

2.2 Early Childhood Education Teachers

Early Childhood education teachers the target group of this study, in Finland the qualification of teachers in early childhood education is very strict. Based on the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018), the qualification of teachers in early childhood education is, at least a Bachelor's degree in

education, which includes studies that give the teacher professional skills for tasks in early childhood education and care. Or a person with a degree in social services from a university of applied sciences includes a minimum of 60 credits on early childhood education and social pedagogy studies, completed by 31 July 2023.

Special education teacher in early childhood education and care. The qualification is, a qualification for the role of a teacher in early childhood education and care, in addition to which the person has completed studies that give him or her professional skills in special education, or a Master's degree in Education with special education as the major subject, training for a special education teacher in early childhood education. (Finlex, 2018)

The preschool teachers are early childhood education teachers, but classroom teachers also teach preschool. A degree in social work from a university of applied sciences does not qualify a person to work in preschool education. (OAJ, 2020)

My target of this study would be kindergarten teachers working with children age from three to six years old, including the preschool teacher who is responsible for children with age six years old.

2.3 Working Partner Kindergarten

The Kindergarten is a private English language kindergarten, located in the Helsinki city centre area. It has been in operation for more than 40 years and a well-stocked, many of the teaching materials have come from the United Kingdom. The kindergarten follows the guidelines for the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Early childhood Education and Care as well as the City of Helsinki Curriculum for Early Childhood and Preschool Education. The kindergarten also uses elements of the British foundation stage for 3-5-year old and key stages 1 & 2 for 5-7-year-old. (kindergarten website)

The kindergarten group children are from 3-6 years. The preschool group as part of Helsinki City's accredited preschool program is for 6-year-old children. The kindergarten has four experienced staff, three kindergarten teachers, and one preschool teacher. Two kindergarten teachers are native speakers of English with 15 years of teaching experience and one preschool teacher who is a native speaker of English with 32 years of teaching experience. Teachers keep track of each child's progress through record keeping and observations.

In addition, the kindergarten forms a warm relationship with parents. It has own App of mobile provides a way for parents to observe own children daily life. Kindergarten teachers safely record children's daily basis, parents could view drop off and pick up times, daily activities pictures, menus, and how the child has eaten. Information communication technology is everywhere nowadays, early childhood education teachers need more ICT skills in daily work, for example, parents' messages, phone calls, and kindergarten's mobile application.

The target group of this thesis is four teachers who are working in the thesis working partner kindergarten. When I did this study, I was doing my internship in the kindergarten as an intern, which helps me connect to my target group and immerse myself in the kindergarten setting as an early childhood educator.

3 Theoretical Framework

In this section, I would introduce the theoretical framework related to this study. This contains a description of teachers' intrinsic motivation, self-determination theory, a 'flow' state in the workplace, and the factors that influence intrinsic motivation.

3.1 Teachers' Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than

because of external prods, pressures, or rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2000:54-67). According to Hakanen (2011: 30) in every workplace, the work can be done either internally or externally motivated or without any motivation at all. Intrinsic motivation comes from personal factors, needs, and interests like self-realization and needs of development.

According to Lue, Li & Zou (2019), teachers' extrinsic motivation can be transformed into intrinsic motivation. Teachers' existing development value, development level of teaching practice, teachers' feeling in their development processes, and the interaction between the three aspects would influence the generation of intrinsic motivation.

Teaching practice may deeply influence teachers' values and bring positive feelings during the teaching process, in a way that makes the teaching work much more meaningful. When teachers have experienced improvement or success in teaching practice, and obtain the recognition and sense of accomplishment, teachers' focus and interests are stimulated during teaching interaction. In a way, it becomes teachers' intrinsic motivation. (Lue, Li & Zou, 2019)

In addition, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, cited Han&Yin, 2016) highlighted four aspects of teacher motivation are, intrinsic motivation related to the interest in teaching, social influences related to external conditions, lifelong commitment, and negative influences from the workplace. This intrinsic motivation refers to individuals' intrinsic values to choose to teach and sustaining teaching, and many other factors of influence effort expended on teaching. For example, professional relations and ties, professional input, teacher evaluation, and colleague's relationship (Mani, 2002. cited Han&Yin, 2016).

