

TEACHER'S SATISFACTION WITH HEALTH

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Abstract: *The report deals with the construct of life satisfaction with emphasis on satisfaction with health and relation of life satisfaction to selected demographic factors (marital status, sex, age). The sample consisted of 386 respondents- teachers, medical staff and employees of banks. We used Fahrenberg's questionnaire of life satisfaction.*

Key words: *life satisfaction, satisfaction with health, teachers, medical staff, employees of banks*

The definition and characteristics of life satisfaction

Satisfaction with life is one of the fundamental goals people try to achieve. In general, the word satisfaction means a subjective evaluation standard of various phenomena, states, activities and objects, including one's self, experienced as a pleasant feeling of joy, success or satisfaction with previous work or activity (Strmeň, Raiskup, 1998).

R. Veenhoven (1996) considers satisfaction to be "a state of mind. It is an evaluating assessment of something." There are two aspects included in this concept: satisfaction and pleasure, where both cognitive and affective assessment are involved.

Life satisfaction means appreciation of life, which is subjective and includes various aspects of one's life. J. Fahrenberg et al. (2000) describe it as individual evaluation of past and current life conditions and life expectations. D.C. Shin and D.M. Johnson (1978) define life satisfaction as global evaluation of one's quality of life according to criteria chosen by oneself. Satisfaction assessments are dependent on the comparison of people's conditions with those they think to be ideal or suitable. The global character of life satisfaction is accentuated also by D. M. Haybron (2001), who thinks the overall positive attitude towards life to be essential and impossible to be reduced to a mere summary of separate experiences of contentedness and discontentedness.

One of the main premises of life satisfaction is, according to E. Diener and C. Diener (1995), a positive assessment of oneself. Positive assessment of one's life is connected with ego cultivation, autonomy, assertivity, success and self-evaluation and is dependent mainly on general ability of coping with life and achievement-connected behaviour.

D. H. Mayborn (2005) concludes the dependables of one's life satisfaction by the formula $S = Co + Ci + W$, where S – satisfaction (permanent measure of happiness) Co – construction (the inherited aspect of overall happiness, disposition for experiencing hap-

piness), Ci – circumstances in life, W – will-controlled factors (inner circumstances).

As mentioned in A. J. Barrett a P. J. Murk (2006), life satisfaction is impossible to follow directly and therefore it is a latent variable. Latent variables are defined as factors that are necessary to be measured indirectly, which is based on operational definitions.

B. L. Neugarten, R. J. Havighurst a S. S. Tobin (1961, in Barrett, Murk, 2006) characterize the theoretical frame providing an operational definition of the latent variable life satisfaction which is saturated by five components:

1. Enthusiasm vs. apathy – related to enthusiasm as the general answer for life; it doesn't describe any specific kind of activity, such as engaging in social activities etc.;
2. Resolution and bravery – active acceptance of personal responsibility for one's life in opposition to passive acceptance of things happening in life;
3. Congruence between desired and achieved goals – expresses the difference between goals one wants to achieve and those they achieved;
4. Self-concept – is based on current emotional, physical and intellectual dimensions;
5. Emotional inclinations – related to optimism, happiness and other positive affective reactions.

When assessing overall life satisfaction, J. Fahrenberg et al. (2000) mention ten areas of life, where individuals evaluate their personal satisfaction with each of them. Similarly, C. E. Lance et al. (1989) see overall life satisfaction as a linear additive function of satisfaction in separate areas. The more satisfied people are with separate fields of their life, their job, family, health and so on, the more satisfied they are with life in general. The overall life satisfaction is in this point of view given by the sum of satisfaction in separate areas of life.

With regard to the stability of life satisfaction, part of the authors (Lykken, Tellegen 1996, Tellegen et al., 1988) supports the opinion that life satisfaction is mostly hereditary. However, genetic influence on life satisfaction determinates the frame, in which changes may occur with regard to the changing age of the person. People get used to accommodating changes in life situations, in which life satisfaction temporarily raises and declines (Headey, Wearing, 1989). According to J. Křivohlavý (2001), the subjective view of life satisfaction may change under the influence of circumstances, time and experience. Other authors (Andrews, Whitney 1976, Campbell, Converse, Rodgers 1976) note that life satisfaction tends to stay stable.

