Factors which determine the level of job satisfaction for kindergarten teachers. Preliminary study.

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Abstract

The present research aims at pointing out the level of job satisfaction for kindergarten teachers (N=124). To this effect, we have attempted at identifying the relation between the job satisfaction level and residentship, teachers’ management position, as well as the following factors: wage and preferment; management and interpersonal relationships; organisation and communication. The results that we have obtained reveal significant differences in relation to residentship in what the kindergarten teachers’ job satisfaction are concerned, as well as significant differences with reference to the management position. The teachers from the rural area have a higher level of job satisfaction than the teachers in the urban area, although, by reference to the intensity rate, we can only speak of medium intensity.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of Romanian Society of Applied Experimental Psychology.

Keywords: professional satisfaction; remuneration; personal involvement; professional development; responsibility

1. Introduction

The psychologists’ research studies have pointed out that the workplace and profession have a great importance for any individual. They grant him/her a social status, but not the guarantee for acquiring professional satisfaction. The studies have pointed out, otherwise, that job satisfaction can be correlated with various variables, some belonging to the external environment, others being strictly individual. Spector (1997) defined job satisfaction as

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“the way people feel about their workplaces and the different aspects thereof. It is the degree to which people like or dislike their workplaces” (p.2). Job satisfaction is a key element, which triggers merit recognition, supplementary income, preferment, and also a sense of fulfilment (Kaliski, 2007). This is valid for teachers, as well. Their job satisfaction influences the quality of the activity, their interaction with the children and, indirectly, the students’ performance (Maslach & Leiter, 1999). Also, Lease (1998) considers that job satisfaction can be interpreted in view of the individual’s affective involvement degree in what his/her role in the organisation is concerned.

The research studies have emphasised different aspects in regard to teachers. It is generally asserted that they are content with their activity, however, they are discontent with their preferment possibilities and the salary. Other studies have pointed out that the educators are, for example, discontent with the work conditions, with the unrealistic demands from their managers, but also with the low social status of the teaching career, and with the conflicts which may occur in the school organisation (Fenech, 2006). A key element of job satisfaction is what Byrne (1994) and Maslach et al. (2001) define as „burnout experience level”. The researchers denominate as burnout the employee’s inability to function effectively in the workplace. It is a syndrome which includes: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decrease in personal accomplishment. Therefore, burnout becomes an effect of the long exposure to workplace stress. Compared to other professions, it seems that the teaching career is particularly stressful. There are studies which indicate that teachers have a high level of emotional exhaustion (Maslach, 1999).

Job satisfaction has a strong affective charge. It is related to the sense of personal welfare, but also to productivity, although the results in this latter respect have proven inconclusive. Thus, whilst Gruneberg (1979) asserted that productivity had a positive influence on job satisfaction, Barbash (1979) considered that the relation between job satisfaction and performance could not be firmly established. The literature in the field also emphasises that job satisfaction can be also related to the manager. Therefore, in a classification of the variables which affect the professional satisfaction, Bruce & Blackburn (1992) ranked the relationship with the managing personnel in the second position. Also, the variety of the tasks and responsibilities is a significant factor which determines the job satisfaction (Sutter, 1994). For a manager, as Calabrese (1991) asserts, the additional responsibilities render his/her activity less effective and more difficult to accomplish.

2. Research design

2.1. Objectives and hypotheses

Starting from the results of the studies in the literature in the field, the objectives of the present research have been:

a) to point out the level of job satisfaction for the pre-school teachers;

b) to establish the relation between the level of job satisfaction and residence, managerial position and the following factors: wage and preferment; management and interpersonal relationships; organisation and communication.

In order to render these objectives operational, we have started from the following hypotheses:

1. There are significant differences determined by residence in what the kindergarten teachers’ job satisfaction is concerned;

2. There are significant differences determined by management position in what the kindergarten teachers’ job satisfaction is concerned;

3. The kindergarten teachers’ job satisfaction is correlated with the following factors: wage and preferment; management and interpersonal relationships; organisation and communication.

