

Chapter 23

THE IMPACT OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS ON THE SATISFACTION AND WELL-BEING OF TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on well-being of primary school teachers in Eastern Slovakia. We studied the differences in the level of teachers' life satisfaction, satisfaction in work, social and emotional well-being with respect to the perceived supportive behaviour of the headmaster and teachers' personality traits. The research sample consisted of 256 primary school teachers (89.6% women, mean age 42.14, SD 9.65). We used the concept of social well-being conceptualized by Keyes (1998) as our main theoretical framework. The IASR-B5 questionnaire (Trapnell & Wiggins, 1990) was used to measure personality traits. Supporting behaviour of headmasters was measured by the SAS-C scale (Trobst, 2000) and life satisfaction and satisfaction in work were measured by The Life Satisfaction Questionnaire (Rodná & Rodný, 2001). The data were analyzed by non-parametric tests to address the differences between the groups with the highest and the lowest levels of measured variables (the perceived type of supportive behaviour of a headmaster and the Big Five personality traits, namely neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness). Our findings showed a significant association between neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness and subjective as well as social well-being. The significance of social support, in terms of supportive behaviour of headmasters, was confirmed in the context of work and employment satisfaction as well as in subjective well-being.

Keywords: work satisfaction, social well-being, teacher, supporting behaviour, personality traits.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are two main approaches to subjective well-being that can be found in the current literature. The first approach is represented by the eudaimonic perspective, which stresses the importance of self-realization and realization of individual's potential and talents (Ryff & Singer, 2008). It can be found especially in the work of Ryff and Keyes and their concept of psychological well-being (Keyes, 2006; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The second approach is based on the hedonistic tradition and focuses mainly on satisfaction with life. From a psychological point of view hedonism is defined by efforts which maximize the experience of pleasure and minimize the experience of suffering. Within this approach subjective well-being consists of two components - cognitive and emotional. The emotional or affective component can be further divided into positive and negative affect and cognitive-evaluative component is represented by the satisfaction with different areas of life and as well as overall life satisfaction (Džuka, 2004). "Subjective well-being is a broad concept that includes experiencing pleasant emotions, low levels of negative moods, and high life satisfaction." (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002, p. 63).

1.1. Literature review

1.1.1. Determinants of well-being. Many factors, which have been shown to influence subjective well-being, can be broadly divided into external (related to the environment in which one lives) and internal (related to one's personality structure). The external factors include for example environmental conditions, economic situation and social status, social relationships or working conditions (Ryff & Heidrich, 1997, as cited in Tišanská & Kožený, 2004). A similar view is also presented by Džuka and Dalbert (1997) who suggest that subjective well-being is

determined by environmental variables, variables linked to the person and moderator-type variables (moderators can be qualitative e.g.: sex, race, class, or quantitative e.g.: level of reward and affect the direction and/or strength of the relation between an independent or predictor variable and a dependent or criterion variable) and mediator-type variables (a given variable may function as a mediator between the predictor and the criterion, mediators explain how external physical events take on internal psychological significance)

• **Association between personality and well-being.** Many research findings indicate that there is an association between personality and subjective well-being. Similarly to personality variables subjective well-being also appears to be relatively stable across different situational contexts with a changing frequency and intensity of intervening life events (Diener & Lucas, 2003). A research study conducted on a representative sample of twins showed that both subjective well-being and personality traits extraversion, neuroticism and conscientiousness have a common genetic basis and personality forms so called “affective reserves” (Weiss, Bates, & Luciano, 2008). These reserves have been shown to be especially important in the process of maintaining the equilibrium in subjective well-being and controlling its changes over time (Weiss et al., 2008). Numerous studies have found further evidence for the relationship between subjective well-being and personality dimensions of extraversion and neuroticism (Gomez, Krings, Bangerter, & Grob, 2009; Librán, 2006; Van den Berg & Pitariu, 2005).

The early work of Bradburn (1969, as cited in Diener & Lucas, 2003) on subjective well-being found that sociability, which is a part of extraversion, was related to pleasant emotions but was not found to be related to negative emotions. Costa and McCrae (1980) also found support for these findings and concluded that neuroticism was related to the negative but not the positive affect. Thus extraversion and emotional stability could act as protective factors and play an important part in maintaining higher levels of subjective well-being (Hayes & Joseph, 2003; Kebza, 2005). However, other authors also found that a low level of neuroticism seemed to be a better predictor of subjective well-being than extraversion (Steel, Schmidt, & Shultz, 2008; Tišanská & Kožený, 2004; Vittersø, 2001).

