

The Relationship Between Organizational Stress and Job Satisfaction Among Pre-University Teaching Staff

Sandu Mihaela Luminita¹, Rus Mihaela², Pârlica (Iliuță) Elena³

¹Ovidius University of Constanta, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania

²Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences, Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania

³Independent researcher

¹mihaela_naidin@yahoo.com, ²psiholog_m@yahoo.com, ³elenaparlica90@yahoo.ro

Abstract. In this era of constant change and highly competitive environments, school efficiency is considered a key factor in successful organization. To ensure the success of educational systems and policies that are seamlessly implemented, schools require motivated and satisfied teachers who feel secure in their workplace and are capable of meeting high standards in their tasks. On the other hand, the continuous monitoring of teachers in the implementation of new curriculum policies, teaching and learning evaluation can diminish motivation, effectiveness, and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the academic literature has recognized teaching as a profession with high levels of stress. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between stress and professional satisfaction among pre-university teachers. The motivation for choosing this topic is primarily grounded in the idea that we all desire to build and maintain a mentally and emotionally balanced, healthy environment that enriches our quality of life and provides a conducive framework for personal growth and development. It also helps us become more aware of and optimize our relationships with the environment we live in, with others, and even with ourselves.

Keywords: Stress, organization, satisfaction, work, teachers, education.

1. Stress and organisational stress – conceptual delimitations

According to Patching and Best (2014), stress is defined as "the harmful physical aspect and emotional responses that occur when the demands of a job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker" (p. 683). The authors argue that stress is managed by a part of the brain that deals with emotional memory, which controls certain processes of the autonomic nervous system through the release of neurohormones. Furthermore, stress is managed by a part that primarily governs how people respond to intense emotions such as fear and aggression. This part of the brain also controls and regulates vital bodily functions, such as heart rate, body weight,

sleep, and alertness. Additionally, it governs regions of pain and pleasure, which are crucial in how individuals perceive stress. In other words, the part of the brain responsible for stress processes information from our senses, identifies it, and then categorizes it (Patching and Best, 2014).

Stress can be caused by both internal and external factors. External factors lead to objective stress, while internal factors result in subjective stress. Subjective stress refers to the type of stress that individuals perceive through their personal judgment. It is largely measured by the level of satisfaction with the surrounding environment, which includes feelings of depression or happiness, as well as an individual's confidence in an organization. Subjective stress can also be divided into two types, namely burnout and physiological stress. Burnout, in particular, has been recognized as a key issue in education for a long time.

Physiological stress, on the other hand, can manifest in the form of headaches, backaches, loss of appetite, and so on. In contrast to subjective stress, objective stress pertains to the assessment of threat as a result of cognitive factors, such as various events happening around the individual in question. Furthermore, objective stress depends on the expected capacity of an individual and their actual ability to cope with tasks efficiently. In real situations, there are numerous cognitive factors affecting the construction of objective stress perceived by professionals, such as the number of project deadlines, the quantity of tasks, etc. (Enshassi et al., 2016).

Therefore, stress is described as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when a worker's capabilities, resources, or needs do not align with the demands of the job. Stress is a broad term for the non-specific adverse body response to job demands. In nature, stress is often classified as an immeasurable and invisible pressure.

2. Causes of occupational stress(stressors)

Work is a fundamental part of human life. A healthy and fulfilling job is a significant and positive aspect of people's lives, providing them with the opportunity to feel satisfied and meaningful in their workplace. However, the stress that can arise in the workplace hinders an individual's performance. Occupational stress is the response employees may have when they are subjected to job demands and pressures that do not align with their skills and knowledge. Work-related stress occurs in various circumstances, but it is often seen to be even more pronounced when employees lack support from supervisors and colleagues (WHO, 2017).

Workplace pressure is inevitable and can be viewed as a natural characteristic of individuals' lives. However, stress beyond a certain level can lead to both psychological and physiological problems, which, in turn, can negatively impact an employee's performance in the organization.

