Psychological variables to professional satisfaction for teachers

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Abstract

The professional success involves a number of personality traits of the individual, all taking its toll on his performance and productivity at work. The results of the study undertaken bring elements into understanding how certain personality traits - extraversion - introversion and nervousness – of teachers relate with different facets of job satisfaction.

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1. Introduction

A fundamental concept in psychology, which is hard to define and especially to measure, personality has long been seen as an explanatory factor of professional competence. In time, however, while defining a series of explanatory models and tools for measuring personality, it began to be granted a greater importance to personality traits in exerting a successful profession. While the psychology of the individual and personality typologies highlighted features in a manner centered on individual differences/similarities and less on relationships with work, labour psychology has focused on the determining factors of performance, of adaptation at work. (Luca, 2003)

Any profession, including teaching, can be successfully performed only when the person who exercises it corresponds to its demands, by his mental and physical qualities. In addition to the cognitive and methodological

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competences assimilated in the initial training process, the personality features (patterns) are a prerequisite to meeting grounds of self-realization and development of the consciousness of valuable integration in social life.

The state of psychological comfort at work depends not only on the correct performance of tasks, but also on the personality profile. The professional relationship appears in this context as "the most important in terms of the trends of human personality to meet the motivation for self-accomplishment, to highlight and imposing the skills - creative potential." (Golu, 1993, p. 89).

Analyzing the impact of personality traits on performance and job satisfaction it is found that there are certain traits that may predict performance in a large number of professions such as: low impulsivity (calm, confident and temperate persons, relaxed faced to anxious, hostile and neurotic people); extroversion (assertive, dominant, energetic, active, enthusiastic and enterprising people); openness to experience (intellectual curiosity, innovative, imaginative, non-traditional spirit); good companionship and selfless spirit (preference for interpersonal relationships); conscientiousness. (Zhao & Seibert, 2006).

Job satisfaction as psychological dimension can be regarded not only as the attitudinal dominant, dependent on the organizational context, but as a personality trait or factor. It can be defined as a positive emotional state resulting from the evaluation of the work done by one person (Constantin, 2004), a complex mental configuration, not always consciously integrated, consisting of a set of positive attitudes of the person towards work done (Popescu Neveanu, 1978). Satisfaction refers to the events giving rise to the subjective feeling of relief, pleasure, which may be expressed or described by the individual who lives it, but that cannot be observed externally by another person. A satisfaction factor is an element that makes a person feel good (Gellerman, 1971). Dissatisfaction occurs when expectations between the individual and the work that it carries do not align.

The analysis of the professional satisfaction dimensions refers to economic satisfaction produced by financial stimuli, by the relationship between effort and financial compensation, satisfaction with work content (variety of work, professional skills, innovative applications) and psychosocial satisfaction derived from the fact that in professional activity man relates not only to the work itself, but also to peers, the group to which it belongs, to relations with superiors/subordinates, work partners (Zamfir, 1993).

Although "the employees’ performances are not only the exclusive result of job satisfaction, but are largely influenced by it" (Rașcă & Deaconu, 2002), a proper establishing of correlation between job satisfaction and personality variables of the individual can identify unnecessary loss of commitment, initiative, individual performance and new sources of stimulation, of improving individual satisfaction and increase collective efficiency" (Constantin, 2004).

Considering that a number of personality traits influence employee satisfaction and emotional predispositions are defined as the human tendency to respond to classes of ambient stimuli in an emotional way, the question is whether there is some innate predisposition for people to be happy or unhappy, optimistic or pessimistic. (Johns, 1981).

In this context, it is suggested that people are temperamentally predisposed to be more or less satisfied, despite the divergence between what an individual wishes for and what is offered, and in spite of what is offered to him at the workplace.

In the case of the profession of teaching preschool children and young school children, some physical features manifest, that distinguish between the profession of teaching and other professions involving personality traits that enable communication and networking with young children. The children’s age, the level of mental development (cognitive and socio-emotional) and the specific teaching requirements imply the existence in the personality structure of teachers' personality traits of some dynamic-energetic traits, allowing resistance to distractions factors, exercise capacity, mobility of cognitive processes, empathy, sociability, and positive attitude towards relationships with others.
2. Objectives

In designing the study we found out that some people are predisposed, by virtue of certain personality traits, to be more or less satisfied than others, although the objective conditions are all similar. There are also people that, irrespective of all conditions, are professionally satisfied, finding a vocation in the profession, but also people who never have the feeling that they enjoy what they do, declaring themselves permanently dissatisfied.

