

THE DIMENSIONS OF JOB SATISFACTION OF THE TEACHERS IN PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The post-pandemic era brings again to the attention of specialists in human resources the job satisfaction and the professional values of the employees, representing a pressing problem that requires special attention from both psychological and social considerations. Starting from this idea, the study aims the analysis of the degree of professional satisfaction of pre-university teachers and the ranking of the determining factors of job satisfaction. Following this experimental approach, the predominance of a medium to high level of job satisfaction was confirmed, and the dimensions most frequently associated with job satisfaction are relationships with colleagues and superiors, the nature of work and communication.

KEYWORDS: *job satisfaction, work benefits, personal factors, organizational factors.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In its long history, the man had a contradictory attitude towards work, on the one hand accepting it as a "necessary evil", and on the other hand, a humanizing attitude. Work is viewed by man as a means of obtaining what is necessary, as well as an occasion for satisfaction. Thus, a large part of our life is dedicated to work, therefore, job satisfaction becomes an important aspect within the professional activity, generating important results, both personally and on the organization in which it takes place (Cojocaru, 2013).

The satisfaction of the employees regarding the work they do and the workplace in general, reveals important hints regarding the profitability and the "health" of an organization. Measuring the weaknesses and strengths of the organization, as perceived by those who constitute its human resource, provides extremely useful information regarding the improvement directions that the unit should follow, especially since it is obvious the link between satisfaction at work and the dysfunctional behaviour of the employees with an effect on professional efficiency.

Following the idea mentioned above, we started this research considering important the knowledge, but also the ranking of the factors determining job satisfaction for employees in post-pandemic conditions, this being a challenge for the labor market today. This study could be a support for educational organizations, providing an overview of teachers' vision on job satisfaction and the expectations they have after crossing the crisis moments we faced. Considering the research problem presented into the introduction, we formulated the following research questions:

1. What level of job satisfaction do pre-university teachers show in the post-pandemic period? Can differences be appreciated in relation to the age?

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2. What are the most common dimensions associated with the job satisfaction of pre-university teachers?

Job satisfaction is a major contributor to quality of life and well-being in general. The determination of the motivational factors, as well as those of job satisfaction, leads to the establishment of strategies to increase the job satisfaction of teaching staff, respectively - to the decrease of dissatisfaction with work. The satisfaction and motivation in the work of the teaching staff is an essential concern of the institutions that want an increased performance for them to achieve the tasks proposed by the institution (Bogathy, 2004). *Starting from these concepts*, the research objectives of our study, formulated in order to answer the research questions are the analysis of the degree of professional satisfaction of pre-university teachers after these moments of change and uncertainty and the ranking of the determining factors of job satisfaction.

We decided to use the quantitative questionnaire-type approach as a research method because we want not only to know the reasons underlying the formation of job satisfaction of pre-university teachers, in the current economic context, but also a ranking of the determining factors that condition the satisfaction in work.

2. CONCEPT AND ARGUMENT

Job satisfaction is considered to be one of the most important motivating factors in accordance with the workplace, since a person whose professional activity brings him satisfaction is motivated to repeat the appropriate attitude that led to it.

Job satisfaction is perceived as an attitude that workers have regarding their work (Johns, 1998, p.128), a positive emotional state that derives from an employee's personal opinion on his work or the work climate (Constantin, 2004, p.185) or the reaction that an employee has towards his job (Locke & Latham, 1990). We can consider a company's employees satisfied when, first of all, they know what they have to do at work, they are praised for their achievements, their opinions are taken into account, when the organization's goals or mission make them feel that their work is important, that they manage to learn and develop at work and that their progress is recognized.

A series of authors highlighted different dimensions that contribute to the achievement of job satisfaction. Thus, Richard and Oldham look at satisfaction only from the perspective of the work content and propose five essential dimensions of a job that can influence the attitude towards work and the behaviour within work (Richard & Oldham, cited by Hoira, 1993).

These dimensions are: the content of the task to be carried out; the diversity of requirements required to perform the work task; the meaning of the task for the well-being and the life of the employees; work feedback, the volume of information received by the employees in relation to the quality of their performance; autonomy – the level of independence that an employee has in organizing and planning work.

The concept of job satisfaction is regarded by several authors as a multidimensional construct, which includes affective relationships of the employees towards a multitude of workplace elements. These elements of the job can be both of extrinsic and intrinsic nature, job satisfaction depending on the personal characteristics of the individual, of the characteristics of the job and of the context in which the work is carried out. Locke (1976) brings a completion by proposing factors such as: working conditions, recognition, organizational policy, relating salary, promotion and recognition to the extrinsic factors of job satisfaction, and the colleagues, supervision, work itself are considered intrinsic factors.