3.2 Self-determination Theory

Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), began with a focus on intrinsic motivation, which is a broad framework to explaining factors that influence intrinsic motivation, autonomous extrinsic motivation, and psychological well-

being, all issues related to educational settings. The theory outline three basic psychological needs that are autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

According to Finnish National Agency for education 2018, in Finland, teachers have the freedom to choose learning materials and pedagogy, to decide on assessment, participation in defining the local curriculum. Finnish National Board of Education 2016 mentioned that early childhood education teachers are considered as pedagogical experts having a great deal of autonomy in Finland.

However, there is also a negative effect of excessive job autonomy, Kelliher and Anderson (2010 cited in Zhou, 2020) found in a study that employees with higher job autonomy use longer working hours to strengthen their work style. On the other hand, more job autonomy will reduce teamwork cooperation.

Kindergarten teachers' relatedness in the workplace would be, relationship with children, colleague relationship, relationship with the manager, parents' relationship, and multi-profession collaboration (Finnish early childhood education and care 2018). Mari Nislin (2015) pointed, supervisors' support would be important resources at work, which was related to stress regulation and quality of pedagogical work in teams. It suggested a balance between autonomy and social support (both supervisor support and teamwork support), particularly in the challenging work environments typical in kindergarten.

It implies as kindergarten teachers should have enough competence in the workplace. Finnish labour market (employment office, 2021), kindergarten teachers are required to have these competencies by the job description, be able to work individually meanwhile possess a genuine team spirit, self-motivated with skills in prioritizing and organizing, proactive, cheerful, and fun personality. On the other hand, kindergarten teachers are asked to have excellent communication skills, fluent in English and Finnish language is an advantage and knowing Helsinki city early childhood education legislation. Have an ability to adapt to a high-paced environment and like to learn new things and understand

that modern working life involves constant change. Do all kindergarten teachers have enough competence for the job position in early childhood education?

Finnish Education Evaluation Centre 2019 states the best early childhood education teachers are well-educated and competent staff. In-service training is also a matter of national-level interest. The studies found that more work experience teachers have more engagement in more positive, linguistically rich interaction with the children and regulate the children's behaviour more constructively than shorter work experience teachers.

However, Saarinen's (2020) dissertation argues that the early educator's qualification does not influence the child's well-being or cognitive development, Saarinen suggests that due to the educators not being able to use their skills effectively because of large groups and not enough caregivers. Her dissertation focuses on equality in cognitive learning outcomes and the role of educational practices, in which she discusses many issues about early childhood education, this thesis only highlights parts that are relevant to the study.

Deci and Ryan (2020) listed competence refers to, feeling efficacious and having a sense of accomplishment, as one of the basic conditions of intrinsic motivation. The need for competence refers to an inborn need. Deci found that giving positive feedback could be fulfilling people's need for competence, in a way can increase the intrinsic motivation to do the task. There are two necessary elements for intrinsic motivation which are self-determination and an increase in perceived competence. The ones who get positively challenged always stay intrinsically motivated. (Deci,2000)

3.3 A 'Flow' State in Kindergarten

Csikszentmihályi (1990) In early childhood education, the child's Zone of Proximal Development, which is a state that the child accesses during play (Vygotsky, 1978, cited in Baker, Falecki, and Green, 2017), can be seen as the child's flow state. In the flow state, the child's performance gets a higher level

than usually does. Is it possible that kindergarten teachers could find this a 'flow' moment during the work?

In Kindergarten setting teachers plan and implement the pedagogical activities with children in circle time, group work, reading time, where we call 'learning by play. (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2021) During this learning and teaching process, teachers would get their own 'flow' moment when positive feedback and recognition from the workplace. Csikszentmihályi lays out some conditions of a 'flow' state are a clear goal, feedback is immediate, challenges, and skills are equally matched. A 'flow' state is related to achievement, thus it could increase work satisfaction and accomplishment.

Wagner (2009) indicates that three factors of work satisfaction were related to intrinsic interest in early childhood education professional development are supervisor support, the nature of the work itself, and colleagues' relations. In addition, the research reveals ways in which interactions between motivation, professional development activities, and work environment support or undermine change.

Finnish Education Evaluation Centre 2019 mentioned shorter-experienced teachers may have less work engagement in the workplace compare to experienced teachers, for them, it may have a big space need to improve professional skills in the teaching practice, the 'flow' theory could guide teachers involved in the learning and teaching process. Csikszentmihályi (1990), believes that enhance and increase flow in the workplace, through which people would gain 'intrinsic rewards that encourage persistence'.