The study aims to capture the existence of significant differences in psychological variables - extraversion/introversion, neuroticism and job satisfaction of teachers in preschool and primary education by gender, age, seniority, specific professional activity. We took into account that in the structure of teaching skills can be identified significant correlations between psychological variables and its methodological and scientific dimensions. In investigating these relations we assumed that no significant differences in terms of personality dimensions regarding extroversion/introversion, neuroticism and job satisfaction.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The study involved a total of 85 teachers from pre-school education (41 to 48.3 %) and primary education (44 to 51.7 %), 12 men (14.2%) and 73 women (85.8%) aged between 24 years and 58 years old (M = 44.5, standard deviation of 4.77) and having professional experience of 2 years to 36 years (M = 17.4, standard deviation 3.82). All subjects have higher education, 32 subjects (37.7 %) had permanent residence in rural areas and 53 (62.3 %) in urban residence, and of these 15 (60.4 %) subjects were practicing in the countryside and commuting to work.

3.2. Materials

To measure the personality dimensions of extroversion/introversion and neuroticism (emotional stability/instability) we used as a tool Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI). The two dimensions are measured by yes or no answers given to 24 items for each dimension. The questionnaire also includes nine items that measure the honesty factor (small notes indicate sincerity responses, scale L being for guidance in interpreting the questionnaire).

Job satisfaction was investigated by using the "Job Satisfaction" Questionnaire (Constantin, 2004), which includes four dimensions: pay and promotion (dissatisfaction/satisfaction with the reward for the work they perform - payroll and other financial rewards, recognition and opportunities for promotion and personal development), management and interpersonal relations (dissatisfaction/satisfaction with the social climate and labor relations, both in terms of relationships with colleagues or superiors, as well as of the relaxed, non-confrontational atmosphere), organization and communication (dissatisfaction/satisfaction with the organization and conduct of the activity: the establishment and ownership of tasks, effort, communication, feedback etc.), overall satisfaction (the extent to which the subject is satisfied with the work they perform - nature of work, both in terms of the organization, as well as the actual effort, workload, work safety, the physical conditions and rewards - material and/or moral they receive for their work and the interpersonal climate in which they operate). The quotation system of responses on a five-speed Lickert scale allows calculating an index of satisfaction for each facet separately, but there can be calculated as well a general measure of satisfaction, by adding the separate indices of the facets.

3.3. Procedure

Sample application was done collectively in schools where subjects had their work, in two stages: in the first stage was applied the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) and in the second stage the "Job Satisfaction" Questionnaire (SP). There was no time limit on the application of evidence.

Depending on the scores obtained from the investigation questionnaire for extroversion/introversion and neuroticism by combining the two scales, the subjects were classified as follows: extravert – unstable (choleric),
extravert - stable (sanguine), introvert - stable (phlegmatic) introvert - unstable (melancholic). It was thus calculated
the frequency of these personality traits to the entire sample of subjects and variables depending on gender and
specific professional activity (pre-school - primary education), based on chi-square statistical test to assess
significant differences between the two samples of data made up of frequency data.

In terms of job satisfaction, to see if there are significant differences, there were computed the average values for
each scale of the questionnaire, the standard deviations for each scale and the average values differences regarding
job satisfaction.

To demonstrate that there are significant differences in terms of job satisfaction among teachers in preschool and
primary education, we resorted to applying the "t" test for independent samples.

The calculation of correlations (Pearson correlation coefficient) between the values of the Eysenck Personality
Inventory scales and the job satisfaction questionnaire allowed us to demonstrate the previously set hypothesis.

4. Results and discussion

After processing the data from the Eysenck Personality Inventory we noticed a high frequency of extravert -
stable (54.2 %) and introvert - stable (33 %) types for the entire group of subjects. Only 3.4% of the subjects are
introverted - unstable and 9.4 % are extroverted unstable. In terms of percentage distribution according to gender
we noted that both women and men enter within the highest proportion in the category of extroverted -
stable (women - 41.7% , males - 7.1%) and introverted - stable category (women - 28.3% , men - 4.7%). We note
that the sample of subjects consisting of teachers for preschool and primary education, mental life instability, as a
personality trait is less present in both men and women, allowing us to conclude that this profession entails the
presence of an emotional balance.