Other authors such as Herzberg (1959), claims that dissatisfaction factors are different from satisfaction factors, noting that the former refer more to the extrinsic factors, the true source of satisfaction being due to intrinsic factors. The author names satisfying factors as motivators, dissatisfaction being a hygiene factor. Hygiene factors (supervision quality, status, salary, working conditions, interpersonal relations and company policies) ensure that an employee does not become

dissatisfied. These factors do not improve satisfaction, but their absence generates dissatisfaction. The motivational factors (recognition, achievement, interest in the job, responsibility for the task, growth, advancement to higher level tasks) are necessary to motivate an employee to achieve high performance. This theory emphasizes the fact that managers must ensure an adequate level of hygiene factors to avoid employee dissatisfaction. At the same time, management must ensure that work is rewarding and stimulating so that the employees are motivated to perform.

Drummond and Stoddart (1991) segmented the concept of job satisfaction into two categories: specific satisfaction and general satisfaction. Specific satisfaction is related to different aspects of the service, such as salary, working conditions, relations between employees and superiors, organizational policies. General satisfaction refers to the personal feeling that the employee has about his workplace (Bogathy, 2004).

Porter and Steers (apud Zlate, 2007) rearranged the sources of job satisfaction into four other categories:

- 1) broad organizational factors – which contain the organization's policies and procedures, promotion opportunities, organization structure;
- 2) factors related to the immediate work environment – which refer to the relationships with colleagues, the size of the group of individuals, the style of supervision, participation in decision-making, working conditions;
- 3) factors related to the activities carried out at the workplace or the content of the work (clarity of the role, their range of action);
- 4) personal factors – characteristics that can differentiate one person from another (age, personality, seniority).

Job satisfaction represents a very important aspect of the professional activity, since, viewed as a whole, it manifests influence on the activity of the entire organization, considering necessary the direct and satisfactory relationship between the management and the employee, a fact that would accentuate the possibility of experiencing a high level of satisfaction in the work of the employees who feel supported by the management. Thus, job satisfaction can be variable depending on the quality of the working conditions; At the same time, this can be an independent variable that would determine consequences, such as: staff turnover, absenteeism or work performance (Avram & Cooper, 2008).

In the literature there are many studies that investigate the satisfaction and motivation in the work of teaching staff. Toropova, Myrberg and Johansson (2021) carried out a study that aimed to determine the factors of teacher satisfaction. According to the results of the mentioned study, we can observe that teachers with more experience of professional development tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction. On the other hand, the author affirmed that some of the previous studies related to this subject (Johnson, Kraft & Papay, 2012) emphasized that the effects of principal's leadership, collegial support, school culture of trust and respect were more important than material resources .

In the following we will present the methodology, the analysis of the results, the conclusions and limitations of our study as well as some recommendations based on the processed data.

3. METHODOLOGY

The method used for the data collection is the survey method, through the questionnaire, applied among the teaching staff belonging to a unit with a technological profile. The sample of the study consists of 70 teachers, selected with the simple random sampling method. We chose this method because it is one of the most frequently used form of sampling in socio-economic surveys.

Measuring instruments: the questionnaire used in this research is adapted from the measuring tool "Satisfaction in work", developed by Constantin (2004). This contains a series of items that have a reverse meaning, thus the analysis was made taking this aspect into account.

The questionnaire includes 30 items that highlight three factors:

1. Remuneration and promotion – the employee's dissatisfaction (low scores) or his satisfaction (high scores) regarding the rewards for the work he performs (financial rewards, salary, recognition or promotion opportunities).
2. Organization and communication – the employee's dissatisfaction (low scores) or his satisfaction (high scores) regarding the way work is organized and carried out: effort, definition of tasks, communication, feedback.
3. Management and interpersonal relations – the employee's dissatisfaction (low scores) or his satisfaction (high scores) regarding both the social climate and relations with colleagues or the boss, as well as that of the drawn or uncomfortable atmosphere.

The answers to the items are obtained on a 5-point Likert scale, where the value 1 denotes the answer strongly disagree, and the step 5 denotes the answer strongly agree. Regarding the degree of general satisfaction, which refers to the extent to which the employee is satisfied/overall satisfied with the work he performs, the people questioned had to rate it with a grade from 1 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied).

The experimental group: as we as we mentioned above, a group composed of 70 teaching staff from a technological college in the urban area, with different teaching degrees, of whom 9 were men and 61 were women, participated in the research. Regarding the particularities of age, 6 people belong to the 18-26 age range, 18 people belong to the 27-41 age group; 30 belong to the 42-56 age group; the rest of the sample, 16 people, are teachers aged between 57-75 years.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND PROCESSING

In the following we present the results of the questionnaire for each dimension.