3.4 The factors Influence Intrinsic Motivation

All in all, autonomy, competence, relatedness would be the factors that influence intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Praver and Oga-Baldwin (2008, cited Han&Yin, 2016) also believed that work autonomy, working relationships, self-realization, and institutional support, and other factors heavily influenced the maintenance of teacher motivation over their career.

Moreover, a 'flow' state from Csikszentmihályi also posits three subtypes of intrinsic motivation: learning, to be curiosity and exploring new things. coping with challenges and improve competence and experience the engaging moment.

Malone and Leeper (1987 cited Kendra 2019) comment that the factors of increasing intrinsic motivation include: challenge, curiosity, control, cooperation and competition, and recognition. Challenge refers to a clear goal and possible attaining, which is aligned as Csikszentmihályi pointed balance between challenge and individual competence. Worth to mentioned, intrinsic motivation also can be increased when people gain satisfaction from a cooperation with others, and when people have competition and better performance than others. Recognition refers to people enjoy having their accomplishments recognized by others, which can increase internal motivation.

In the next section, I will implement the study research by using these factors.

4 Research Methods

The purpose of this study is to explore the 'Intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace.' The main question to the research is: What factors influence the Intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace?

A research method is a qualitative approach. Data collection used a survey form to four kindergarten teachers and participant observation in this thesis working partner kindergarten. Data analysis used thematic analysis for the survey answers from four kindergarten teachers.

4.1 Participants

Four kindergarten teachers participated in this study. Each teacher is responsible for different age group children. Group has 21 children who are age from three to six. All participants worked in the kindergarten during the time of this study, which was carried out in March 2021. All participants had been working as qualified kindergarten teachers for many years. one has been worked as a kindergarten teacher for 32 years, two of them have around 15 years of work experience. The

other one was a secondary school teacher and worked in early childhood education for over two years.

4.2 Data Collection

This thesis working partner is a private English kindergarten, I applied for study permission from the kindergarten. Before the survey, I introduced my study purposes, information sheet (appendix1), and consent form (appendix2) through e-mail. This way the participants were able to read the purpose of this study, and the ethical viewpoints of this study. The data collection of this study used a survey form (appendix3) and participant observation.

4.2.1 Survey Form

The survey form I made by google, then I sent the link to the participants by email. The survey form questions are based on the theoretical framework, where outlined work accomplishment, competence, autonomy, relatedness, challenges, and self-development. When designed the survey questions, I used closed-ended questions and open-ended questions, where the respondent answers can be from the participants' own words.

In terms of language, I made the survey questions as clear and precise as possible, by using the language that respondents will easily understand. I also arranged in a logical order for the questions. Start with easy, non-sensitive, closed-ended questions that will encourage the respondent to continue, like this: 'Which group age of children are you working within kindergarten?' The open-ended questions are: How many years have you worked as a kindergarten teacher? How do you feel the accomplishment from your work? How does your work let you make full use of your abilities? (for example, competence, challenge). How do you feel your work autonomy? How do you feel about your work-relatedness? (for example, the relationship between you and children, colleague relationship, and parents' cooperation). How does the work allow you to grow and develop yourself? (improve skills, knowledge). What factors influence

your intrinsic motivation in the workplace? The survey form was sent to the target group in March of the year 2021.

4.2.2 Participation Observation

In this thesis working partner place, I made participant observation for one week, every day I joined the kindergarten daily activities meanwhile observing the group. I made a checklist that included aspects, such as group ratio, work resource, work autonomy, teachers' competence, challenge, cooperation with parents, teachers' relationship, and kindergarten teachers' attitude.

The participant observation was on March 2021. It took one week, 7 hours every day. The observation made me immerse myself in the kindergarten setting, I noted related information on my working diary. It helps me know better the intrinsic motivation of teachers in a kindergarten environment. When conducting the data collection, I took into consideration that clarifies all issues related to confidentiality and anonymity.

4.3 Data Analysis

This study used a thematic analysis of the qualitative method to analyze the data based on the theoretical frame. I followed the process of thematic analysis (Caulfield, 2019). First, coding, which involves highlighting sections of data such as phrases or sentences and coming up with labels or "codes" to describe the content (see table 1). Second, I generated themes by identifying patterns among the codes and coming up with themes. Thirdly, I defined and name the themes making them easily understandable. Data analysis for data from both survey answers and participants observation.