Individual stressors

There are numerous individual stress factors that can be generated in the context of personal or organizational life. Individual stressors are highly dependent on an individual's personality traits and the constraints of change. The individual stress factors are as follows:

- *Life and Career Changes*: Stress is induced by changes in an individual's life and career. Research studies have shown that stress is more prevalent in higher education categories.

- *Personality Type*: Personality traits are a source of stress, where individuals with a very strong work ethic can be prone to burnout. These individuals exhibit constant movement, juggling

multiple tasks simultaneously, a constant sense of time pressure, leading to experiencing higher levels of stress.

- *Role Characteristics*: Role stress can arise due to role conflict or role ambiguity. Role conflict arises from the incompatibility of two or more roles (work, family, religion, etc.). In certain situations, an individual's different roles may have conflicting requirements, leading to stress due to the challenges of fulfilling conflicting role demands.

Group Stress Factors

The group can also be a potential source of stress, and the major stress factors are as follows:

- *Lack of Group Cohesion*: Group cohesion is important for an individual's interaction within a group. When individuals are denied such cohesion, it can lead to stress.

- *Lack of Social Support*: Individuals who receive social support from other group members are able to fulfill their social needs. They feel better when they can share their problems and joys with others.

- *Conflicts*: Conflicts that arise in group interactions can cause significant stress for group members.

Organizational Stressors

An organization is comprised of groups and individuals, so both individual stressors and group stressors can occur in an organizational context. The major organizational stress factors are as follows:

- *Organizational Policies*: Organizational policies provide guidelines for actions, where vague or disadvantageous policies can lead to stress among employees. Stress factors include unrealistic job descriptions, inflexible rules, and unequal incentives, among others.

- *Organizational Structure*: Organizational structure pertains to the formal relationships between individuals within an organization. Any flaws in the organizational structure act as stress factors due to inadequate relationships between individuals and groups. Stress factors include a lack of advancement opportunities, participation in decision-making, and line and staff conflicts.

- *Organizational Processes*: Insufficient organizational processes, such as poor communication or inadequate information flow, cause stress among employees in an organization.

- *Physical Conditions*: Physical conditions impact performance. Poor physical conditions, including excessive noise, lack of privacy, or indoor temperatures that are either too hot or too cold, cause stress in individuals (Reddy, 2004).

3. Job satisfaction among teachers

Job satisfaction is generally seen as emotional states caused by employees' evaluation of their professional lives and can be defined as the degree of pleasure or contentment regarding their work (Won & Chang, 2019).

Job satisfaction is conceptualized as a dynamic structure determined by the interaction of many factors. Job satisfaction, which expresses employees' perceived feelings about their work, has both rational and emotional elements. Job satisfaction can be perceived as emotional responses directed towards the jobs or their roles as teachers.

Job satisfaction is a multidimensional structure due to the nature of the teaching profession. Malinen and Savolainen (2016) stated that teachers' job satisfaction is related to social and organizational factors, cognitive factors, and affective factors.

According to Sharma and Jyoti (2006), factors that affect a teacher's job satisfaction include internal and external factors, demographic factors, and individual characteristics of the teacher and the school. Teacher job satisfaction encompasses external factors, such as school and principal characteristics, as well as internal factors, such as the teacher's own characteristics.

A. Factors at the Teacher Level Regarding Job Satisfaction

In a study conducted by Kinman et al. (2011) involving 628 secondary school teachers in the United Kingdom, teaching experience was positively associated with job satisfaction.

As a result of the analysis performed by Van Maele and Van Houtte (2012) with data from 2091 teachers in 80 secondary schools in Belgium, job satisfaction was negatively correlated with their years of service.