At the general level, the way of *remuneration and promotion* is perceived by the teaching staff as unsatisfactory. In table 1 it can be seen that the highest score was obtained by the item "Salary increases are rare" with a result of 3.95 which reflects agreement, and the lowest score 2.26 (disagreement) is obtained by the item "I am paid correctly". Thus, the results show that most teachers are dissatisfied with the current level of the salaries, the rewards and the promotion possibilities.

Table 1. The results regarding the dimension remuneration and promotion

	<i>Items</i>	<i>Medium score</i>	<i>Hierarchy of variables</i>
1	I am paid correctly	2,26	IX
2	Salary increases are rare	3,95	I
3	I am satisfied of the actual promotion possibilities	3,47	III
4	The benefits we receive are as attractive as those offered by other institutions	2,69	VII
5	I am not satisfied with the salary I get	2,99	V
6	I consider that the work carried out is not appreciated	2,75	VI
7	There are few rewards for those who work in this field	3,50	II
8	The package of benefits that the institution offers is attractive	3,02	IV
9	I am satisfied of the perspectives of salary increase	2,53	VIII
10	The employees in education are rewarded to a small extent	3,47	III

Source: elaborated by the author

The teachers, seen as the key characters of the educational system, find themselves in the situation of constantly adapting to the new realities, generated by the crises that humanity is going through, thus calling on new ways of self-development for their professional achievement and for connecting to the changing needs of students. The training and development of the teaching staff is a structural pillar in increasing the degree of professional satisfaction of the teachers.

The results of the *organization and communication* section confirm a dissatisfaction of the teaching staff with regard to the way work is organized and carried out: cumbersome procedures, lack of appreciation of the effort made by the employees, unequal distribution of the workload. However, the people surveyed consider the work satisfactory as a whole and show pride in the activity carried out (table 2).

Table 2. The results regarding the organisation and communication section

	<i>Items</i>	<i>Medium score</i>	<i>Hierarchy of variables</i>
1	I like the things I do at work	3,95	III
2	Communication seems good inside the organization	3,47	IV
3	The rules and procedures make my work difficult	2,16	VIII
4	The aims of this institution are not clear to me	3,30	V
5	The workload is too high	2,65	VII
6	I feel proud of the work I do	4,06	II
7	I consider that my work is satisfying	4,10	I
8	I consider that the distribution of the tasks is not fair.	2,69	VI

Regarding the *leadership and interpersonal relations* section, the highest score was obtained by the item "I have a very good relationship with colleagues" a result of 3.97 which reflects agreement, and the lowest score 1.79 (disagreement) is obtained by the item "Sometimes I feel that I don't know anything about this institution" (table 2). Summarizing, we can affirm that the teaching staff participating in the study are satisfied with the relations they have with the staff of the educational unit, the average score of the answers being 3.97 and they also support the competence of the hierarchical superior. This is a positive aspect for the managers of the school unit, because it validates the current relationship policies and do not impose amelioration measures.

Table 3. The results regarding the leadership and interpersonal relations section

	<i>Items</i>	<i>Medium score</i>	<i>Hierarchy of variables</i>
1	I consider that my superior is very competent in the work he carries out	3,76	IV
2	I like the people I work with	3,97	II
3	I like my hierarchical superior	3,81	III
4	Sometimes I feel my work is pointless	2,30	V
5	Sometimes I feel that I have to work longer and harder due to the incompetence of my colleagues	2,04	VII
6	Sometimes I feel that I do not know anything about this institution.	1,79	X
7	The superiors make no effort to understand their subordinates	2,14	VI
8	I have a very good relationship with colleagues	3,97	I
9	My boss is unfair to me.	1,78	IX
10	There are often conflicts at work.	1,89	VIII

All in all, the relationships between employees, communication between colleagues, as well as their relationship with the manager of the school unit, his management style are perceived as positive, non-conflictual to the greatest extent. In general, teachers are satisfied with the management of the institution where they work and with their relationships with their colleagues.

The responses received from the research participants to the question regarding general satisfaction with the workplace reveal a high level of satisfaction with the activity carried out, most of the respondents, 22.2%, giving a score of 8, followed by a score of 9 with 20.9% of answers. The assessment with the maximum value was given by only 13.2% of the respondents. This indicator provides information related to the way in which organization and communication is perceived, that of the rewards received for the activity performed (moral or material rewards) and of the interpersonal climate in which they carry out their activity.

In concluding our research, we consider it appropriate to understand the degree of satisfaction of the respondents according to the age criterion. Thus, analysing the Pearson and Sig coefficients, (0.897, $p < 0.01$) we can observe a positive relationship between them.