Regarding the distribution of extraversion-introversion and nervousness between the two professional groups we
have identified that 68.2% of pre-school teachers and 40.9% of primary teachers have the personality traits of
extraversion and stability, and only 4.9% of pre-school teachers and 13.7% of primary teachers are manifested as
unstable extroverts. We note that none of the teachers working with preschool children is introvert unstable and only
2.1% teachers working with students in primary education exhibit unstable behavior.

Based on chi-square statistical test it was found that the value obtained in chi-square is of 75.2, with 15 degrees
of freedom (df) and the exact two-tailed significance of 0.001. Since this value is less than 0.05, chi-square
coefficient is significant, which indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between pre-school
teachers and the teachers for primary education, in terms of temperamental traits extroversion - introversion
and stability - instability.

The results of statistical processing of the four dimensions of the questionnaire "job satisfaction" (SP) -
remuneration and promotion, leadership and interpersonal relationships, organizational and communication, overall
satisfaction reveal the following: mean scores on the questionnaire scales are low - pay and promotion - M = 26.3,
SD = 9.765; leadership and interpersonal relations - M = 56.2, SD = 0.782; organization and communication - M =
38.4, SD = 0.453, overall satisfaction - M = 42.6, ds = 0.547. This can be interpreted by a low satisfaction in terms
of organization (pay and chances for promotion), although interpersonal size scores are slightly increased.

Regarding the analysis of professional satisfaction of the two categories of teachers, the data obtained show that
there are slight differences in different dimensions assessed. T test calculated for each scale of the questionnaire
shows that there are differences in satisfaction in pre-school and primary teachers for leadership and interpersonal
dimensions (t = 0.06, p ≤ .05).

The analysis of professional satisfaction on the basis of gender reveals that men exhibit a low level of satisfaction
in terms of size of pay and promotion (M = 16.3, SD = 4.665), while women show a high level of satisfaction
regarding management and interpersonal relationships (M = 78.2, SD = 8.355). As regards the overall satisfaction of
the activity, no different options between the two groups did show.

Regarding the distribution of job satisfaction according to the residential and social environment of their
professional activity, it shows that in terms of subjects residing in urban areas and work is in the same locality (M =
58.2, SD = 0.347), they achieved a higher average of scores than those living in rural areas (M = 23.1, SD = 0.783),
in terms of overall satisfaction. A separate category is represented by the subjects who live in another place than
where they work. They obtained low scores in all dimensions of the questionnaire (M = 12.3 for pay and promotion;
for leadership and interpersonal relationships \( M = 24.1 \); organization and communication \( M = 17.8 \); overall satisfaction \( M = 15.4 \). For the analysis of job satisfaction categories of categories of professional experience, subjects were divided into four categories - 1-10 years, 10-20 years, 20-30 years and over 30 years. The highest mean scores were obtained by subjects ranging from 20-30 years \( M = 58.5, \ SD = 0.439 \) and the lowest by subjects ranging from 1 to 10 years \( M = 23.1, \ SD = 0.578 \).

To verify the hypothesis we calculated the correlations between EPI test scales values and the professional satisfaction survey. The Pearson correlation coefficient is between 0.20 and 0.322. We obtained significantly positive correlations of 0.05 between the overall satisfaction and introversion - stability and leadership and interpersonal dimension and extroversion - stability. Positive correlations at the threshold of 0.01 significance were obtained and to the scales “leadership and interpersonal relationships” and extroversion/stability and introversion/stability \( r = 0.299 \) and \( r = 0.299 \). Individuals who meet these personality types act and involve themselves into the specific issues of the group without having the feeling that they perform extra work.

5. Conclusions

The study showed that job satisfaction of teachers of preschool and primary education, on the dimensions we have evaluated, is gender-related, associated with the residential environment which is job specific and with certain personality traits. Among the personality traits most strongly associated with job satisfaction there were found to be, for both categories of teachers, the extroversion/introversion and emotional stability.

Among the dimensions of job satisfaction of teachers, that are associated most strongly with them, there was noticed the dissatisfaction with pay and promotion and dissatisfaction with the organization and communication (how work is organized and performed).

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