The Impact of Age on Job Satisfaction

A study in higher education conducted by Saner and Eyupoglu (2012) aimed to determine the relationship between age and job satisfaction. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) was administered to university faculty from five universities in Northern Cyprus. The article mentions that how one feels about the nature of their job tasks is related to intrinsic job satisfaction, while how one feels about external factors, such as the workplace environment, is linked to extrinsic job satisfaction. Although there is no significance regarding the relationship between intrinsic job satisfaction and age, there is a significant variation in the extrinsic job satisfaction of university faculty concerning age. The study's findings indicate that older educators are generally more satisfied than their younger counterparts.

The conclusions of another study show that job satisfaction decreases until a teacher reaches approximately 31 years of age, and only after this age does it start to increase. Additionally, as teachers age, the satisfaction derived from their occupation increases (Guo & Wang, 2017). Yucel and Bektas (2012) suggest in their study that young teachers feel more emotionally connected to their workplaces, embrace the institution's issues, and are more likely to remain in the institution when their job satisfaction level is either high or low.

Moderate levels of job satisfaction are observed in older, more self-assured teachers.

Shrestha (2019) conducted a study with 345 teachers and concluded that older teachers exhibit higher job satisfaction, consequently showing more commitment to their work, leading to high performance. Masath (2015) explored the job satisfaction of middle school teachers in relation to certain age groups. The research states that there is an increasing dissatisfaction with the teaching profession among young teachers. To find solutions to the problem, it is suggested that orientation activities be conducted, and teacher educators should establish organizations to prepare young teachers for entering the profession.

The Gender Effect on Job Satisfaction

Using data from 2202 teachers in New Brunswick, Ma and MacMillan (1999) demonstrated that gender and professional experience were significant in job satisfaction. According to this study,

female teachers were more satisfied than their male counterparts. Professional experience showed a statistically significant but negative impact on teachers' professional satisfaction.

Mocheche and colleagues (2017) emphasize that female high school teachers in Kenya have higher levels of satisfaction compared to men.

According to a study conducted in Cyprus (Menon & Reppa, 2011), female teachers in Cyprus do not report greater job satisfaction than male teachers. Menon and Reppa (2011) argue that women have lower self-confidence, believing they need to exhibit masculine behaviors and a masculine management style to advance in their careers.

Bentea and Anghelache (2012) found in their study that the hypothesis "Gender affects job satisfaction" is false.

The Career Effect on Job Satisfaction

According to a study (Guo & Wang, 2017) regarding job satisfaction, the organizational system, reputation, working conditions, career development, and salary are the most important factors. The study also found that male teachers are more satisfied with their career development than females. A study conducted with Australian teachers revealed that the minority group was composed of teachers who had never considered changing their workplace. Recommendations included fostering positive relationships, ensuring security, meeting teachers' needs, and offering different teaching alternatives.

A study by the UCL Institute of Education conducted in 22 countries showed that the most dissatisfied teachers were in England. The questions addressed issues of job satisfaction among teachers, whether they would recommend the profession to others, and whether they would like to stay in the profession. The reasons for leaving the profession were cited as heavy workloads, low salaries, and a rigid curriculum (Busby, 2018).

Work Experience on Satisfaction

When considering work experience, it is stated that teachers who have been working for a long time are happier with their jobs.

It was found that the duration of years of work had no effect on job satisfaction.

B. Factors at the Principal Level Regarding Job Satisfaction

The Effect of Principals' Age on Job Satisfaction

Eckman's study (2004) indicated that male high school principals remained in the profession for a longer period than females, despite men having less teaching experience and being the same age as their female counterparts. It is also stated that women who have the roles of "mother" or "wife" become principals as they get older.

The Gender Effect on Principals' Job Satisfaction

Eckman (2004) suggests that the longer tenure of male principals can be attributed to several factors, one of which is 'perception.' By this, it is meant that there are gender-related perceptions about professions. For example, caregiving, teaching, etc., are considered more suitable for women, while administrative roles are considered more suitable for men. Another factor could be related, according to Eckman (2004), to the expected societal roles for both men and women. Ballou and

Podgursky (1995) found that female principals receive higher evaluations than male principals. The study's results show that male teachers give higher ratings to male principals but do not perceive any difference between male and female principals.