According to R. A. Emmons (1996; in Lejková, 2001) and J. C. Brunstein (1993, in Lejková 2001), being successful in the effort of achieving the goals which are personally significant is of essential importance for keeping life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing; that is why personal values are closely connected with life satisfaction. Similarly, I. G. Khakoo (2004) highlights the importance of subjective determinants (individual and collective experience, values and interactions) in assessing life and D. M. Hayborn (2001) praises situational context in assessing life satisfaction. Other authors, for example E. Řehulka and O. Řehulková (1999), K. C. Land (1999) and Veenhoven (1996) consider personality or situation to be the predictors of life satisfaction.

In psychological research, the concepts of happiness, well being and satisfaction

are used for describing positive temper (Džuka, Dalbert, 1997). According to various authors, life satisfaction together with affective elements create a relatively complete picture of subjective well being (Andrews, Whitney 1976, Herzog, Rodgers, Woodworth, 1982). The concept of life satisfaction is often mistaken with subjective health status. According to various research findings, it is a component which includes the perception of one's health and overall level of the quality of life.

In this paper, we specify life satisfaction as a subjective criterion of positive self-assessment and evaluation of one's life conditions; we consider it to be the result of one's relationship to their environment and it is based on a model, according to which the overall life satisfaction of a person is determined by the satisfaction in separate life areas, including family, friends, health, work and leisure time.

Life satisfaction and teachers

Current discussion about teacher's profession states that teachers are not able to follow the changes in social context, aren't well prepared for creating new contents, cannot react to the changes of environment, consequences of social processes including migration and multiculturalism, changes of characteristics of children's population and its rising heterogeneity and threats such as drugs, violence and diseases (Braslavsky, 2001). Ten years ago, the situation in education, which is not very positive (working environment, motivation, salary conditions, results of education), was pointed out by V. Rosa, I. Turek a M. Zelina (2000). They also appealed on general restructuring of the educational system. According to the authors, for changing schools, changes in the philosophy of schools (changing directive school into a humane one), changes in curriculum (meaning not learning unnecessary information), changes in teachers' training (emphasising the possibilities of social and personal development of future teachers during their pre-gradual training, their agreement with humanization of education and mainly accenting the teacher – student relationship), changes in school management (its decentralization, creation of national standards) and similar are necessary. The claims stated above have been projected into the new law on education, effective since September 2008; however, their practical realization is doubtful.

Facing challenging requirements from society and critique of teachers' profession, the teachers themselves are discontent. From the point of view of the situation and circumstances in which teachers work (weak salary conditions, not enough possibilities of development in their specialization, rising number of students with behaviour problems), they are usually considered to be discontent, which is confirmed i.e. by the departure of young and perspective teachers to other professions. Therefore, we were interested in how teachers are satisfied with their lives.

The study

The goal of the study is to analyze teachers' satisfaction with health, compare it with the satisfaction with health in medical staff and bank employees and observe a sample of teachers for the relationship between life satisfaction and its areas and the factors of age, sex and family status. Our study is a part of a complex research on life

satisfaction of Slovak teachers (life satisfaction related to social support, monitoring the influence of personal characteristics to the life satisfaction of teachers, Popelková et al., 2009).

The sample

The sample was composed of 386 university-educated people in total, aged 23–65, of which were 197 teachers (primary, secondary), 102 medical staff (doctors, nurses) and 87 bank employees from the towns and villages in the west of Slovakia. There were 167 men (43.3 %) with the average age of 41.65 and 219 women (56.7 %) with the average age of 40.31. The sample of 197 teachers (elementary, secondary school) consisted of 88 (43.3 %) men and 109 (56.7 %) women, average age of 41.65. There were 26 teachers in the age group 23–32, 71 teachers in the age group 33–45 and 100 teachers in the age group 45–65. By marital status, there were 155 married, 29 single, 3 widowed and 10 divorced teachers.

Used methods

The Questionnaire of Life Satisfaction (QLS) by Fahrenberg, J., Myrtek, M., Schumacher, J., Brähler, E. (2001) was applied. It enabled us to capture individual satisfaction in ten areas of life: health, work, economical situation, leisure time, marriage and relationship, relationship to one's children, self, sexuality, friendship, acquaintances and relatives, housing. The overall value of QLS, being the index of overall life satisfaction, consists of the sum of these elements. Life satisfaction is defined as individual evaluation of past and current life conditions and life expectations. Scale values characterize relatively permanent self-evaluation.