It has also been shown in several research studies that there is a relationship between personality factors conscientiousness (Chung & Harding, 2009; Hayes & Joseph, 2003), agreeableness (Joshani & Nosratabadi, 2009; Ruiz, 2005) and subjective well-being. Another research study found that subjective well-being was correlated with all personality factors except for the factor openness to experience (Hřebíčková, Blatný, & Jelinek, 2010).

While numerous studies have applied the Five Factor Model of personality and focused on the relationship between these five personality factors (extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness to experience) and subjective well-being, there are additional variables which should be of interest. In particular, the social dimension and functioning in interpersonal relationships may play important roles in experiencing the feelings of well-being and satisfaction (Blatný, 2005; Myers, 2003) and its respective dimensions (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) or independent components (Keyes, 1998; Šolcová & Kebza, 2005). Furthermore, far less attention has been paid so far to the contingencies of the interpersonal theory of behavioural traits in this context. Based on the theory of the interpersonal circumplex and vertical understanding of provision and denial of status, it can be assumed that self-provision of status and love could also be associated with higher levels of subjective well-being.

• **Association between social support and well-being.** Social support and participation in social relationships promote subjective well-being (Blatný, 2005). Social support is particularly important as it is based on interpersonal communication and exchange in which the one who provides support may also benefit from the positive feedback from the person who receives it (Mareš, 2001). Moreover, social support is one of the first variables that have shown a clear moderating effect on psychological well-being and health (Šolcová & Kebza, 1999).

It is also very important to address the impact of social support on subjective well-being in workplace, which is in the centre of this study. Shirey (2004, as cited in Mintz-Binder & Fitzpatrick, 2009) proposed that within the context of work comfort it is important to distinguish

between provided and perceived emotional support. Furthermore, Smith (2008) has suggested that the effect of support from superiors on subjective well-being of employees is an important topic for investigation and the findings from his research show that leadership based on a respectful and open approach, social support, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation have a positive effect on the well-being of the employees.

An original concept of social support has been proposed by Trobst (2000). His concept is based on the interpersonal circumplex theory of personality with individual types of supportive behaviours arranged in a circle. These respective personality types are characterized by either provision or denial of love and granting status to oneself and others. This model allows describing the types of behaviour that are positively but also negatively related to subjective well-being.

1.2. Well-being of the teachers

There are also specific variables that have to be taken into account when studying the subjective well-being of teachers. In particular, it is important to consider teachers' personal and interpersonal skills and characteristics (Van Petegem, Aelterman, Van Keer, & Rosseel, 2008). It has been found that on average a profile of a typical teacher is characterised by a medium to high degree of neuroticism, high degree of extraversion and agreeableness, and medium levels of openness to experience and conscientiousness (Howard & Howard, 2000, as cited in Hřebíčková & Řehulková, 2002). However, research findings regarding the degree of neuroticism among teachers have not been consistent. While increased neuroticism among teachers was reported by Řehulka and Řehulková (1998), and Židková and Martinková (2003); research studies by Hřebíčková and Řehulková (2002) and Žaloudíková (2001) did not find a significant prevalence of neurotic personality among teachers.

Subjective well-being of teachers has been shown to be related to a number of factors. Subjective well-being has been shown to be related to socio-demographic factors, competencies of the teachers but also to the amount support provided to the teachers. The headmaster is an important source of social support for school teachers. Thus the supportive behaviour of the headmaster may have a moderating effect on the impact of psychological stress of the teachers on their well-being (Sakoda, Tanaka, & Fuchigami, 2004). For example, a study on health and well-being of teachers in Scotland has found that teachers considered their superiors' behaviour to be very important; especially, they appreciated friendly attitude, emotional support, collegiality and an engaged proactive approach (Dunlop & Macdonald, 2004). Furthermore, Leithwood (2005, as cited in Konu, Viitanen, & Lintonen, 2010) emphasizes the importance of behavioural attributes of the headmaster such as a tendency to support initiative, creativity and producing new ideas of fellow teachers. Finally, Křivohlavý (2002) in his work focuses on social support of teachers and students and highlights the need for further empirical research in this area.