Wangai (2015) found in his study that, regarding leadership behaviors, male principals had better outcomes than their female counterparts.

Work Experience of Principals on Job Satisfaction

Ballou and Podgursky (1995) state that despite principals with over 15 years of experience being more supported by their faculties, most states consider a few years of experience to be sufficient.

Shen and colleagues (2012) asserted that a principal with previous experience as a department head leads to lower job satisfaction among teachers, while a principal with previous experience in sports, coaching, or leadership leads to higher job satisfaction among teachers. Additionally, it was found that the school process was more significant than the education and experience of the principals.

C. School-Level Factors Regarding Job Satisfaction

School Location

Wang and colleagues (2017) stated in their study that job satisfaction and teacher engagement in rural areas are higher than those in urban areas. Considering psychosocial and economic factors, urban university teachers were found to be more satisfied in Showkat's study (2013).

School Type

Torres (2019) used data from TALIS 2013 to investigate the relationship between shared leadership, professional collaboration, and teacher job satisfaction in U.S. schools. In this research, teacher job satisfaction was examined in two types of schools: public and private. As a result of the study, it was observed that the difference in school type had no effect on teachers' job satisfaction.

Susmitha and Raghavaya's study (2018) revealed that teachers working in public schools are more satisfied with their jobs compared to teachers working in private schools. This is because teachers in private schools feel more insecure, less independent, and have more issues with the payments provided by the institutions they work for. The findings of Kapa and Gimbert's study (2017) showed how school demographics can affect teacher job satisfaction. It was found that school size and student population are effective factors on job satisfaction.

Akhtar and colleagues (2010) conducted a comparative study of job satisfaction among teachers in public and private schools. In the study, five public and five private schools were selected from the Lahore region, and 150 teachers were randomly chosen from these schools. They applied a Likert-type questionnaire with 25 items to the selected teachers. As a result, it was clear that teachers in public schools were more satisfied than teachers in private schools. Tasdan and Tiryaki (2008) conducted a study involving 151 teachers from a total of 12 schools, including 6 public and 6 private schools. The overall scores of teachers from public and private schools who participated in the study were examined on the job satisfaction scale, and a significant difference was observed depending on the type of school from which the teachers came. As a result, it is stated

that the level of job satisfaction of teachers working in private schools is higher than that of teachers working in public schools.

Tye and O'Brien (2002) state in their work that the longer teachers have been in the profession, the harder it is to quit. It is also mentioned that newly enrolled teachers affect the motivation of teachers who have been in the profession for a long time.

Bennett and colleagues (2013) found that both new and experienced teachers enjoyed teaching. Experienced teachers attributed their reasons for staying in the job to personal significance and spiritual aspects. They stated that they enjoyed shaping the characteristics of children and felt destined to hold the position. In addition, teachers who left the profession explained their reasons as follows: overwhelming workload, stress, and insufficient time to allocate to children. According to the research, both novice and experienced teachers consider managerial support and childcare to be of great importance for staying in the profession.

Bivona (2002) states in his research that teachers with at least ten years of teaching experience are more optimistic about teaching. It is also said that experienced teachers have specialized in education, while only some novice teachers have done so, considering specialization as a waste of time. Furthermore, it was found that teacher training and experience reduce teacher stress levels and allow them to feel adequate.

4. Methodology

4.1. Objectives

The established and continuously pursued research objectives were:

O1. To investigate and identify the differences between teachers working in private schools and teachers working in public schools in Romania regarding job satisfaction and occupational stress.

O2. To identify the correlations between job satisfaction, occupational stress, and personal autonomy.

4.2. Hypotheses

A synthesis of the collected information led to the following hypotheses for the current study:

1. It is presumed that there are significant differences between teachers working in private schools and teachers working in public schools in Romania regarding job satisfaction.

2. It is presumed that there are significant differences between teachers working in private schools and teachers working in public schools in Romania regarding the level of occupational stress.

