

PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION, OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND EMOTIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL EXHAUSTION SYNDROME OF TEACHERS IN PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract: *The teaching profession is considered one of the most demanding and exhausting profession. Freud calls it an almost impossible job, along with being a parent and a psychoanalyst. The objective of this research is to identify and analyze the relationship between professional stress, burnout, professional satisfaction and individual aspects of preschool teachers and primary teachers. The research was carried out on a lot of 62 preschool and primary school teachers. 4 questionnaires were used: Maslach Burn-Out Inventory, Professional Stress Scale -adapted Mental Health Professionals Stress Scale, MINICRI-Teacher's Assessment of Professional Satisfaction Assessment, Catell Anxiety Questionnaire.*

After processing the data, it was found that preschool teachers and primary teachers are living similar levels of professional satisfaction and stress. From the perspective of Burnout Syndrome manifestations, we did not notice significant differences between the two professions. Early teachers are more vulnerable to fatigue and psycho-emotional exhaustion than experienced teachers.

Keywords: *Professional stress; burnout; professional satisfaction; preschool and primary education; teaching experience;*

1. Introduction

At an international level, the teaching profession is considered one of the most demanding, exhausting but also crucial to other people becoming. Freud calls it an almost impossible job, along with a parent and a psychoanalyst. Preschool teachers and primary teachers are the first people who enter a child's life when it comes out of the parent's nest. Through scientific and didactic competences, teachers in pre-school and primary education continue the construction that was begun within the family. The philosopher Kant believes that education alone can turn us into people. "Man cannot become a man but through education" (Kant, apud Cuceș, 2005). Thus, the author says that we are not born human beings, but becoming human beings, and this human needs to grow and develop by the presence, by accompanying one participative and attentive to the individual's experiences and needs, and this development becomes a premise in Education.

Professional satisfaction affects the general state of a person, people spending a significant part of their life in the workplace. They may be satisfied or dissatisfied with their professional activities. There are many factors that can influence the state of well-being that comes from the professional area. There are factors that relate to each individual's individuality, his personality traits, motivating factors and factors related to the organizational climate. Through correlative research, we want to identify the relationship between psycho-emotional exhaustion syndrome, professional stress and the level of professional satisfaction. In order to help the educational institution, the manager can observe, analyze, and propose measures to increase the level of professional satisfaction of the teaching staff in the

educational institution that coordinates. Thus, creating a harmonious educational environment, favorable to the learning of children, we can speak of an increase in the quality of the educational act.

2. Theoretical framework

As Massari says (2016), professional satisfaction is given by certain emotional states born from the way a person values his work, it is "a key to fulfilling both professional and personal well-being, in the form of a sense of accomplishment (Massari, 2016, p.313). From the perspective of the teaching profession, the author asserts that in the absence of professional satisfaction, we are talking about the success of the work, in the form of productivity, enthusiasm and happiness in the realization of the actual work, negative consequences ensue on the quality of the teaching act (Massari, 2016, p.316). According to this author, the organization of the factors that can influence the professional satisfaction of the teachers in three reference levels comes to integrate both the factors that are related to the individual characteristics of the teaching staff, as well as the aspects related to the specificity of the school, the management of the profession, but also the dimensions of the system education, educational policies with a major impact on professional satisfaction. The gender and age of teachers, seniority in teaching, and even taught discipline correlate significantly with professional satisfaction and motivation in a study of a batch of high school teachers in the United States (Bishay, 1996, apud, Massari, 2016). Also, from the perspective of the individual characteristics, Păiși Lazarescu (2014) concluded that the extraversions along with the emotional stability are associated with the satisfaction at the work place. Among the dimensions of professional satisfaction in primary and preschool teacher, but on satisfaction slope, there were complaints about pay and promotion, but also disagreements about organizational and communication issues. On the other hand, Bota (2013) reports a high level of job satisfaction for a group of 112 teachers in the Romanian high school education compared to the level of didactic satisfaction of the teachers in the British high school education. The author compared the average obtained on her group of teachers to the average obtained by other authors who have researched the level of professional satisfaction in various professional categories: academics, tax agents, nurses. The results show that the investigated teachers have scored the highest level of professional satisfaction among all these investigated professional categories.