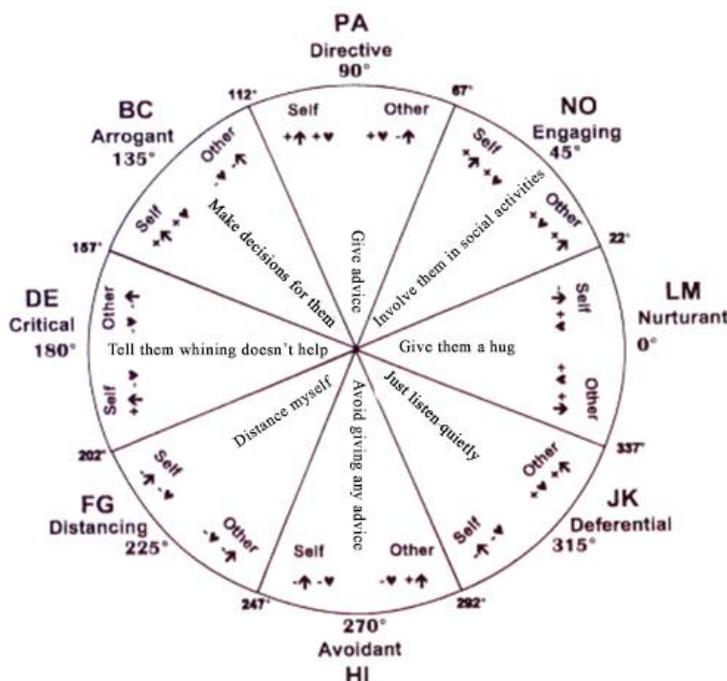
2. BACKGROUND

This research study was based on the hedonic perspective on subjective well-being. It focused on the overall life satisfaction as well as the satisfaction with different areas of life and the frequency positive and negative emotions. As already presented, well-being has been shown to be predominantly associated with the dominance of positive over negative emotions. In this study we used the concept of social well-being by Keyes (1998), which consists of five dimensions:

- a) social integration (the extent to which people feel they have something in common with others who constitute their social reality);
- b) social acceptance (trust to others, belief, that other people are kind and industrious);
- c) social contribution (belief that one is a vital member of society, with something of value to give);
- d) social actualization (belief of the positive evolution of the society);
- e) social coherence (perception of the quality, organization and operation of the social world).

The chosen approach to measuring personality traits was based on the Five Factor Model of personality. This model consists of five basic personality dimensions: extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness to experience. Interpersonal behaviour of the school headmasters was studied with specific focus on the provision of social support, which was based on the concept of interpersonal social support (Trobst, 2000). The details regarding the provision of love and status within the concept of the circumplex model of social support is shown in the Figure 1. The particular focus of our study was centred on engaging and distancing behaviours of the headmaster.

Figure 1. Provision love and status in the context of the circumplex model of social support (Trobst 1999, p. 248).



3. DESIGN

A cross-sectional comparative design was used to explore the differences in life satisfaction, work satisfaction, social well-being in school environment and emotional well-being according to the level of support from the headmaster as well as teachers’ personality characteristics. The differences in measured variables were explored between the groups of teachers who perceived their headmaster as very supportive and those who perceived their headmaster as not supportive. Secondly, the differences were explored between those high in distancing behaviour and low in distancing behaviour.

Finally, the differences in life satisfaction, work satisfaction, social well-being in school and emotional well-being between those with the high versus low score in personality variables (extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience) were addressed.

4. OBJECTIVES

The aim of the present study was to explore how personality characteristics of teachers and social support provided by headmasters influence life satisfaction, work satisfaction, social and emotional well-being of teachers.

5. METHODS

5.1. Sample

The research sample consisted of the 1st and 2nd grade teachers from primary schools. The total number of participants was 265 with 89.6% women. According to the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education in Bratislava, in the academic year 2010/11, 85.74% of teachers who taught in Slovak primary schools were women (<http://www.uips.sk/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka>), which roughly correspond with the gender composition of our research sample. The mean age of participants was 42.14 years, age range 24-68 years. The length of teaching experience of the teachers in our sample varied from 0.5 to 50 years. The average length of teaching experience was 17.92 years. 39.7% of teachers taught at the 1st grade and 60.3% taught at the 2nd grade at primary schools.