3. It is presumed that there is a negative correlation between job satisfaction and personal autonomy in the studied population.

4. It is presumed that there is a negative correlation between occupational stress and personal autonomy in the studied population.

4.3. Research Instruments

For the purpose of this study, the following instruments were used:

Teacher Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (TJSQ) - This instrument, consisting of 66 items, was developed by Lester (1982) to measure job satisfaction among teachers.

Personal Autonomy Questionnaire - The Autonomy Questionnaire (AP) is a tool composed of 36 items used to measure four dimensions of personal autonomy: cognitive autonomy (9 items), behavioral autonomy (11 items), emotional autonomy (8 items), and value-based autonomy (8 items). It can be utilized for personality assessment in educational, clinical, and health psychology contexts.

Occupational Stress Questionnaire for Teachers - The 20 items in this questionnaire were obtained based on Shirom, Oliver, and Stein's (2009) descriptions of the main sources of stress in teaching.

4.4. Study Participants

This study was conducted in secondary schools in Constanța County, with a sample of 40 teachers (N = 40) aged between 28 and 56 years.

From the beginning, it was aimed to create two samples based on the criteria of the type of institution where the teachers work (public or private schools) for statistical analysis.

The questionnaires were administered collectively within a week at various educational institutions.

5. Data analysis and processing

Hypothesis 1

It is presumed that there are significant differences between teachers working in private schools and teachers working in public schools in Romania, regarding job satisfaction.

Table 1. Independent Samples T-Test for Hypothesis 1

		Levenes Test for Equality of Variances		I-test for Equality of means						
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Professional satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	18.203	,000	-8.463	38	.000	-110.850	13.098	-137.365	-84.335
	Equal variances not assumed			-8.463	21.326	.000	-110.850	13.098	-138.063	-83.637

Analyzing the results of the Levene's Test (Table 1) which indicates the homogeneity of variances. $F=18.2$ at a significance level of $p=0.000$. Since p is statistically significant, it confirms the hypothesis.

Therefore, the responses from the statistical analyses indicate that teachers in public schools achieved lower scores in terms of job satisfaction compared to their counterparts working in private institutions.

The nature of a teacher's work is a key ingredient in predicting both teacher and student outcomes, as research shows that schools with more positive working conditions have better academic outcomes for their students.

The factors that may be causing these differences include independence, skill utilization, working conditions, recognition, authority, job security, salaries, and the employer-employee relationship.

A study conducted by Mic, Christopher; Buckman, David G., (2021) on a sample of 150 teachers from both public and private schools was conveniently selected for the study. Data analysis was carried out using the "t-test" and "ANOVA," which revealed significant differences in the job satisfaction of teachers in public and private schools.

This study focused on the factors contributing to job satisfaction: personal attributes, human capital, occupational characteristics, and school characteristics. Inferential statistics concluded that there was a statistically significant difference in the level of professional satisfaction among teachers in public and private schools. Specifically, teachers in private schools had higher levels of job satisfaction than teachers in public schools

Hypothesis 2

It is presumed that there are significant differences between teachers working in private schools and teachers working in public schools in Romania regarding the level of occupational stress.

Table 2. Independent Samples T-Test for Hypothesis 2

		Levenes Test for Equality of Variances		I-test for Equality of means						
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
occupational stress	Equal variances assumed	.346	.560	-17.902	38	.000	-51.100	2.854	-56.879	-45.321
	Equal variances not assumed			-17.902	37.944	.000	-51.100	2.854	-56.879	-45.321

Analyzing the results of the Levene's Test (Table 2) that demonstrate the homogeneity of variances. $F=0.346$ at a significance level of $p=0.560$. Since p is statistically significant, it confirms the hypothesis.

Therefore, the responses from the statistical analyses indicate that teachers in public schools obtained higher scores in terms of job-related stress compared to their colleagues working in private institutions.

The factors that may be causing these differences are related to student misbehavior, lack of cooperation among colleagues and the school director, interference from politicians and parents, low professional status, low salaries, lack of technology, excessive workload, planning, and hours worked outside of school.