Clipa (2016) considered that the Romanian society has crossed many social, political, economic changes that marked the educational sphere. All this introduced new elements at a rapid pace where adaptation was made on the go; the implementation of norms without tuition to the realities of their own educational, social and cultural system creates among teachers on one side and children and parents on the other great difficulties, becoming thus sources of tension and stress. A permanent assessment, the need for continued development and training, the pressure given by responsibility for education and the development of future adult generations are just some of the possible sources of stress in this profession.

There is consensus that most preschool teachers have the ability to work under stress, and their workloads are accompanied by pressure and constraint, uncertainty, fear and frustration (Clipa and Boghean, 2015). Following a study by the two authors, on a number of 150 preschool teachers, 96% of the subjects considered that preschool didactic activities are extremely stressful, which confirms the idea that this job is among the more stressful jobs. The large number of possible sources of stress that was brought to the attention of preschool teachers was structured into two categories. The first is administrative, the stress being caused by exaggerated requests for documents, the large number of children in a group restricted in

small spaces, additional administrative work or high workload. The second source of stress is the financial one, when the salary and insufficiency or lack of didactic materials enters. On the other hand, the different sources of stress related to either political instability (very frequent changes in the education system), or the education that parents have given to children in their first years of life, the inadequate behavior of both children and of parents towards the teacher are sources of stress related to the specifics of the educational activity. Identified as stress-generating were also the necessity of attending courses or seminars, as well as presenting activities at methodological meetings, committees, or professional qualifications.

It was found according to Cojocaru-Boroza (2010 apud Gorincioi, 2015 p.74) that "the incompatibility between the personal expectations of the chosen profession and the professional reality", relational specificity, "disregarding of its own value, typical problems of self-organization (insufficient autonomy, conflicts of role, inadequate or insufficient feedback, the feeling of personal failure and the disappearance of the true meaning, professional failure ", profound exhaustion and professional exigencies, are just a few of the elements that put pressure on and overwhelm the teacher's situation, called by the author, "emotional burning". In this way, Gorincioi (2015) considers that the age of the teacher is a factor that can influence burnout in the sense that youth associates with greater vulnerability when talking about burnout than with adults in the adult stage of life. Also, in his research, teaching staff with less than 10 years' experience in the department were more affected by emotional burning than those who had gone through this first professional decade. Similarly, the high level of stress favors the occurrence of emotional burning as well as the high level of neuroticism, while job satisfaction can lead to the development of emotional burning in the academic staff (Gorincioi, 2015).

Burnout is a syndrome that affects physical, academic and social performance in the teaching act (Sears et al, 2000, apud Baran et al, 2010), causing aggression, decreased performance, quality and competence is affected, the person is exhausted, which interacts with it, can live the effects of this exhaustion. The decline in teacher performance stems from a drop in the level of interest, concern for students, parents, workplace and causes negative impressions on the people with whom teachers come in contact (Baran et al, 2010). As Baran (2010) points out, it is important to establish those factors that increase the level of burnout. Over time, psychological, occupational, demographic variables have been identified that increase this level. Also, other variables are: age, gender, years in the same activity, educational system, willingness/ willingness to work, degree of appreciation and support by others, professional training, number of students in class, quality of educational institution, state civilian and personal qualities of the teacher.

3. Methodology of research

Our research is quantitative and aims to make a foray into the universe of the two professions. We investigated a group of 62 teachers, preschool and primary education professionals. The research design is a correlative one in which we want to identify and analyze the relationship between psycho-emotional exhaustion syndrome, the professional stress and the level of professional satisfaction of the preschool teachers and primary teachers participating in the research, and certain individual peculiarities.

The objective of the research is to identify and analyze the relationship between psycho-emotional exhaustion syndrome, professional stress, professional satisfaction and subjective peculiarities in preschool and primary education teachers.

Hypotheses:

1. There is an expectation of a relationship between the professional satisfaction of the teachers and:

- 1.1 The level of professional stress,
- 1.2 The level of psycho emotional exhaustion,
- 1.3 The level of their anxiety.

