

Stress and teachers satisfaction with educational work

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Abstract

Pedagogical activity is one of the special types of human work. Teachers in their daily work are exposed to various stressful situations. The article characterizes the phenomenon of stress and satisfaction in the teaching profession. The aim of this publication is to show the factors conditioning stress, as well as an indication of ways to deal with it. The article presents stress tests for teachers conducted in Poland and abroad. This article have a review character and has been prepared using international scientific databases such as Elsevier, Springer, Web of Science, and Ebsco.

Keywords: stress; satisfaction; teacher's work

Introduction

Research on stress conducted over the last decade allows to see the stressful impact of human life conditions, including conditions related to professional work. The profession of a

teacher, like the profession of a firefighter, nurse, doctor and policeman, can be included in social professions due to constant contact with other people. However, the teaching profession is special due to the task of caring for the personality of young people. The teacher's fulfillment of his professional role requires him to cooperate, maintain good interpersonal relationships with foster children and their parents. Contemporary environment puts on the teacher requirements, which sometimes are difficult to meet. Unfavorable organizational conditions, such as noise, a large number of classes, an increasing amount of paperwork make teachers feel overloaded mentally and physically by their work. The everyday feeling of tiredness and exhaustion contributes to reducing work engagement. There is frustration, reluctance, helplessness and a feeling of loneliness. Stress contributes to the unpleasant emotions that can often be accompanied by biochemical and physiological changes in the body. As a result, teachers cease to feel satisfaction with their work. Their pedagogical activities become routine and less and less interesting for students. In this context, it should be noted that it is very important to care for the development of the emotional competence of the teacher, as well as to maintain a balance between work and personal life.

The concept of stress and types of stressors

The term stress can be associated with a situation that causes negative emotions that are difficult to deal with. The term "stress" was borrowed in 1936 from physics by the doctor Hans Selye. Hans Selye defines stress as the "unspecific reaction of the body to all "requirements"[18]. In psychology, there are three traditional approaches to stress. The source location is a differentiating factor. The first approach captures stress as an internal human experience. The second approach grasps stress as an external event and stimuli from the environment. The third approach refers to the relationship between external stimuli and individual characteristics [7]. Stress is a state of mental tension caused by a discrepancy between the requirements of the environment and human capabilities. Our abilities make people perceive these discrepancies as a threat to their health, life or integrity. However, factors that threaten these values are called stressors[14].

According to the theory of Hans Selye, the creator of the GAS model - General Adaptation Syndrome can be distinguished by three stages of stress response.

Table 1. Stages of stress reaction according to Hans Selye.

Phase	Description
An alarm reaction	It is created as a result of a harmful stimulus. Its goal is a two-step mobilization of the body's defenses. Can distinguish: a) the shock phase, which is characterized by the stimulation of the body for defense; b) the shock prevention phase, which includes defense reactions, such as changes in the body's physiological functions.
The immunity stage	The body mobilizes its defense mechanisms and energy resources.
Depletion stage	It involves lowering the body's defenses. There is a dysregulation of the body's physiological functions.

Source: study based on: G. Erenc-Grygoruk, *Sposoby pokonywania stresu i jego skutków stosowane przez nauczycieli edukacji wczesnoszkolnej – wyniki badań*, „Edukacja Humanistyczna” 2016, no 1 (34), p. 120.

Teachers' stress is a very complex phenomenon that involves many factors. According to S.-O. Brenner and R. Bartell teacher stress is "the result of the interaction of many factors characteristic for the teacher and school: potential stressors that can occur in the school area, current stressors associated with each job, the teacher's state of health, his personality traits, coping skills, and stressors not related to professional work" [5]. The research conducted by Stanisława Tucholska shows that in the group of 747 professionally active primary school teachers, 23% of them feel strong or very strong stress, while for 64% professional work is moderately stressful, and for 13% it is not stressful at all. [20]. Long-term feelings of stress can lead to emotional exhaustion, which is the result of overwhelming many matters. It can also lead to occupational burnout, which is a form of occupational stress [7]. One of the best-known in the literature on the subject classification of stressors related to the profession was developed by three groups of researchers: Cooper and Marshall, Levi and Frankenhaeser as well as Ivancevich and Matteson. According to Levi and Frankenhaeser, the basic source of stress is social and physical factors. The table below presents these factors conducive to the creation of stress.

Table 2. Environmental factors causing stress.