The results of the current study align with findings in the literature.

Jude Brady, et al., 2021, conducted a research study comparing the sources of stress experienced by 20 teachers in the public sector with those of 20 teachers in the private sector. The work is based on qualitative data from a larger study. It analyzes data collected through interviews and focus groups with classroom teachers and middle leaders working in primary and secondary education in England.

The results highlight the acute suffering of teachers in state schools related to work tasks determined by cultures of responsibility. In comparison, teachers in private schools report less intense work-related stress experiences, but some identify demanding parents as a concern.

The novelty of the research lies in this sector-specific comparison, and these sector-specific perspectives can help focus the efforts of school leaders to improve teaching conditions in both sectors.

Hypothesis 3

It is presumed that there is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and personal autonomy in the studied population.

Table 3. Correlation between Job Satisfaction and PA (Personal Autonomy)

			professional satisfaction	autonomy
Spearman's rho	professional satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.678**
		Sig (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	40	40
	autonomy	Correlation Coefficient	.678	1.000
		Sig (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	40	40
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)				

According to Table 3, the significance level is $p < 0.01$ (0.000), and the correlation coefficient is 0.678, indicating that the correlation is significant.

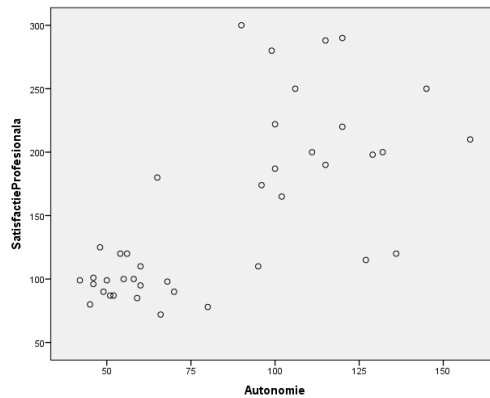


Figure 4.7 Correlation between Job Satisfaction and PA (Personal Autonomy)

The scatterplot is a graphical representation of the correlation between the two variables. The points are oriented to the right, indicating a positive correlation between the two variables. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between Job Satisfaction and autonomy is confirmed.

Research has long established a connection between a teacher's autonomy and job satisfaction. Teacher autonomy in the context of job satisfaction includes achievement, independent choices, having control, and being part of shared decision-making processes. Self-determination theory posits that autonomy is not a standalone concept but is intricately linked with competence and relatedness. Similarly, self-efficacy suggests a relationship between control and a person's perceived ability to achieve their goals and motivation.

In a study, Ann Fradkin-Hayslip (2021) examined teacher autonomy, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy. With 165 teachers, the author administered The Basic Need Satisfaction at Work instrument to assess teacher autonomy.

The results supported the idea that autonomy is related to competence, relatedness, and job satisfaction. The study also suggests that teacher autonomy may be influenced by school leadership and recommends further exploration of teacher autonomy within the public school system

Hypothesis 4

It is presumed that there is a negative correlation between occupational stress and personal autonomy in the studied population.

Table 4. Correlation between Occupational Stress and Personal Autonomy

			occupational stress	autonomy
Spearman's rho	occupational stress	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.932**
		Sig (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	40	40
	autonomy	Correlation Coefficient	-.932**	1.000
		Sig (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	40	40
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)				

The significance level is $p < 0.01$ (0.000), and the correlation coefficient is -0.932, indicating a negative relationship between teacher autonomy and occupational stress (Table 4). High levels of stress in teaching can lead to a continuous deterioration of teachers' mental health and, consequently, lower autonomy.