2. It is assumed that there are statistically significant differences between preschool teachers and primary teachers on the field

- 2.1. Professional satisfaction,
- 2.2. Professional stress,
- 2.3. Psycho emotional exhaustion,
- 2.4. Anxiety.

3. It is presumed that there are significant differences from the perspective of the professional satisfaction experienced by primary and preschool staff according to the salary income.

4. Significant differences are expected when it comes to the age of primary and preschool teachers:

- 4.1. Psychoemotional exhaustion (burnout),
- 4.2. Professional stress.

5. It is anticipated that there are significant differences in the level of professional stress according to the experience of the teaching staff in primary and preschool education.

6. It is assumed that there are statistically significant differences according to the didactic degree regarding the level of professional satisfaction for preschool teachers and primary teachers.

Operationalization of variables

Satisfaction is the feeling of accomplishment that the teacher has in his professional activity. It is when the teacher is satisfied by his relationship with children, when the institutional environment is harmonious, when he can perform its activities and tasks.

Professional Satisfaction – in our research it represents the score obtained by the teachers in the questionnaire consisting of 25 items, MINICRI and is the sum of the results obtained in the subscales of this questionnaire:

1. Satisfaction regarding the relationship with children-students
2. Satisfaction regarding the relationship with the family of the children
3. Satisfaction regarding the relationship with the preschool-school environment
4. Satisfaction regarding the work activities and tasks
5. Satisfaction regarding the exercise of the pedagogical profession.

Psychoemotional Exhaustion - is the score obtained by applying the 25-item "burnout" Maslach evaluation questionnaire. It can be felt as an emotional squeeze associated with the physical and mental tiredness of the teachers in their activities.

Professional stress - It is the tension experienced by the teacher because of interpersonal conflicts or disorganized organizational climate. In current research, it is the score obtained in the 42 items that make up the following subscales: Professional demands,

Difficulties in dealing with children, pupils, Organizational problems, Conflict relations with colleagues, Insufficient material and human resources, Professional doubts Conflicts generated by the family climate.

Anxiety - we understand the level of emotional discomfort, the degree of emotional instability of the teacher. It is when the person experiences feelings of insecurity, guilt, strong negative emotions: anxiety, fears. For Catell, the anxiety factor is secondary representing a combination of 5 primary factors:

1. Self-awareness. Social ideal ego,
2. The force self. Emotion,
3. Insecurity. Paranoid tendency,
4. Insecurity in the direction of culpability and
5. Ergic tension (Minulescu, 1996, p.265).

The research lot is one of convenience, consisting of 62 teachers, of which 31 are preschool teacher and 31 are primary teachers, with a large majority of 96% females and only 4% of male gender, who are part of the class of primary teachers. From the perspective of the professional experience at the department, more than 24 subjects had more than 20 years of teaching activity, being the most representative group, 38.7%, followed by the group of those who were in the first year of teaching, a number of 15 subjects, representing 24.2% of the total participants. All teachers were informed of the research objectives and confidentiality of the data. Each research participant has completed 4 questionnaires. Their administration took place within methodical meetings to which they participated.

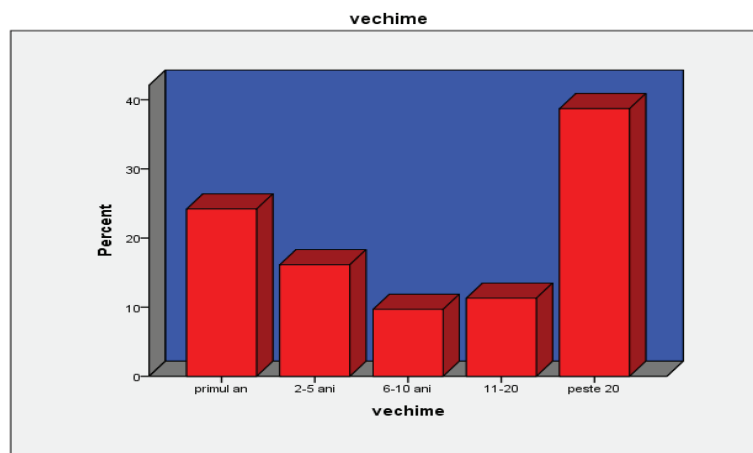


Figure 1. Distribution of the teaching staff according to the length of service.