Data collection was carried out in January and February 2011. Questionnaires were administered in two ways, both in the form of group learning activities for teachers and also individually through personal contacts with the teachers. Participants were selected based on availability. A total of 551 questionnaires were distributed and 287 completed questionnaires returned (52.09%). 22 questionnaires were excluded from the analysis due to large amount of missing data.

5.2. Measures

Work satisfaction was measured by the Questionnaire of life satisfaction created by authors J. Fahrenberg, M. Myrteka, J. Schumacher and E. Brahlera (Rodná & Rodný, 2001). This questionnaire assesses the overall life satisfaction and satisfaction related to important areas of life. Each area is represented by seven items. Participant answered each item on a 7 point scale (1 - very dissatisfied, 2 - dissatisfied, 3 - rather dissatisfied, 4 - neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 5 - rather satisfied, 6 - satisfied 7 - very satisfied). Summary score of life satisfaction was created by adding the scores for health, work and employment, financial situation, leisure, satisfaction with oneself, friends, acquaintances and relatives, and housing. For the purposes of the analysis overall life satisfaction score and satisfaction in the area of work and employment and satisfaction with oneself were used. Cronbach's α for the total life satisfaction score was 0.936. Cronbach α for work satisfaction was 0.862. Table 1 shows examples of representative items from this questionnaire.

Table 1. Example of the items of the Questionnaire of life satisfaction.

I am... with my position in the workplace.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When I think about how secure my position is in the future I am...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The success I have experienced at my work is...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

To detect affective component of subjective well-being the Scale of habitual emotional subjective well-being was used (Džuka & Dalbert, 2002). It consists of two subscales (positive affect and negative affect) measuring emotional component of subjective well-being. Positive affect was examined by four items (enjoyment, physical vigour, joy, happiness) and negative affect was represented by six items (anger, guilt, shame, fear, pain, sadness). Participants responded to the frequency of experiencing these feelings on a 6-point scale ("almost never", "rarely", "sometimes", "often" and "very often", "almost always"). Emotional well-being was defined as a difference between standardised score of positive and negative emotions.

Social well-being in school was measured by selected items from Keyes's questionnaire (1998). The items were selected to measure concern regarding school environment (table 2). Total score of social well-being was represented by fifteen items. Participants responded on a 7 point scale. Cronbach's α was 0.828.

Table 2. The scale and example of the items of Social well-being questionnaire.

1 strongly disagree	7 strongly agree						
The school environment is too complicated for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that I am a part of community in the school where I work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
People in the school are helpful without expecting anything in return.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am a valuable member of the community in the school where I work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Schools are becoming a better place for everybody.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Personality traits were measured using the IASR-B5 questionnaire (Trapnell & Wiggins, 1990), which included the Big Five factors, as well as interpersonal traits based on the circumplex model. We analysed data only from the following subscales: agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness and openness to experience. Participants responded to how the individual adjectives described them on a 8 point scale, with the number 1 meaning completely inaccurate and 8 completely accurate (Table 3). Cronbach’s α for each subscale ranged from 0.624 to 0.892.

Table 3. The scale and example of the items of questionnaire IASR_B5.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
extremely inaccurate	very inaccurate	quite inaccurate	slightly inaccurate	slightly accurate	quite accurate	very accurate	extremely accurate
__outgoing	__anxious	__reliable	__imaginative	__friendly			

To identify supportive behaviour of school headmaster, Support Actions Scale Circumplex (SAS-C) methodology was used (Trobst, 2000). Trobst created the scale on the basis of the circumplex model of social support. The questionnaire consists of 64 items and each type of supportive behaviour comprises eight items. We analysed the data from the subscales: engaging (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.685$) and distancing (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.790$) behaviours. Participants assessed the behaviour of the headmaster on a seven-point scale (from 1 – “certainly would not do it” to 7 – “certainly would do it”) in situations where they or their co-worker needed help and support when confronted with problems (Table 4).