Result analysis and interpretation

Satisfaction with health

In the area of satisfaction with health, we compared the sets of teachers, medical staff and bank employees. The area of satisfaction with health is represented in the questionnaire by satisfaction with physical and mental health, fitness and occurrence of diseases or pains. We found out the following rank of average values of satisfaction with health (from highest to lowest value): bank employees, medical staff, teachers. Significant difference in the monitored area occurred between teachers and bank employees (table 1, 2). Teachers are significantly less satisfied with their health than bank employees. The result corresponding with ours is introduced in B. Vašina and M. Valošková (1998), who found out more negative health assessment in teachers compared to people working in the area of economics. There was no significant difference found between teachers and medical staff in evaluation of physical and mental health. Though health is a significantly subjective area of human life, we assume that the results given can be influenced by the type of profession. The profession of a teacher and the occupation of people working in healthcare have similar characteristics: everyday face-to-face contact with several people (patients, pupils/students), working conditions,

salary etc. The profession of a teacher is burdened by considerable demands in multiple areas. Teachers are asked to educate themselves continuously, to fuse educational and psychological approach to pupils/students. High demands put before the personality and role of a teacher can represent stress and an incentive for the initiation of health problems – physical or mental. P. R. O'Connor and V. A. Clarke (1990) consider the profession of a teacher to be a so-called “stress” profession. This claim is based on research findings by the authors, in which they noticed an increased morbidity of teachers and their premature retirement. The findings of multiple studies (O'Connor, Clarke, 1990; Fialová, Schneiderová and others), which found connection between health and stress in the profession of a teacher, have made us consider the potential influence of higher workload on our sample. M. G. Borg and R. J. Riding (in Daniel, 1996) mention these sources of stress: pupils' behaviour (breaking discipline, ignoring the authority of the teacher etc.), bad work conditions (low salary, unclear circumstances of teachers' career and so on), relationships between co-workers (for example lack of help, bad school management) and time pressure (lack of time for creating syllabi, individual approach to students etc.). Burnout syndrome is very connected with teachers' health (Fialová, Schneiderová, 1998). Results of their study proved that the factor of emotional exhaustion mirrors the state of teachers' health. E. Řehulka and O. Řehulková (1998) find a 10 % increase of neurosis together with the need of seeking professional help. Specifically, they found psychosomatic problems, communication disorders, role conflicts and so on.

When interpreting higher satisfaction with health in bank employees compared to the satisfaction of teachers, we consider also a different approach of bank management to their employees. Apart from specialized workshops and educational courses, which are oriented to gaining knowledge and abilities at the area of banking, bank employees are provided with other benefits in the form of health care, for example complex health checks at private practitioners and specialists, to which a certain amount of money is allocated. Usually, sports activities in which the employees are engaged as a team, are financially supported. According to our opinion, schools do not provide teachers with proper health care of such kind.

Intersexual differences in life satisfaction of teachers

In the area of overall life satisfaction of teachers, we didn't find any intersexual differences (table 3). When comparing the average values we noticed above, though statistically insignificant, a higher satisfaction in the male group with health, financial situation, leisure time, partnership/marriage, children and in sexual area. Statistically significant differences were confirmed in two areas, satisfaction with partnership/marriage and satisfaction with financial situation.

Higher satisfaction of male teachers with their financial situation is a surprising finding. Teachers' profession is among professions, where the salary is not very high, in spite of university education (average gross monthly wage of teachers is EUR 590). The traditional understanding of the masculine role contains the task of financial safeguarding of the family. It can be considered that male teachers gain financial means also from other sources, have a different income, or it is the wife whose income is higher and

she becomes responsible for securing the family financially. Also, higher average age of male teachers in our sample (43.4) can be connected with the finding in the sense of life satisfaction increase with increasing age (Diener et al., 1997)

Research monitoring in the area of life satisfaction from the point of view of intersexual differences brings uneven conclusions. Several studies, using different research methods, proved insignificant influence of sex on life satisfaction (Diener, Diener 1995, Pavot et al. 1991, Blatný 2001). According to Diener et al. (1997), life satisfaction slightly grows with age in male population and negative emotions decrease. In women, life satisfaction and also negative emotions stay relatively constant. As far as positive emotions are concerned, we can talk about their decline with higher age in both sexes. When validating Freiburg personality questionnaire (the sample of 2035 respondents), the results proved correlation between life satisfaction and sex. Men described themselves as more satisfied (Fahrenberg et al. 2001). Men tended to be more satisfied also in Herschach's study (1999). The differences in satisfaction between men and women are also dependent on expected roles of men and women in the culture concerned. The traditional female role presumes a higher level of caring for others, connected with higher responsibility.