Table 4. The correlation between general satisfaction and the age of the respondents

<i>Items</i>		<i>Age</i>
The degree of general satisfaction regarding the work place	Pearson	,897**
	Sig.	,000
	N	70

It can be seen (figure 1) that the majority of respondents, 75% over the age of 57, gave the highest score in terms of overall job satisfaction. At the opposite pole, 67% of the young teachers, under the age of 27, rated the current level of satisfaction with a grade of 2. At the same time, the graph reflects an increasing trend of job satisfaction once with the increasing age. This supposes the fact that although the motivation of the teaching staff is mainly of an intrinsic nature, and depends on the content of the work itself, it is nevertheless influenced in a significant way by external factors, related to the increase in seniority and didactic degrees.

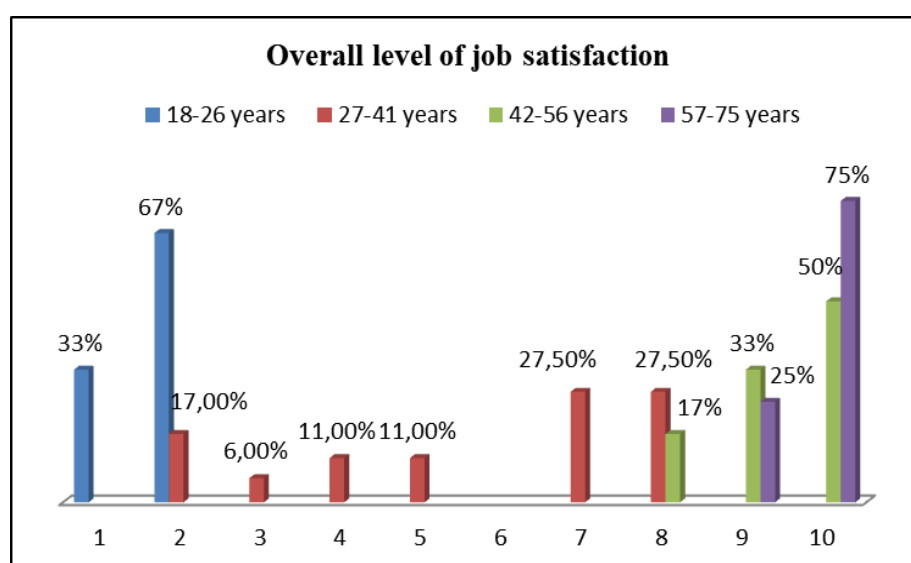


Figure 1. General satisfaction towards the workplace and the age of respondents

Source: elaborated by the author

5. CONCLUSIONS

Following the application of the research methods, a preponderance of medium and high levels of job satisfaction was attested: 29,2% of teachers have a medium level of job satisfaction and 44,1% a high level of job satisfaction. These results regarding the level of job satisfaction were not surprising, starting from the hypotheses identified in other studies related to the job satisfaction of teaching staff. The analysis of job satisfaction in relation to its dimensions allowed us to identify the psychological sources of gratitude at work. Thus, we identified a high level of job satisfaction in relation to the dimensions of the relationship with colleagues, the nature of work and supervision. The dimensions of work less associated with job satisfaction were benefits, pay and rewards.

These data can be useful to managers of pre-university educational units whose objective is to maintain the organizational health and the well-being in the institution they lead. Based on the conclusions of this research, we formulate the following recommendations in order to improve the degree of satisfaction of teachers in pre-university education:

- Ensuring the fairness of the rewards offered, improving decision-making transparency and organizational communication, re-evaluating the rewards system, both financial and non-financial, and taking over the good motivational practices of high-performing educational units.
- Supporting teachers in order to be motivated to reflect on the progress of their work, on the performance of students with the aim of encouraging professional development by expanding the knowledge and skills they possess.
- Supporting teaching staff involved in development activities, through material stimulation for didactic innovations within educational units.
- Encouraging and supporting the personal development of teachers through various methods: training courses, training/development programs, methodical elaborations, demonstration lessons, participation in innovative projects, psychological and pedagogical research, etc.

This research study has several limitations, including the application at the level of a single school unit and no qualitative research methods were used, such as interviews, observations or notes submitted for data collection. That is why we consider that it would be interesting to study the responses of a larger sample that is formed by the members of several school units in Dambovita county, a study that can be accompanied by a qualitative focus group research that we intended to carry out in one of our future researches.

The results of the study allow the development of certain assumptions regarding the specifics of the job satisfaction of pre-university teaching staff. We allow ourselves to state the assumption that, by virtue of the need to achieve the vocational-professional dimension, most of the teachers show the tendency to identify sources of professional satisfaction despite some precarious social-economic conditions. Seen from this point of view, the results of the study validate an optimistic perspective on the psychological potential of the employees in education, a very important reality for the didactic field, where the main stake is capitalizing on the human potential of the community and educating the younger generation.

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