Table 4. Example of the items of the Questionnaire of life satisfaction.

Reluctant to give advice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Helped with enthusiasm	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5.3. Statistical analyses

The data were analysed using non-parametric test (Mann-Whitney U-test) to test for differences between the groups with the highest and lowest levels of measured variables (the perceived type of supportive behaviour of a headmaster and the Big Five personality traits). Work satisfaction and social well-being were the dependent variables.

The analysis was conducted in SPSS 20.

6. RESULTS

The engaging behaviour of headmasters was associated with high levels of teachers’ life and work satisfaction as well as social well-being in school. On the contrary, distancing behaviour of headmasters was associated with low levels of these variables. There are no significant differences in teachers’ emotional well-being according to supportive behaviour of their headmaster (Table 5).

Table 5. Significant differences in teachers' Life and Work Satisfaction, Social and Emotional Well-being as related to the level of Engaging/Distancing headmasters' behaviour.

	Engaging behaviour				Distancing behaviour			
	U-test	sig	Median Group 1	Median Group 2	U-test	sig	Median Group 1	Median Group 2
Life Satisfaction	5033	.002	230	245	3052.5	.027	241.5	229
Work Satisfaction	1662.5	.000	31	39	512	.001	38	33
Social Well-being	1639	.000	65	72	383.5	.000	75	66
Emotional Well-being	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Group 1 - low level; Group 2 - high level

The teachers with a low level of neuroticism and high level of extraversion showed a high level of life satisfaction. The emotionally stable and conscientious teachers were more satisfied in work (Table 6).

Table 6. Significant differences in teachers' Life and Work Satisfaction when compared according to their level of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Openness to experience.

	Life Satisfaction				Work Satisfaction			
	U-test	sig	Median Group 1	Median Group 2	U-test	sig	Median Group 1	Median Group 2
Neuroticism	2200	<.001	246	219	311	.000	40	31
Extraversion	4269	.002	229	248	-	-	-	-
Conscientiousness	-	-	-	-	1328	.000	31.5	39
Agreeableness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Openness to experience	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Group 1 - low level; Group 2 - high level

The emotionally stable, extraverted and conscientious teachers showed higher levels of social and emotional well-being. Social well-being was also higher in the group of teachers scoring high in agreeableness. Emotional well-being was found to be higher in the group of teachers with higher level of openness to experience (Table 7).

Table 7. Significant differences in teachers' Social and Emotional Well-being when compared according to their level of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Openness to experience.

	Life Satisfaction				Work Satisfaction			
	U-test	sig	Median Group 1	Median Group 2	U-test	sig	Median Group 1	Median Group 2
Neuroticism	1392	<.001	.938	-.976	436	.000	73	66.5
Extraversion	5163.5	<.001	-.587	.891	1513	.004	66.5	72
Conscientiousness	5165	.013	-.385	.253	1173.5	.009	66	73
Agreeableness	-	-	-	-	1192	.019	63.5	72
Openness to experience	3808	.013	-.362	.253	-	-	-	-

Group 1 - low level; Group 2 - high level

7. CONCLUSION/DISCUSSION

Similarly to other research studies, (Gomez et al., 2009; Hayes & Joseph, 2003; Joshanloo & Nosratabadi, 2009; Van den Berg & Pitariu, 2005) this work also finds support for the association between personality traits (mainly neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness) well-being and work satisfaction. However, emotional stability and extraversion were not found to significantly contribute to the explanation of the variance in the overall life satisfaction or social and emotional well-being of teachers. Regarding the emotional component of subjective well-being, personality factors were found to make a unique contribution to the explained variance in this component. Our findings are similar to those of Steel, et al. (2008) who found that neuroticism significantly contributed to the explanation of negative affectivity while extraversion was more effective in explaining positive affectivity.

Our findings further show that there is an association between the overall life satisfaction, work satisfaction and social well-being of teachers and the behaviour of school headmasters characterized by respect, patient listening, affection, and providing of emotional support. This corresponds with the testimonies of teachers regarding behaviour of school headmasters as can be found in the work of Dunlop and Macdonald (2004). It has been even suggested that the evaluation of the overall life satisfaction is affected by work satisfaction (Judge & Locke, 1993). The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of Smith (2008) who concluded that leadership (which includes respectful, open behaviour providing social support, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation) had a positive impact on the well-being of employees. Social well-being, life and work satisfaction of teachers are negatively affected by behaviour of the headmasters when they are perceived by the teachers as distancing, even in the absence of emphasized superiority but with missing emotional involvement.