The instruments used in the research were:

1. Maslach Burn-Out Inventory - Maslach C.Jackson, SE, 1981,
2. PROFESSIONAL STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE - Workplace Voltage Sources (a questionnaire adaptation - MHPSS = Mental Health Professionals Stress Scale, Delia Cushway & Patrick, A. Tyler (1996)
3. MINICRI-Teacher's Professional Satisfaction Questionnaire - a questionnaire designed and built for current research
4. C - CATELL ANXIETY QUESTIONNAIRE

Analyzing the internal consistency of the instruments we used, the Alpha Cronbach coefficients obtained on our research lot took values between .672, for the Anxietate-C Catell questionnaire, .902 for the Professional Stress Questionnaire, .757 for the questionnaire built

by us for the current research to determine the level of Professional Satisfaction and .902 for Maslach Burn-Out Inventory-Maslach. All of these values indicate a good internal consistency, which pleads for their use in our study.

4. Results

H. 1.

To test the first hypothesis, we used the Pearson correlation test, which resulted in the correlations shown in Table 1. We have significant negative correlations between professional satisfaction and professional stress ($r = -0.49$, $p < 0.001$), between professional satisfaction and psychological exhaustion ($r = -0.45$, $p < 0.001$), but also significant positive correlations between occupational stress and psycho emotional exhaustion-Burnout ($r = 0.69$, $p < 0.001$), $p < 0.001$) and respectively between professional stress and anxiety ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$). The determinants coefficients in the table allow us to see how much of the variation of one of the two variables is determined by the variation of the other variable. These coefficients can be interpreted as a percentage, for example, we can say that professional satisfaction and psycho emotional exhaustion share 40% of the variation that characterizes them, and the remaining 60% of their variation comes from other sources.

The obtained results allow us to conclude that this hypothesis is confirmed, which translates into a relationship of negative association between professional satisfaction and professional stress, professional satisfaction and Burnout and professional satisfaction and anxiety, as well as positive association relationships between professional stress, psycho emotional exhaustion-Burnout and anxiety. Thus, while professional stress increases, the level of psycho emotional exhaustion increases, anxiety is high while the level of professional satisfaction decreases significantly.

Table 1. Correlations between Professional Satisfaction, Professional Stress, Psycho emotional Exhaustion-Burnout and Anxiety

Corelation		Satisfaction professional	Stress professional	Exhaustion Psycho-emotional-Burnout	Anxiety
Professional satisfaction	Correlation coefficient		$r = -0.49$	$r = -0.64$	$r = -0.45$
	Pearson Coefficient of determination		$r^2=0.24$	$r^2=0.40$	$r^2=0.20$
	The threshold of significance		$p<0.001$	$p<0.001$	$p<0.001$
Stress professional	Correlation coefficient	$r = -0.49$		$r = 0.69$	$r = 0.48$
	Pearson Coefficient of determination	$r^2=0.24$		$r^2=0.47$	$r^2=0.23$
	The threshold of significance	$p<0.001$		$p<0.001$	$p<0.001$
Exhaustion Psycho-	Correlation coefficient	$r = -0.64$	$r = 0.69$		$r = 0.48$

emotional (Burnout)	Pearson Coefficient of determination	$r^2=0.40$	$r^2=0.47$	$r^2=0.23$
	The threshold of significance	$p<0.001$	$p<0.001$	$p<0.001$
Anxiety	Correlation coefficient	$r = -0.45$	$r = 0.48$	$r = 0.48$
	Pearson Coefficient of determination	$r^2=0.20$	$r^2=0.23$	$r^2=0.23$
	The threshold of significance	$p<0.001$	$p<0.001$	$p<0.001$

H. 2.

In order to verify the second hypothesis regarding the differences from the perspective of the professional category in our research – preschool teacher or primary teachers - on the level of professional satisfaction, professional stress, anxiety and psycho emotional exhaustion - Burnout, we used the statistical **t** test for independent samples. In all four dimensions, the results obtained are statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$), so hypothesis 2 of the research is not confirmed.