Factors	Description
stress factors depending on the work itself	working conditions (qualitative and quantitative work overload), time pressure and absolute punctuality, the need to keep up with dynamic technological changes, shift work
social relations with superiors, subordinates and co-workers	faulty social policy, lack of social support, inability to comply
emotional climate and organizational structure	bad interpersonal communication, lack of co-responsibility, sense of loneliness
place in the organization	inadequate to the role of responsibility for things and people, ambiguity of the role and conflict
extra organizational sources	family problems, life crises, conflicts at work and at home, financial difficulties, lack of institutional support
career	lack of development prospects, current professional status, inconsistent with qualifications and aspirations

Source: study based on: O. Jurgilewicz, *Stres i stresory w pracy wpływające na poczucie bezpieczeństwa pracownika*, „Modern Management Review” 24 (4/2017), vol. XXII, p. 61.

As part of the research conducted by scientists Cooper, Marshall, Ivancevich and Matteson, intra-organizational stressors were specified.

Table 3. Stress factors inside the organization.

Factors	Examples
organizational stress factors	wrong organizational climate
unfavorable physical environment	too high or too low temperature, vibrations, high noise, poor lighting
faulty management style	control system used, outdated technology
group stress factors	group cohesion, conflicts within the group
group dissatisfaction with the leader	faulty communication with the leader, conflict of interest
individual workload	conflict of roles, responsibility for others, work overload, lack of career prospects, work under time pressure

Source: study based on: O. Jurgilewicz, *Stres i stresory w pracy wpływające na poczucie bezpieczeństwa pracownika*, „Modern Management Review” 24 (4/2017), vol. XXII, p. 64.

Teachers point out that they are overloaded with their work. In the study of Australian high school teachers, almost half of the respondents stated that they cannot cope with the excess of duties that they must perform, and every fifth teacher thought about changing the profession due to work overload [1].

Janusz Miąso emphasizes that contemporary teachers, in addition to possessing knowledge and substantive competences in the field of the subject they teach, should be characterized by the ability to control their emotional states and cope with the pressure [12]. If the teacher first of all controls himself, his work can be a source of inner satisfaction. However, when a teacher has difficulty coping with stress he is accompanied by a feeling of dissatisfaction. It is worth noting that an effective teacher is a person who works on himself.

Ewa Karabanowicz conducted research with the use of the CISS Questionnaire in CIS Stress Situations and the AVEM Questionnaire measuring behavior patterns and work-related experiences. Analysis of research results shows that 90% of teachers working in schools are characterized by symptoms of burnout syndrome. Research shows that in stressful situations, a group of teachers of public and special schools comparatively often use a style focused on task and emotions. In turn, special pedagogues use the avoidant style more often than the teachers from public schools, based on the search for social relations [7].

Ways of overcoming stress and its consequences

In order to successfully overcome stress, it is necessary to learn about it and identify factors that cause it to appear in everyday life. These factors can be called stressors. The concept of stressors and stress factors should be understood as an element of a stimulus or situation that violates the relative balance between the subject and the environment, and consequently activates the adaptive mechanisms of human behavior[19].

According to Z. Ratajczak, in coping with stress, it can support "adaptive potential", "remedial possibilities", "energy resources", which are dependent both on the individual and its surroundings. When developing a model for the analysis of people's behavior in stressful situations, you can indicate four of its elements:

- 1) threats understood as harmful factors or threatening events;
- 2) stress as a response to the threat;
- 3) remedial process - human activity focused on removing the threat or limiting the state of emotional tension;
- 4) psychological costs of coping which a person feels during and after the activity [16].

In modern times, man lives at a fast pace. He spends most of his time working, studying, and housework, and he does not have much time to rest. This leads to the appearance of stress

symptoms, nervousness, lack of motivation to act. However, to deal with stress, you can use different techniques and methods whose effectiveness is an individual matter for every human being. Zofia Ratajczak describes the process of coping with stress as a "conscious or unconscious effort related to preventing, eliminating or weakening stressors or tolerating their effects in the least "harmful" way. [8]. Problems cannot always be avoided, so it is worth knowing how to deal with stress.