Marital status and life satisfaction of teachers

No significant differences were found in life satisfaction of single teachers and married teachers or teachers in a partnership (table 3). The area of satisfaction with marriage or partnership in the Questionnaire of Life Satisfaction (Fahrenberg et al., 2001) is characterized by the duties resulting from marriage, common activities, personal dispositions of the partner and the support provided by one partner to the other. We noticed a higher average value of life satisfaction in single teachers from our sample, however, the difference is not statistically significant.

Our findings are different from the results of F. K. Willits and D. M. Crider (1998), J. Fahrenberg et al. (2001), who reported higher life satisfaction of people living in marriage than of singles. Satisfaction in marriage is an area which has, according to multiple authors (e. g. Plaňava, Rajmicová, Blažková, 2003, Fahrenberg, et al., 2001), a positive influence on the life satisfaction of an individual. The comparison of satisfaction in different areas of life in singles and married teachers in our sample proved a significant difference in the area of partnership or marriage in favour of higher satisfaction in married teachers. D. Rhyne (1981) stresses that interpersonal characteristics contribute to the satisfaction in marriage in higher measure than the personal or socio-demographical ones (education, age, income etc.). In connection with the result, we are considering the influence of high divorce rate in Slovakia, which has lately risen to 58%. R. E. Lucas et al. (2003) characterized different levels of change in life satisfaction in years which follow the marriage. They talk about substantial individual differences concerning the degree of change of life satisfaction: some people mentioned distinctive decrease of life satisfaction after marriage, others got back to their original level after several years of marriage and in others, life satisfaction gradually increased. Almost every respondent in the research of the authors mentioned significant increase of life satisfaction immediately after marriage.

We believe that the current trend of an increasing number of young people living alone and increasing age of marriage can also be connected with the findings mentioned.

Life satisfaction and teachers' age

One of our goals was to analyze teachers' life satisfaction according to age. We didn't find any relationship between teachers' age and life satisfaction. When comparing average scores, young teachers are more satisfied with their life. Life satisfaction decreases in middle-aged and stays level in late adulthood (table 4, 5). The answer to the question of the relationship between age and life satisfaction is not explicit (Fahrenberg, 2001). With increasing age, satisfaction with health is likely to decrease; satisfaction with financial situation can conversely rise, because with increasing age, it is not necessary to provide for children and personal needs decrease.

Research on life satisfaction with regard to age yielded inconclusive results. A study from the seventies of the last century evaluated eight major surveys including a thousand to ten thousand respondents (Herzog et al., 1982). Four of the eight surveys have shown that life satisfaction significantly positively correlated with age, three surveys showed no relationship and one came to the conclusion that the relationship between age and life satisfaction is significantly negative. The model of the negative relationship between age and life satisfaction is also shown in Hnilica's (2006) research findings.

It can be considered that the overall satisfaction and hence also satisfaction with various areas is likely to change in the course of teachers' life. During young adulthood, the basic criteria of maturity are coping with the career start, which means a professional role, creating a stable monogamous relationship, marriage and parental role (Vágnerová, 2000). For teachers in middle adulthood, lower life satisfaction may be associated with lower satisfaction in various areas of life. With increasing age the probability of health problems occurring in relation to biological changes also rises. In this period, the relationship with the professional role is also changing – either the need for self-realization is satisfied, or resignation appears (Vágnerová, 2000). In connection with the age of their children, people in middle adulthood also realize their own aging and weakening of physical and mental powers and their own vulnerability and finality of their own life.