2.2. Methodology (subjects, procedure, instruments)

Mention should be made that the research has been empirical and has not aimed at experimental manipulation. Although the research is still in progress, we will present the results obtained from a lot of 124 kindergarten teachers from Galati County, Romania. Considering the residence variable, the subjects lot consists of 66 subjects from the urban area and 58 subjects from the rural area. Considering the management position variable, the subjects lot
consists of 61 subjects who hold a managerial position and 63 subjects who are not engaged in management activities. The average of the subjects’ seniority in education is 15 years.

During the present research, the following variables have been considered:
- **Job satisfaction** – the degree to which the employee is content with his/her work, both in what regards the organisation, and the rewards s/he obtains for this activity and the interpersonal climate in which the activity is carried out;
- **Residentship**;
- **Management position**;
- **Factors**: wage and preferment; management and interpersonal relationships; organisation and communication.

In order to measure the job satisfaction variable, we have applied the standardised questionnaire Job satisfaction, designed by Prof. Dr. Ticu Constantin. The questionnaire consists in 32 items, structured on four factors: wage and preferment, management and interpersonal relationships; organisation and communication; and general satisfaction. The wage and preferment factor groups the items 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 23, 24, 29, 30. The ones who score low in this factor are dissatisfied with regard to the material compensation for their work, but also with their preferment possibilities. The management and interpersonal relationship factor groups the items 8, 10, 16, 21, 24, 26, 31, 32. The subjects who score low in this factor are discontent with the social climate and work relationships. The organisation and communication factor groups the items 1, 2, 9, 10, 17, 18, 21, 22, 27, 28. The subjects who score low in this factor are discontent with the work organisation and performance, with the quality of communication and the assignment of the work tasks. The subjects with high scores in this factor are usually content with their professional activity, considering that it provides them a certain level of comfort, but also the possibility for personal development, merits recognition, and the chance to work in a pleasant environment. The Crombach-alpha coefficient for the entire questionnaire is of 0.872. The results statistical processing has been conducted with the help of the SPSS 13 software. The statistical operations carried out have been: frequency analysis for determining the composition of the subjects lot; the mean calculation for the job satisfaction variable; the independent samples t test for comparing the means obtained for the job satisfaction variable in relation to the residentship variable; the independent samples t test for comparing the means obtained for the job satisfaction variable in relation to the management position variable; the Pearson correlation coefficient for checking the correlation between the job satisfaction variable and the factors wage and preferment, management and interpersonal relationships, organisation and communication.

### 2.3. Data processing and analysis. Results

We must bring again to your attention that our first assumption has assumed the existence of significant differences in relation to residentship in the what the kindergarten teachers’ job satisfaction is concerned. According to the results obtained, we indeed note significant differences in relation to residentship in what the kindergarten teachers’ job satisfaction is concerned [t (122) = -2.985, p < 0.05]. The results are depicted in the table below.

| Variables        | n  | M       | SD    | t      | df   | p    |
|------------------|----|---------|-------|--------|------|------|
| Job satisfaction |    |         |       | -2.985 | 122  | 0.003|
| Urban            | 66 | 4.0099  | 0.34194 |       |      |      |
| Rural            | 58 | 4.2328  | 0.48459 |       |      |      |

Thus, the subjects from the rural area obtain significantly higher scores in job satisfaction (M1 = 4.23), than the subjects from the urban area (M2 = 4.00). If we refer to the intensity rate of the factor, we can assert that the subjects in the rural area have a medium level of job satisfaction, whilst the subjects in the urban area record a lower level of job satisfaction intensity. This results are also illustrated in the chart below.
The results obtained entitle us to consider that the first assumption is valid.

Our second hypothesis has assumed the existence of significant differences in relation to the management position in what the kindergarten teachers’ job satisfaction is concerned. According to the results obtained, we have indeed noted significant differences related to the management position in what the kindergarten teachers’ professional satisfaction is concerned \( t(122) = -5.338, p < 0.05 \). The results are depicted in the table below.