Table 1: Extract from survey and code

survey extract	codes	themes
'The boss gave me space; I decide what kind of activities with the group.'	Work autonomy Decision-making	Work autonomy

<p>'Always can plan work in own way.'</p> <p>'independently plan and use the work resource.'</p>		
<p>2years and many years in secondary school.</p> <p>12 years, 15 years, 32 years</p>	<p>Many years of work experience with children</p>	<p>Work competence</p>
<p>'I am very motivated to use own professional skills on the teaching'</p> <p>'Use own unique capabilities to carry out work.'</p> <p>'We have a good team who show flexibility in making sure child needs are met & that we ensure time if made for other tasks to be completed too.'</p>	<p>full use of the abilities</p>	
<p>'It is challenging. I work in a field which is very rewarding and very draining at the same time both physically and emotionally. It is challenging to find a balance between the two and it does not always happen.'</p> <p>'it can be challenging to try to meet all the expectations from parents, city and the children's needs.'</p>	<p>Work Challenge</p>	<p>Work Challenge</p>
<p>'Excellent. Very good relationship. Respect each other, learn from each other.</p> <p>Always get comments, support, help from the supervisor.'</p> <p>'Colleagues have great experience & knowledge which they share.'</p>	<p>Colleague Relationship.</p>	<p>Relatedness</p>

<p>'Communication with parents is very important.'</p> <p>'Building rapport is essential being open and available to listen to parents builds their confidence to talk.'</p> <p>'I find it rather easy to communicate with our parents. Most of them respect our work and the efforts'</p>	<p>Cooperation with parents.</p>	
<p>'Positive feedback from parents.'</p> <p>'I love my work and in the end of the day, the positive out way the negative.'</p> <p>'Working in kindergarten is a special opportunity in the lives of a family, you are creating the foundation of lifelong learning, and your interaction enthusiasm and energy will affect the family experiences. Be positive be supportive and nurture them through this new experience so they will collectively feel confident about the education process and journey.'</p>	<p>Accomplishment. Recognition.</p>	<p>Accomplishment. Recognition.</p>

<p>'I am happy about the position and what I will learn in the coming years.'</p> <p>'Do the best to improve.'</p> <p>'I will do developing a learning platform for parents & professional childcare workers.'</p>	<p>Improve skills or knowledge.</p> <p>Keep learning.</p>	<p>Self-development</p>
<p>'I love this place and children, I am happy about the position and what I learn from the team.'</p> <p>'Colleagues are professional and work in different ways which always provides opportunities for me to learn from them as well as the children'</p> <p>'I hope to learn different ways to help the children reach their potential and be happy little people.'</p> <p>'I have always been given free hands to plan and carry out my work in a way that benefits me, my colleagues and the clients. I can express myself fully as a teacher and as a colleague. We are all able to work in a manner befitting our unique capabilities which allows us to feel "successful".'</p>	<p>Factors influence intrinsic motivation.</p> <p>Relatedness.</p> <p>Work autonomy.</p> <p>Professional/Competence.</p> <p>Keep learning.</p> <p>Interest in the field.</p>	<p>Relatedness.</p> <p>Work autonomy.</p> <p>Professional/Competence.</p> <p>Keep learning.</p> <p>Interest in the field.</p>

Table 1: Extract from survey and code

Themes from survey data are (table1), work autonomy, work competence, work challenge, relatedness, recognition, and self-development. To have a reasonable finding, I combined data from the participant observation.

Participant observation as the following table2, my observation focuses on group ratio, work resource, work autonomy, teachers' competence, challenge, cooperation with parents, teachers' relationship, and kindergarten teachers' attitude. (table 2)

Table 2: Extract from observation note

Observation note extract	codes	themes
4 teachers with 21 children. Children age: 3-6 years old.	Group ratio: small	Small group
'Many learning materials from online.' 'Books, paper, crafts, handmade all materials in kindergarten setting.' 'Enough resource to support teachers plan.'	Work resource.	Work autonomy
'Self-plan the morning circle topic, table learning activities.' 'Each age group has one teacher fully responsible learning plan and implementation, and parents meeting.' 'Teachers can have a lunch outside, give self a fresh air and re-charge the energy.'	Work autonomy	
'circle time 40mins, one teacher with 21 children. Games, songs, talks, and reading.' 'native speaker of English guide a very high-quality learning activity.' 'Table work, 20-30mins, one teacher with 5-6 children' 'all activities planned by each teacher' 'Lunch story, one teacher.'	Work competence	Work competence
'It is not easy when some children have tough time.' 'Deal with conflicts, by low voice to repeat with eye contact, effective communication with children.'	Work challenge	Work challenge