However, we have identified significant differences in two subscales of the anxiety variable, namely Ego Force and ergic tension. The data in table no. 2 gives us both the value of the **t** test and the value of the significance threshold, $p < .05$. Looking at the environments, we noticed that the group of preschool teachers obtained a significantly lower average for the Ego Force ($m = 3.68$) compared to the average obtained by the group of primary teachers ($m = 4.77$). As far as the ergic tension is concerned, we show a higher average of the group of preschool teachers ($m = 8.94$) compared to the average of the primary teachers ($m = 6.84$).

This hypothesis does not confirm the differences between preschool teacher and primary teachers for the total level of anxiety, but significant differences appear on the two subscales mentioned above.

Table 2. Differences between preschool teacher and primary teachers

Variable	Categories compared	Number	Average	Standard deviation	The difference Average	Test <i>t</i>	Meaning
Force ego	Preschool teacher	31	3.68	2.02	-1.09	-2.15	$p < 0.05$
	Primary teacher	31	4.77	1.97			
Tension	Preschool teacher	31	8.94	4,50	2.09	2.04	$p < 0.05$
	Primary teacher	31	6.84	3.49			

H. 3, H. 4, H. 5, H. 6

The last 4 hypotheses of the research were checked using the same significance test of the differences between the averages, and the obtained results are presented in Table 3. We

observe a significance threshold $p < 0.5$ for each of the compared categories, which confirms the hypotheses formulated. Thus, the t test is statistically significant for the average differences in the level of satisfaction of the pupils according to their financial income, which means that those with an income higher than 2000 lei show a statistically elevated level than their colleagues which have revenues between 1600-2000 lei.

Also, from an age perspective, the t test reveals a significant difference between younger teacher, aged between 20-30 and the older teachers aged 41-50 years old, in the way they rated for the variable professional stress and exhaustion Psycho emotional. Similarly, people in the first year of teaching are significantly more burdened on the level of professional stress than their colleagues with more than 20 years of experience at the department. A significant difference on one of the subscales of the professional satisfaction variable, namely the Professional Satisfaction in the relationship with the school-educational environment, we identified it in the teaching staff who have the didactic grade I faculty towards their debut colleagues in the pedagogical profession.

Tabel 3. Differences between environments – salary, age, length of work.

Variable	Categories compared	Nr	Mean M	Standard Deviation SD	The mean difference	Test t	Meaning
Professional satisfaction	1600-2000 lei	18	88,84	8,523	-8,017	-3,04	$p < 0.05$
	Peste 2000 lei	26	96,96	8,632			
Professional stress	20-30 years	21	24,76	13,43	8,82	2,54	$p < 0.05$
	41-50 years	15	15,93	7,196			
Burnout	20-30 years	21	50,29	15,40	9,95	2,325	$p < 0.05$
	41-50 years	15	40,33	10,26			
Professional stress	First year of work	15	27,27	14,572	7,892	2,144	$p < 0.05$
	Over 20 years of work	24	19,38	8,479			
Professional satisfaction related to educational environment	Debutants	16	18,94	3,235	-2,108	-2,29	$p < 0.05$
	Grade I	22	21,05	2,439			

5. Discussions and conclusions

Let's understand the connection! At the heart of these links is the teacher in his / her relationships with his / her children, colleagues, school, educational environment, education system.

In our research we have focused our attention on identifying and analyzing the existing relationships between Professional Satisfaction, Level of Professional Stress, and the degree of psychoemotional exhaustion-Burnout. We also introduced the Anxiety Factor as a component of the personality structure of the teaching staff and we intended to identify

possible associations between the emotional stability of the teaching staff and the other areas of our research.