Teaching is a unique profession as it's the responsibility of teachers to educate and nurture individuals. It is also a profession that comes with high social expectations and family pressures due to its unique nature. With the advancement of many educational reforms, the workload in the teaching profession has become harder to manage, and the pressures on teachers have increased, leading to many mental health issues that affect the work and lives of teachers. Autonomy is associated with mental health. While more attention is given to mental health education in primary and secondary schools, often less attention is paid to the mental health of teachers. High levels of stress in teaching can lead to a continuous deterioration of teachers' mental health, which can have a negative impact on students' health and educational achievements. Reduced teacher autonomy has led to a decrease in personal accomplishment.

The study conducted by Yujue P., et al. (2022) involved 810 Chinese primary and secondary school teachers aged 21 to 57. They completed self-report measures of teacher autonomy, mental health, teaching efficacy, and job satisfaction. The results show that (1) teacher autonomy, teaching efficacy, job satisfaction, and mental health have strong positive relationships, (2) teaching efficacy and job satisfaction significantly mediate the relationship between autonomy and mental health, and (3) both teaching efficacy and job satisfaction play a mediating role in the chain. The mediating chain effect of teaching efficacy and job satisfaction plays an important role in promoting teacher mental health. Teachers with high autonomy tend to have high teaching efficacy, high job satisfaction, and improved mental health.

Conclusions

Job satisfaction of teachers plays a significant role in learning. The 21st-century skills have become the driving force behind changes in educational policies and practices, and schools should provide the knowledge and skills that young people need to succeed. There is a broad consensus that teachers are the primary factor contributing to the acquisition of these knowledge and skills.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between organizational stress and job satisfaction of pre-university teachers. More specifically, considering the increasing importance of private schools in the education system, this study aims to explore the level of professional satisfaction among teachers based on the type of institution they work for: public and private schools in Romania.

In this work, our objectives were to investigate and identify the differences between teachers working in public and private schools in Romania in terms of job satisfaction and the level of occupational stress, and to identify the correlations between job satisfaction, occupational stress, and personal autonomy.

The results of the study confirmed our hypotheses, highlighting significant differences between teachers working in public and private schools in Romania in terms of job satisfaction and the level

of occupational stress. The statistical analyses demonstrate higher levels of professional stress and lower job satisfaction among teachers in public schools.

Furthermore, the study affirms that low levels of job satisfaction predict low levels of personal autonomy in the studied population, and occupational stress also predicts lower levels of autonomy.

General Limitations

A general limitation of this study is that the sample size is not large enough to generalize our findings to the entire population of Romania.

Recommendations and Future Research

The contributions and implications of this study suggest several potential opportunities for future research that would continue to explore the impact of occupational stress on teachers and its implications in various aspects of mental well-being, including job satisfaction and personal autonomy.

Consistent with previous studies, our results confirmed that the effects of occupational stress can be devastating on the job satisfaction of teachers, raising an alarm about the importance of increasing awareness of this construct.

This study recommends:

- Improving working conditions by ensuring the necessary resources and formulating and implementing policies that provide a favorable working environment for teachers in public schools. This can help avoid unnecessary occupational stress and, consequently, increase employee engagement, loyalty, performance, and job satisfaction.
- Providing public school principals with leadership capacity-building courses to enhance their knowledge and leadership skills. This will ultimately reduce the stress experienced by teachers due to the lack of adequate leadership in public schools.
- Addressing workload-related stress by hiring more teachers in public schools.
- Equipping public school teachers with the necessary skills for effective stress management. This will help them understand and use stress coping strategies and increase job satisfaction.

Future research could provide a more nuanced understanding of the discussed issues, and suggestions for future research directions include:

- A comparative study conducted on a larger sample that allows for the generalization of results to the population of Romania.
- A comparative study investigating the relationship between teachers and parents.
- A longitudinal study that includes the implementation of a psychotherapeutic intervention program, allowing for a more detailed analysis of the discussed issue.
- Comparative studies of different sources of stress for teachers in private schools compared to those in boarding schools, for example. Additionally, there is potential for a more granular understanding of how teacher stress affects students' educational experiences.
- Comparative studies of the association between stress, satisfaction, and teachers' school experiences could yield valuable insights for those seeking a better understanding of interactions within the school ecosystem.

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