<p>'ICT work, App, laptop work, mobile work over one hour every day.'</p> <p>Multi-task every day.</p>		
<p>'Homework for parents and children once a week. Daily images and eating showed online application to parents'</p> <p>'Small talk with parents in the afternoon.'</p> <p>'Teachers told they have a good cooperation with parents.'</p>	Cooperation	relatedness
<p>'Very supportive each other. Always have a discussion, and teachers have good communication skills.'</p>	Colleague relationship	
<p>'Working in a happy mood. Warming welcome in the morning. Smile all the time and give a hug to children.'</p> <p>'Storytelling with a little drama play before or during lunch.'</p> <p>'Each child has individual reading or literacy time with a teacher, very responsible for everyone.'</p>	Work attitude	Work attitude Self-learning
<p>'Teachers always keep curiosity by search and creative for every week topic.'</p> <p>Teachers can learn themselves as well when preparing materials for the learning plan.</p>	Keep learning Work attitude	
<p>Kindergarten has a very good reputation in the area, it has been in the area for over 40 years.</p>	Recognition	Recognition

Parents need to make an application for their children in advance, even they don't live nearby the kindergarten.		
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Table 2: Extract from observation note

The data from participant observation helps me deeply understanding my research question 'the factors influence the intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers'. It is a lot of details in the workplace setting, if I only have an interview or one visit, I will not get such details and experience in the workplace. Considering ethical issues, I did not record videos, only descriptions on the notebook. To avoid my influence of observation on results and make the validity of this study better. Thus, I used two methods which are a survey form and participant observation.

Table 3: Themes from table1 and table2 thematic analysis

Themes by survey data (table1)	Themes by participant observation data (table2)	New Themes
work autonomy Competence Relatedness Challenge Accomplishment. Recognition Self-development	work autonomy Competence Relatedness Challenge Recognition Self-learning Work attitude small group ratio	Work autonomy
		Competence
		Relatedness
		Challenge
		Accomplishment/Recognition
		Self-development/work attitude
		Group ratio

Table 3: Themes from table1 and table2 thematic analysis

The new themes from table3 are Work autonomy, competence, group ratio, relatedness, challenge, accomplishment, recognition, self-development, work attitude.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

This study follows ethical norms in research. A research permit was agreed from the thesis working partner kindergarten. The whole process of study, I followed the data collection ethics, after I obtain the study permit from the working partner, then gave the information form (appendix1) and consent form (appendix2) for each kindergarten teachers, in the way let participants know my name, school, goal and reason for collecting data. The information form let the participants knowing this study is voluntary and confidentiality participation and nothing harm to participants. All participants signed on the consent form, and one copy for the participant, the other copy I keep in a safe place.

To remain neutral and unbiased to do not let my personal opinions interfere with the data, I used both survey form and observation for data collection. The participant observation has an active involvement in the group, which can cause the researcher to lose objectivity and may lead to bias (Ross, 2014). To prove the appropriateness and trustworthiness of this thesis. In this thesis process, an attempt has been made to enrich the findings of the research by obtaining the data from two different sources, survey responses, and participant observation. The results obtained from the survey and observation with both the methods were closely related which in turn enhanced the confidence regarding the accuracy of the findings.

In the process, I respected my target group time, meanwhile, protect the data safely. It should be taken into consideration that the teachers who participated in this study were voluntary. Because of this, it can be that the participants were already interested in this topic and people who are not interested, did not volunteer. (Understanding the Ethics of Data Collection, 2021)

Following the respondent validation approach, in the end, a copy of this thesis was sent to all the participants involved including the working life partner for their approval.

5 Results

In this section, I would show the finding of this study based on thematic data analysis and provide my interpretations of the results.

5.1 Work Autonomy

Work autonomy is one factor that influences the intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace.

'very independently to handle the daily work. I am lucky to have a boss who trusts me and allows me to do things my way rather than dictate a certain course of action. I try to do my best in any situation, and she knows it.' (From survey). 'teachers have self-plan for the morning circle topic, table learning activities. Each age group has one teacher fully responsible for learning plan and implementation, and parents meeting.' (From observation).