Table 2. Results of the t test for comparing the means of the job satisfaction variable in relation to the management position variable

| Variables            | n  | M      | SD   | t      | df | p       |
|----------------------|----|--------|------|--------|----|---------|
| Job satisfaction     |    |        |      |        |    |         |
| Management position  | yes| 61     | 3.9257| 0.26493|    | 0.000   |
|                      | no | 63     | 4.2966| 0.47592|    |         |

Thus, the subjects with no management responsibilities obtain higher scores in job satisfaction \( (M1 = 4.29) \), than the subjects who hold a management position \( (M2 = 3.92) \). If we refer to the intensity rate of the factor, we can assert that the subjects who are not in a managerial position have a medium level of job satisfaction, whilst the subjects involved in management record a low level of job satisfaction intensity. This results are also illustrated in the chart below.

The results which we have obtained entitle us to consider that our second hypothesis is also valid.
The third assumption of our research has been that the kindergarten teachers’ job satisfaction correlates with the factors wage and preferment, management and interpersonal relationships, organisation and communication. In order to check whether there is a statistically significant correlation between job satisfaction and the aforementioned factors, we have calculated the Pearson r correlation coefficient. The condition of the normality for the variables distribution has been verified with the help of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov z test, the results for the job satisfaction variable being K-S z = 1.631, p > 0.05. As the result is statistically insignificant, it results that the variable is normally distributed. Having the application conditions fulfilled, we have calculated the Pearson r correlation coefficient (table 3).

Table 3. The Pearson correlation coefficients for the job satisfaction variable and the wage and preferment, management and interpersonal relationships and organisation-communication variables

| Variables                              | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    |
|----------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| 1. Job satisfaction                    | -    | 0.801** | 0.588** | 0.756** |
| 2. Wage and preferment                 | -    | -    | 0.275** | 0.312** |
| 3. Management and interpersonal relationships | -    | -    | 0.602** | -    |
| 4. Organisation and communication     | -    | -    | -    | -    |

** p < 0.001

The statistical analysis of the results confirms the existence of a statistically significant positive correlation between the job satisfaction and wage and preferment variables (r = 0.801, p < 0.01) and also between the job satisfaction variable on the one hand, and the management and interpersonal relationships (r = 0.588, p < 0.01) and organisation and communication (r = 0.756, p < 0.01), variables, on the other hand. Therefore, the kindergarten teachers’ job satisfaction is also reflected in their requests for an improvement in the wage and preferment system, by awards and professional merits recognition. Also, the teachers want a non-confictual climate based on genuine communication and strict definition of the tasks.

3. Conclusions

The present research has started from the assumption that the kindergarten teachers’ job satisfaction is determined by a series of variables, such as the subjects’ residentship or management position. The results which we have obtained have proven that the hypotheses are generally confirmed. Thus, the analysis of the influence which the residentship has over the kindergarten teachers’ job satisfaction has revealed that the teachers from the rural area have a higher level of job satisfaction than the teachers in the urban area, although, by reference to the intensity rate, we can only speak of medium intensity. The results that we have obtained can be also explained in terms of the expectations the people in the rural area have towards the kindergarten teachers. We are talking about the importance granted to school, which is less pronounced in the rural area, which results in less stress and fewer responsibilities for these teachers. Nevertheless, the results should be treated with caution, as the subjects lot is not statistically representative.

In what the management position variable is concerned, the results we have obtained seem to confirm Sutter’s (1994) and Calabrese’s (1991) studies. Thus, the teachers who have managerial responsibilities record a lower level of job satisfaction, although these responsibilities presuppose higher incomes. Nevertheless, the stress produced by the additional professional responsibilities seems to affect the general satisfaction level. Also, the results obtained point put that the kindergarten teachers’ job satisfaction level depends on the income, on the climate they carry out their activities in, on the relation with the management, on the preferment possibilities which the workplace offers them. The results which we have obtained confirm the studies carried out by Kaliski (2007) and Spector (1997). Though partial, these results can be a wake-up call for the decisional factors in the education field, but also for those involved in the management of the pre-school institutions.
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