The links between the variables of the research are in line with the existing theories regarding the Professional Satisfaction of the Teacher (Massari, 2016)) and about the stress in the teaching activity (Clipa, 2016). According to our results, the professional satisfaction of the teachers is closely related to the tension they experience in the form of professional stress and which in turn is associated with the psycho emotional exhaustion-Burnout, but also with the Emotional Stability, versus the Anxiety level. When professional stress sources tend to become more harmless to preschool and primary school professionals, they will be able to avoid emotional shedding, loss of meaning, endless fatigue, lack of energy, etc. There is a consensus that Professional Satisfaction, Professional Stress and Personal Development Levels must be monitored to prevent the exhaustion that comes from this profession, which can sometimes be experienced as exhausting. (Massari, 2016)

Following statistical analyzes on the two groups of teachers who participated in our research, we found that preschool teacher and primary teachers are living similar levels of professional satisfaction in their didactic work, a perspective that makes us argue that both professions are generating similar degrees professional satisfaction. Even though the age of the children participating in the educational act is different, there are great differences in the institutional and professional organization of the two professions, yet we cannot talk about a higher degree of professional satisfaction for either of the two categories professional. We found the same thing for the verse of Professional Stress and Burnout-Psychological Exhaustion. The two professions scored similar levels for both criteria proposed in the study. Thus, the tensions generated by professional situations are similarly felt, but there is no discrepancy for those working with preschool children compared to those working with primary school children.

We found a statistically significant difference between preschool teacher and primary teachers on the Anxiety Scale, in the sense that primary teachers ranked more on the Self-Emotion Strength subscale while the ergic tension subscale proved to be more loaded in the group of preschool teachers, about which we may say that they experience several states of hyper-emotive, irritability and nervousness, having a greater need for consideration than their primary college. How can we make sense of the difference? Can we say that the specificity of children in the educational activities of teachers in preschool education, the somewhat legacy framework, the flexibility related to the establishment of limits, the rules when it comes to the child in kindergarten often put in difficulty this professional category? The fact that from the perspective of tensions and exhaustion, however, there are no differences between preschool teacher and primary teachers, the identification of differences in subscale of anxiety comes as a way in which these professionals manage to integrate each, the professional peculiarities with resonances in the plan of emotional experiences.

The analysis of the statistical data across the entire group of teachers led us to the conclusion that the younger teachers, who are at the beginning of their teaching career, are more vulnerable to fatigue and psychoemotional exhaustion than their experienced colleagues at the didactic chair. Also, preschool teachers and primary teachers with seniority and didactic experience feel less busy and tense professionally than their younger colleagues. The onset in the teaching profession involves entering what constitutes professional reality. Those who choose this profession will encounter the various difficulties and conflicts that can keep both personal characteristics and those of their fellow guilds, the children they will accompany in learning, the parents of these children, the meeting with the tutoring of the educational system, methodological norms, organizational hierarchies and many more. In addition to the basic assimilated theoretical training, some professional and life experience, the mentor's support, which can guide and contain the teacher's insecurities, can be divided from the

richness of his own didactic experience to meeting the daily challenges. It also needs strong motivation and a strong belief in the educational act, the enthusiasm and the joy of giving the child learning and growth experiences for himself and for the world.

Professional satisfaction correlates with the financial income of those working in preschool and primary education. Similarly, Massari (p.329, 2016) also writes about the issues of wage inefficiency and organizational deficiencies both from a managerial perspective and from a climate perspective, all of which have significant repercussions on the extent of professional efficiency, performance and professional satisfaction. One of the threats to these effects is related to the fact that the teaching staff chooses to leave the education system. This also corroborates the results obtained by testing the hypothesis 6, according to which we note that the debutants show a lower level of professional satisfaction when it comes to their relationship with the preschool or school environment towards their colleagues with didactic degree I. We can ask ourselves how we can help new educators get into this profession? The need for a harmonious climate on the part of their colleagues to support them in this process of initiation, the appropriate resolution of the conflicts that have arisen in this process, and the availability of the working group seem to be just some of the milestones that are being considered by the debutants.

6. Usefulness of the study and future research directions

One of the benefits of this study is to be able to observe, analyze and work together, Professional Satisfaction, Professional Stress and Psycho emotional Exhaustion-Burnout within these two professional categories, preschool teacher and primary teachers, both at the conceptual level and above all the existing dynamics between these 2 phenomena. We consider it important to understand these dynamics and existing relationships in order to be able to support the didactic framework but especially to directly support the act of learning for children. Measures are needed to maintain a high level of professional satisfaction among teachers, which could diminish their professional stress with an effect on their emotional state and availability. Thus, creating a harmonious educational environment suitable for the learning of children, we can finally talk about an increase in the quality of the educational act.

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