In working partner kindergarten settings, all support learning materials are everywhere, one reason is that kindergarten has been in this location for over 40 years, were collected all materials, books, paper, crafts, tabletop play, toys, clothes, almost everything as work resource. In addition, all materials for learning activities are very professional from online teaching resources. Work resources gave teachers more opportunities to have the autonomy to complete the teaching plan in kindergarten. The data suggest that the kindergarten teachers are agreed on work autonomy, from the feedback given by them, thus work autonomy is one factor of intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace.

5.2 Work Competence

Work competence is one factor that influences the intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace.

'I am very motivated to use own professional skills on the teaching.'
 'Use own unique capabilities to carry out work.' 'We have a good team who show flexibility in making sure child needs are met and that we ensure time if made for other tasks to be completed too.'
 (from survey)'All teachers have many years of work experience in the early childhood education field and they use their native language for the very high-quality learning activities. Group ratio is small, teachers could carry out teaching plan very well for each child. (from observation)

The data suggest that kindergarten teachers have high competence and professionalism with personal strengths in the workplace, meanwhile, group ratio seems to influence the quality of teaching output in kindergarten.

5.3 Work Challenge

Work challenge is one factor that influences the intrinsic motivation in the workplace.

'It is challenging. I work in a field which is very rewarding and very draining at the same time both physically and emotionally. It is challenging to find a balance between the two and it does not always happen.' (from survey)

'It is not easy when children have a tough time. Safety is always the priority, which needs teachers more attention for every child in the workplace. on the other hand, ICT work takes an extra 1 hour at least every day, checking mobile messages from parents, upload on the app about recording the children image and tabletop activity. Multi-task work is challenging in kindergarten.' (from observation)

The data showed work challenge seems multi-tasks on daily work, and balance between physically and emotionally is challenging. According to observation, teachers are doing very well even face the challenges.

5.4 Relatedness

Relatedness is one factor that influences the intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace.

'Excellent. Very good relationship. Respect each other, learn from each other. 'Always get comments, support, help from the supervisor.' 'Colleagues have great experience and knowledge which they share.' 'Communication with parents is very important.' 'Building rapport is essential being open and available to listen to parents builds their confidence to talk.' 'I find it rather easy to communicate with our parents. Most of them respect our work and the efforts' (from survey)

'Homework for parents and children once a week. Daily images and eating are showed the online application to parents' Small talk with parents when parents pick up their children.' 'Teachers told they have a good cooperation with parents.' Teachers are very supportive to each other, with a discussion and good communication.' 'Working in a happy mood. Warming welcome in the morning. Smile all the time and give a hug to children.' (from observation)

The data showed teachers have a good relationship with children, colleagues relationship, and good cooperation with parents.

5.5 Accomplishment and Recognition

Work accomplishment and recognition influence are the factors that influence the intrinsic motivation in the workplace.

'Positive feedback from parents.' 'I love my work and in the end of the day, the positive out way the negative.' 'Working in kindergarten is a special opportunity in the lives of a family, you are creating the foundation of lifelong learning, and your interaction enthusiasm and energy will affect the family experiences. Be positive be supportive and nurture them through this new experience so they will collectively feel confident about the education process and journey.' (from survey)

'Kindergarten has a very good reputation in the area, it has been in the area for over 40 years. Many parents make an application for

their children place in advance, even they don't live nearby the kindergarten.' (from survey)

The data showed teachers obtain good recognition from parents, and also teachers feel a sense of accomplishment on their job.

5.6 Self-development and Work Attitude

Self-development and work attitude influence are the factors that influence the intrinsic motivation in the workplace.

'I am happy about what I will learn in the coming years.' 'Do the best to improve.' 'I will do developing a learning platform for parents & professional childcare workers.' (from survey)

Working in a happy mood. Warming welcome in the morning. Smile all the time and give a hug to children.' 'Storytelling with a little drama before or during lunch.' 'Each child has individual reading or literacy time with a teacher, very responsible for everyone.' 'Teachers always keep curiosity by search and creative for every week topic.' 'Teachers can learn themselves as well when preparing materials for learning plan.' (from observation)

The data suggested teachers are willing to learn new things with children together for every week topic. Teachers themselves also love reading books to keep curiosity about the world. Teachers have a very good work attitude.

From the last survey question 'What factors influence your intrinsic motivation in the workplace?'

'I love this place and children; I am happy about the position and what I learn from the team.' 'Colleagues are professional, and work in different ways which always provides opportunities for me to learn from them as well as the children' 'I hope to learn different ways to help the children reach their potential and be happy little people.'