In order to control stress, it is necessary to get to know oneself and apply appropriate methods of dealing with it. One of them may be relaxation methods based on calming the breath and giving it a moderate rhythm. The analysis of research conducted in mainstream schools and special schools shows a higher ability of mental rest from work, and thus the ability to distance oneself from teachers of public schools in comparison with teachers of special schools, and each year of work is associated with an increasing tendency to distance [7]. Listening to music and reading books can give people a break and help you break away from everyday matters. It is also very important to take care of the right amount of sleep, because during the sleep the body rests and regenerates itself. A good solution is to do sports at least a few times a week. Preventive actions at the individual level may include general actions for their own health. They usually concern good eating habits and physical activity [22]. The feeling that you can rely on loved ones and family members is an important element in the process of overcoming stress. Positive attitude towards life and people is also very important. It is important to exchange experiences between teachers, talk to them about difficulties at work. The probability of stress can be reduced by the ability to manage your own time and by setting priorities. In addition to work, it is worth spending time on your own passions and interests. The balance between private and professional life affects both family relationships and professional roles.

Joanna Madalińska-Michalak, describing teachers who achieve professional success, indicates the need to discharge their emotional competence[11]. Emotions have very important functions in the life of every human being. Due to the social role included in the teaching profession, emotions are particularly important. Emotions affect the building of the teacher's relationship with students, their parents, and colleagues. Jacek Pyżalski emphasizes that activities should be carried out that relate both to the reduction of occupational stressors and to the increase of teachers' competences so that they can cope with the work environment [15]. However, the last type of action will be less effective if the teacher's working environment is not a system in which social support is present.

Satisfaction in teacher's work

One of the basic forms of human activity is work. However, satisfaction felt from its implementation becomes the main source of life satisfaction. In the case of teacher's profession, this is particularly important. The concept of work is related to two key terms such as satisfaction and satisfaction. In the literature, the concept of satisfaction is defined in various ways and often equated with satisfaction. Professional satisfaction is an indicator of the emotional attitude of employees to their work, tasks and the environment in which they are staying [13]. One of the first satisfaction researchers was Frederick Herzberg. According to Herzberg's two-factor theory of job satisfaction, job satisfaction consists of two groups of factors:

- a) motivation factors (internal) - they can give you professional satisfaction. These motivators are: recognition by others, work achievements, responsibility or development
- b) hygiene factors (external) - they are related to the work environment and can cause dissatisfaction with work [4].

They include work components such as working conditions, supervisors, pay and safety.

Job satisfaction can be understood as a changeable, situational reaction, while satisfaction with the work performed is the result of several satisfaction effects and usually includes relatively recurrent and persistent tasks with a higher degree of complexity [10].

Research shows that the higher the teacher's job satisfaction, the lower the burnout rates [10]. Nielsen and his co-workers analyzed the relationship between stressors in the workplace and the satisfaction of professionally active people. The results of their research allowed to conclude that people who assessed occupational stress as high showed lower professional satisfaction [13]. According to Wiesław Wiśniewski, building high satisfaction in the teaching profession is related to :

- good and proper organization of work at school,
- friendly atmosphere prevailing in school and in social environment,
- good conditions for experimenting in pedagogical work [21]

According to Linda Evans, the main factors influencing on satisfaction or lack thereof are the behavior of the school head towards the teaching staff and the kind of atmosphere that prevails at school [2]. Teachers' self-development and student achievement are also a factor influencing teacher satisfaction. The sense of dispiritedness may increase when the teacher involved does not receive positive feedback about his or her efforts or when he or she does not see the intended effect of their work [17]. A teacher who feels job satisfaction supports students in their initiatives, encourages them to act, is involved in what they do.

It should be emphasized that a special relationship in the teacher's contacts with foster children is attributed to a personal relationship, whose weakening significantly reduces the effectiveness of all methods of educational influence. The immediate consequence of building and maintaining a personal relationship with children is the atmosphere created in the group, imbued with mutual understanding and friendship [9].

Summary and final conclusions

In the face of dynamic technological changes, life in the 21st century is gaining rapid pace. Stress becomes an element present in many spheres of human life. Therefore, it is necessary to develop skills to deal with it. This is especially important in the case of people performing social professions in which it is important to maintain good relationships with other people. The teacher's work is unique because it shapes the personality of the young generation. Satisfaction with the fulfillment of professional duties becomes a source of satisfaction. In the teaching profession, satisfaction is very important. When the teacher does not feel job satisfaction, he is overloaded with an excess of duties and may be exposed to burnout. The further direction of the presented research may focus on the development of guidelines and training programs on coping with stress for teachers.

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