We consider the balanced life satisfaction of the oldest age group of teachers, related to the life satisfaction in the middle-aged group, to be a positive finding. In the late adulthood, the career is gradually closing, the “empty nest” period in the family is coming and a possible change in partnership may consequently occur (Vágnerová, 2000). Shift of values, from hedonism and performance, typical for youth and younger maturity, towards cultural and spiritual ones, characteristic for older maturity, can also be considered (Kováč, 2007). Perhaps, the financial and general independence of children also contributes to the financial situation and overall life satisfaction of teachers. Higher satisfaction with the financial situation at older people and its share on overall life satisfaction is confirmed by multiple research studies (Schumacher, Gunzelmann a Brähler 1996, Harrer et al. 1993). L. Golecká (2002) says, that an aging person can, in spite of irreversible changes, experience the later evolutionary periods of life positively

through flexible adjustment of old goals to new life circumstances, and thinks the flexibility of accommodation of older people to be a possible predictor of life satisfaction.

Conclusion

A comparative survey, which included groups of teachers, medical staff and bank employees, enabled us to monitor the differences in overall life satisfaction. The factor of professional differences has not been identified as a determinant in experiencing overall life satisfaction. In separate areas of life satisfaction, we found significant differences in satisfaction with work and health. Teachers are, compared to medical staff and bank employees, the most satisfied and are significantly more satisfied in this area than bank employees.

In the area of satisfaction with health, teachers feel lower life satisfaction, which is significantly lower than in bankers, who, compared to teachers and medical staff, are the most satisfied with their health.

In teachers' sample, we were investigating relations between life satisfaction, sex, marital status and age. Demographic factors (sex, marital status – single/married, and age) did not prove themselves to be significant determinants of teachers' life satisfaction.

Male teachers are generally more satisfied with their lives than females, which is mainly caused by the areas of marriage or partnership and finance. The feelings of overall life satisfaction in men are related to the perception of satisfaction in marriage or partnership and financial area. The research results incline to characterizing the profession of teacher as a mission, similarly as in doctors or lawyers (Řehulka, Řehulková, 1998).

In spite of relatively high overall teachers' life satisfaction, satisfaction in the area of health is the lowest. Its relation to stress is undeniable and is a warning sign. A teacher, who is physically and mentally healthy, contributes to the education of a healthy generation and nowadays, when teachers feel the increase of intensity of their duties (ongoing implementation of teachers' professional development concept, high standards in the field of lifelong education, relatively low social prestige of teachers), the significance of various ways of prevention comes to the fore, including interventions in teachers' health area, which should be a part of their vocational training, as well as overall change of lifestyle, as inevitable premises of successful stress prevention.

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Table 1 Average values and standard deviations of satisfaction with health – teachers, medical staff and bank employees

profession		N	AM	SD
SH	Teachers	197	33.73	7.18
	Medical staff	102	34.62	7.29
	Banking	87	36.55	5.38

Legend: SH – satisfaction with health

Table 2 Differences in satisfaction with health in the three monitored groups

SH	T	Sig.
Teachers – Medical staff	-1.013	.312
Teachers – Bank employees	-3.286	.001**

** level of significance $p < 0.01$

Table 3 Intersexual differences and differences between married and single teachers in overall life satisfaction

Overall life satisfaction		N	AM	SD	T	Sig.
Teachers	Men	88	235.85	36.88	.907	.036
	Women	109	231.32	33.11		
Teachers	Married	155	243.27	33.51	1.012	.389
	Single	29	235.59	42.03		

Table 4 Average values and standard deviations of overall life satisfaction according to teachers' age

Age group	23 – 32			33 – 45			45 – 65		
	N	AM	SD	N	AM	SD	N	AM	SD
Teachers	26	251.27	30.77	71	230.41	30.97	100	230.77	37.24

Table 5 The relationship between overall life satisfaction and age of teachers

		Age
Teachers	CŽS Correl. coefficient	-.136
	Sig.	.057
	N	197

Sig. – level of significance

SPOKOJNOSŤ UČITEĽOV SO ZDRAVÍM

Abstrakt: Príspevok sa zaoberá konštruktom životnej spokojnosti s dôrazom na spokojnosť so zdravím a vzťahom životnej spokojnosti k vybraným demografickým činiteľom (rodinný stav, pohlavie, vek). Výskumný súbor tvorilo 386 respondentov - učitelia, zdravotnícky personál a zamestnanci bánk. Použili sme Fahrenbergov Dotazník životnej spokojnosti.

Kľúčová slova: životná spokojnosť, spokojnosť so zdravím, učitelia, zdravotnícky personál, zamestnanci bánk