'I have always been given free hands to plan and carry out my work in a way that benefits me, my colleagues and the clients. I can express myself fully as a teacher and as a colleague. We are all able to work in a manner befitting our own unique capabilities which allows us to feel "successful".' (from survey)

The data suggested, relatedness, work autonomy, professional and competence, keep self-learning, and personal interest in early childhood education.

All in all, the results illustrate, the factors of intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in kindergarten are, working autonomy, work competence, challenge, relatedness, accomplishment and recognition, self-development, and work attitude.

6 Conclusion

This study aimed to find out about the intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace, to obtain what makes kindergarten teachers remain and enjoy in the early childhood education field.

All three elements of self-determination theory emerged from the data. The kindergarten teachers did experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Findings showed the kindergarten teachers have their job autonomy, meanwhile obtain many supports, materials, kindergarten provides enough work resource.

In the thesis working partner kindergarten, there is a one-hour break including lunch break and teaching plan, teachers have their own choice about how to use this one hour. The workplace management is very flexible and allows teachers to eat lunch outside of the kindergarten. on the other hand, teachers have their decision-making on the education plan and full responsible with own group children teaching output and cooperation with parents. Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) summarized job autonomy as "the degree to which an organization allows employees to freely, independently, and autonomously make work arrangements, work decisions, and work methods" (cited in Zhao,2020). Finnish National Board of Education 2016 mentioned that early childhood education teachers are considered as pedagogical experts having a great deal of autonomy in Finland.

The small group ratio allows teachers to fully use their ability and own professional, which brings quality education and care, especially for some

teachers who are native speakers of English, strong communication is an advantage when communicating with parents, and get positive feedback. Deci found that giving positive feedback can be fulfilling one's need for competence, in the way can increase one's intrinsic motivation to do the task (Deci and Ryan,2000).

Saarinen's (2020) dissertation also mentioned that the early educator's qualification does not influence the child's well-being or cognitive development, Saarinen suggests that this is due to the educators not being able to use their skills effectively because of large groups and not enough caregivers. If the day-care group ratio is high, how early educators provide a good quality service, high group ratio will influence teachers' job autonomy and competence, which affects teachers' intrinsic motivation.

Teachers have a very strong sense of belonging in the workplace since they worked many years in the same workplace, the colleague's relationship is very good, people are familiar with each other and have good teamwork. It is aligned with Mari Nislin (2015) pointed, supervisors' support would be important resources at work, which was related to stress regulation and quality of pedagogical work in teams. It suggested a balance between autonomy and social support (both supervisor support and teamwork support), particularly in the challenging work environments typical in kindergarten.

Kindergarten teachers are happy to work in their team and enjoying the daily working life. They are learning with children together from every topic in everyday routine with a good working attitude. Although there is a challenging task sometimes, such as when doing circle activities in the group with attractive and fun, meanwhile dealing with children conflicts and bad mood. In this thesis working partner kindergarten, the circle moment seems like teachers 'flow' moment, teachers are fully immersed in what they are doing, once the interaction with children starts and feedback to the teachers, it usually begins to be intrinsically rewarding. (Csikszentmihalyi et al.,1990)

What was discovered is that teachers with good competence and many years of teaching experience are enjoying working in the early childhood education field. My data collection is only in one kindergarten, where it might be different from other kindergartens in the Helsinki area since every different place has a different work style. As I only got survey responses from four teachers for this study, the results cannot be generalized. However, the data shed light on the individual perception of the current state of teachers' intrinsic motivation. The thesis working partner kindergarten would be a good model to help the development of the early childhood education field.

There are many directions where the study of work intrinsic motivation in kindergarten could be developed in the future. It would be very interesting to study the work intrinsic motivation in different types of daycare centers. For example, Nislin and her team (2016) was to examine early childhood professionals' work engagement, burnout, and stress regulation in integrated special daycare groups. The results indicated that early childhood professionals experienced high levels of work engagement, and even though signs of burnout appeared. And younger early childhood professionals showed lower professional self-esteem and early childhood professionals with higher-level qualifications (e.g. special teachers) were more likely to report higher levels of work engagement. (Nislin, Sajaniemi, Sims, Suhonen, Maldonado, Hyttinen & Hirvonen, 2016) In addition, the reasons behind these factors should be more studied. In this way, the suggestions for development drawn from the results would probably be more and constructive.