Conscientiousness seems to be another significant factor in explaining work and employment satisfaction as well as emotional and social well-being. Next, agreeableness was also an important variable in explaining social well-being. The positive relationship between job satisfaction and conscientiousness was found in the study by Van den Berg and Pitariu (2005) and the relevance of agreeableness the context of subjective well-being can be found in the work of Joshanloo and Nosratabadi (2009) and Ruiz (2005).

The findings of this study generally correspond with the assumptions and are logical. There are many studies that deal with subjective well-being and its variables; our work focuses specifically on the subjective well-being of primary school teachers. We were mainly interested in the interconnection of selected factors that contribute to teachers' well-being.

The findings of our study have provided evidence for a significant association between neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness and variables representing subjective and social well-being. The significance of social support, in terms of supportive behaviour of school headmasters was especially highlighted in the context of work and employment satisfaction as well as subjective well-being. The behaviour of headmasters appears to be especially supportive when it is characterized by active involvement, interest, emotional support and necessary information. In contrast withdrawn, reserved and avoiding behaviours, showing neither superiority nor emotional involvement were found to work in the opposite direction.

The issues of physical and especially mental health of the teachers, as well as raising the levels of their subjective well-being are the key issues that can improve the overall atmosphere at schools. Our research results indicate the path, which can be followed to achieve this goal.

7.1. Limitations of the study

There are some limitations to this study that should be mentioned. The survey sample was based on availability of the teachers and cannot be treated as representative of the primary schools in the East Slovakia region. Another limitation concerns the research tools; Slovak adaptations of the questionnaires used in our study might need further psychometric scrutiny due to lower values of reliability indicators of some scales (extraversion, openness to experiences). Nunnally (1978) suggests 0.70 as an acceptable reliability coefficient.

It is important to mention that the variables included in the analysis were not exhaustive and did not address the whole spectrum of possible influences, which can be found in the current scientific literature, which explores subjective and social well-being. Certain socio-economic as well as demographic variables were not included in our analysis (however, the sample of teachers seemed to be evenly distributed regarding these characteristics). Furthermore, within our study only selected variables were included from a wider spectrum of social relationships, which could be important sources of social support. Moreover, it is also important to mention that a correspondence between personal expectations, values, goals and real life conditions should be addressed in more detail. It is also important that the future research addresses variables representing psychological well-being according to Ryff and Keys (1995) as well as the construct of meaning of life developed by King, Hicks, Krull, & Del Gaiso (2006). The present study is a part of a broader study addressing the variables which could explain the well-being of teachers and their life satisfaction, satisfaction with different life dimensions, and represents a preliminary account of the proposed topics which require a complex approach containing a large variety of possible predictors of subjective and social well-being.

8. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

In the future research, we consider using abbreviated versions of questionnaires in order to make the complete battery of questionnaires less demanding to complete in one session. A comprehensive view on the subjective well-being would require integration of methodology used to evaluate psychological well-being based on the theory Ryff and Keyes (1995).

It is important that future explorations include as many relevant variables as possible and address their interactions. In addition to the personality variables and social support provided by supervisors in schools it is important to include additional internal variables such as salutogenic factors of resilience, hardiness, locus of control as well as values, goals and explore them with respect to the needs of the environmental conditions. From the external variables it is important to address the social support from colleagues, close family, wider social environment, teachers' status within the society, atmosphere in schools, problematic students in class, social and economic factors. The findings from such research could help to formulate further recommendations for school managements and policy makers who can thus propose specific action plans for improving the school climate and well-being at schools.

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KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Social well-being: appraisal of one's circumstance and functioning in society. There are confirmed five dimensions of social well-being: social integration, social contribution, social coherence, social actualization and social acceptance.

Big Five personality traits: five broad dimensions of personality that are used to describe human personality. The five factors are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

Social support: it is understood as an act willingly provided in good faith to a person with whom the provider is in a personal relationship and has a positive effect on the recipient.

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