7 Discussion

It seems to me that the topic of intrinsic motivation in the workplace was covered well in the discussions with four kindergarten teachers from the thesis working partner kindergarten. This study 'What factors influence the intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace' could offer valuable information for everyone who works in early childhood education or people who are responsible for developing early childhood education.

The participants for this study might also have benefited from the survey, where the participants have a good self-reflection of their work. It maybe had positive effects on the participants' work value.

About intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace. What can social services workers do to help? To raise awareness by linking a forum on the website that would be a platform for kindergarten managers and teachers, sharing the good working methods, and management. for example, in this study working partner kindergarten, teachers could have a lunch break outside of the kindergarten. it is very important for teachers' work motivation and well-being. Such a small change in kindergarten management would be a big benefit in the workplace.

The forum is also for the kindergarten teachers to communicate with each other, relieving feelings of being alone or exhausted. Sharing the information about how teachers could use their strengths in the career to improve individual competence, in a way improve their intrinsic motivation and well-being in the workplace.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(Survey form, Participant Observation)

Study title: Intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace.

We would like to invite you to participate in our research study. Before you decide, we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Talk to others about the study if you wish, and please do ask us if there is anything that is not clear. If you agree to take part, we will then ask you to sign a consent form.

Purpose of the study: The study is to find out early childhood teachers' thoughts about intrinsic motivation and offer valuable information for people are in the early childhood education field.

Voluntary nature of participation

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences.

What will the participation involve?

Survey form, an email survey would simply involve you answering questions in an online Google Forms survey.

Participant observation, the research student Tiina Chen will join the workplace to make notes and participant observation about this research topic 'intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace'.

Who is organizing and funding the research?

This research is for my thesis. There is no direct funding for this research.

Possible disadvantages and risks of taking part

There are no disadvantages and risks for participants that I am aware of.

Financial information

Participation in this study will involve no cost to You. You will receive no payment for the participation.

Informing about the research results

If you would like to see the findings of my research, we would be happy to share them with you.

Contact details of the researchers

Researcher / Student: Tiina Chen

Supervisor name: Jukka Törnroos

Supervisor name: Satu Hakanen

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (Helsinki)

Appendix 2: CONSENT FORM**CONSENT FORM**

Title of the study: Intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace.

Student Name: Tiina Chen

Supervisor name: Jukka Törnroos

Supervisor name: Satu Hakanen

Giving a permission to participate in the questionnaire held by Tiina Chen which is a part of her bachelor thesis. The purpose of the research is to gain an understanding of the factors of intrinsic motivation of teachers in kindergarten.

- My participation consists of a survey form, and participant observation.
- I am not required to answer any questions I do not wish to answer
- I may withdraw from the research at any time with no penalty to me
- This study will be presented in the form of a final paper, to be read by the school supervisor of the course.
- The results of this research may also be presented in workshops or conferences
- The presentation of the study will not identify me in any way. My name, as well as any information which could identify me, will be taken out of all presentation of the research final papers.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Researcher

Date

Date

The original consent signed by the participant and a copy of the participant information sheet will be kept in the records of the researcher. Participant information sheet and a copy of the signed consent will be given to the participant.

Appendix 3: SURVEY FORM

Intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers in the workplace

Title: Intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teacher in the workplace

This research is, anonymous and voluntary

Survey student: Tiina Chen, Social Services Bachelor Degree in Metropolia AMK

Aim: Survey is to find out early childhood teachers' thoughts about the intrinsic motivation and offer valuable information for people are in early childhood education field.

Where to use data: Bachelor thesis

What is your job title in daycare/kindergarten? *

Which group age of children are you working with in kindergarten?

How many years have you worked as a kindergarten teacher?

How do you feel the accomplishment from your work?

(for example, recognition, responsibility)

How does your work let you make full use of your abilities?

(for example, competence, challenge)

How do you feel your work autonomy?

(for example, independently handle the work, decision-making)

How do you feel your work relatedness?

(for example, relationship between you and children, colleague relationship, and parents' cooperation)

How does the work allow you to grow and develop yourself?

(improve skills, knowledge)

What factors influence your intrinsic motivation in the workplace?

“Thank you for your feedback. We really appreciate your time.”

Research link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf4rFDHik7CabC7Yalz6fkBj4HJeSJVuk8KWh2GsfV84wYUw/viewform?usp=pp_url