

## JOB SATISFACTION AND GENDER DIFFERENCES IN JOB SATISFACTION OF TEACHERS IN SERBIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

UDC: 331.101.32:305]:371.12(497.11)  
Original Scientific Paper

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Paper received: 26.11.2014.; Paper accepted: 07.12.2014.

**This paper aims to examine Serbian primary teachers' job satisfaction as well as the differences in job satisfaction between male and female teachers. The participants were 362 teachers from 57 primary schools in Serbia. Nine dimensions of job satisfaction (Pay, Promotion, Supervision, Fringe Benefits, Contingent Rewards, Operating Procedures, Co-Workers, Nature of Work, Communication) were measured. The results indicate that from the dimensions of job satisfaction, Serbian primary teachers are most satisfied with the Nature of work, Communication and Supervision, while the major sources of Serbian primary teachers' job dissatisfaction are Fringe benefits, Pay and Operating procedures. When it comes to the gender difference in job satisfaction, T-test analysis shows slightly higher satisfaction among female teachers, while statistically significant difference exists only in two dimensions: Supervision and Nature of work. Serbian policy makers in the field of education as well as school administrators should pay close attention to teachers' job satisfaction and its improvement considering that it is an essential to the continuing growth of school effectiveness.**

**Key words:** primary teachers, job satisfaction, gender differences in job satisfaction, Serbian schools' effectiveness.

### INTRODUCTION

Serbian education system has been facing many challenges for the last two and a half decades. The biggest problems in Serbian educational system are directly related to the social problems in our society. Painful years of war and sanctions, as well as a long and chaotic transition process that is still present in Serbia resulted in degradation of values in Serbian society which has negatively influenced the state of education in Serbia, the work of teachers and the reputation of their profession.

Peer violence and bullying have become frequent phenomena in many Serbian primary schools. Furthermore, teachers across the country are experiencing alarmingly high rates of student violence and harassment while at school, while parents' attitudes towards teachers range from total

indifference to extreme aggression. The frequent changes of strategies, policies and directives governed by the Serbian Ministry of Education and not so successful attempts to comply them with those in European Union are very stressful for teachers making them feel lost and leaving no room for creativity or taking initiatives. Moreover, uncontrolled introduction of inclusive education caused a lot of troubles for primary teachers in Serbia. The biggest problem in the implementation of inclusion in education is that the preparations started late so the teachers were not sufficiently prepared or trained for implementation of this process. Teachers' training through several short seminars for working with children with disabilities is inadequate, because dealing with such children requires highly educated and specially trained personnel. Adding the fact that, in Serbia, teaching is the lowest paid profession of all

professions that require university degree, it is obvious how people, on whose work the prosperity and success of current and future generations depend, are treated in our country.

The aim of this paper is to examine the level of Serbian primary teachers' satisfaction with specific aspects of their job considering all mentioned challenges they are facing with as well as to investigate whether there are any significant differences in job satisfaction between male and female teachers. Being the most important group of professionals for the nation's future, it is of great significance to understand the sources of teachers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction in order to maximize their satisfaction and minimize dissatisfaction not only for the benefit of teachers themselves but for the sake of students and entire education system as well.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Job satisfaction is the pleasurable condition of a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Locke, 1976). It indicates the overall quality of one's experiences in one's work role (Kalleberg and Loscocco, 1983) and, according to Spector (1997), is a person's evaluation of his/her job and work context i.e. an attitude reflecting how well people like or dislike their job. Job satisfaction is an important topic in studies dealing with education and teachers. Exploring the issue of teacher job satisfaction provides a deeper understanding of teachers' mental state, such as their occupational attitudes, zeal for teaching, and work enthusiasm, which affects the quality of teaching and education (Fuming and Jiliang, 2008). With respect to teachers, their job satisfaction can be defined as the feelings that they hold toward the job (Taylor and Tashakkori, 1995), or the state of mind determined by the extent to which they perceive their job-related needs as being met (Evans, 1997). According to Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2004), teacher job satisfaction refers to a teacher's affective relation to his or her teaching role and is a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from teaching and what one perceives it is offering to a teacher. Lester (1982) defines teacher job satisfaction as the extent to which a teacher perceives and values various factors such as evaluation, collegiality, responsibility and recognition while Hoy and Miskel (1991) argues that, in educational settings, job satisfaction is a present-and past-oriented

affective state of like or dislike that results when teachers evaluate their work role.

A teacher's level of job satisfaction is important matter for many reasons. Woods and Weasmer (2002) suggest that when teachers are satisfied, the rate of attrition is reduced, collegiality is enhanced, and job performance improves. When it comes to professionals such as teachers who work under little supervision and are autonomous in their work, the effect of job satisfaction on performance may be even more pronounced (Serow et al., 1992; Duffy, 2006). Teacher job satisfaction influences the quality of teaching and students' progress, and is a predictor of teacher retention and a determinant of teacher commitment, which contributes to school effectiveness (Shann, 1998). In reference (Hoerr, 2013), it is pointed to the importance of job satisfaction of teachers for success in the classroom and the overall atmosphere in the school. The author further states that the growth of teachers' job satisfaction develops through the teaching and promotion of teachers. They become more effective, and therefore happier. According to Wolk (2008), the overall satisfaction and satisfaction of students in the school can hardly be realized without teachers who are satisfied with their work. It is crucial for the quality of life, psychological health and self-actualization of teachers (Michaelowa and Wittmann 2007). Demands from administrators, colleagues, and students compounded by work overload, shifting policies, and a lack of recognition for accomplishments make teaching a stressful occupation (Greenglass and Burke, 2003). Understanding factors that contribute to teacher satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) is essential to improving the information base needed to support a successful educational system (Perie et al., 1997).

Teachers have many various responsibilities such as: educating students, insuring their safety and healthy atmosphere, communicating and collaborating with parents, fellow teachers, specialists and administrators, developing their own skills and knowledge, administering documents, organizing school trips and completing a number of other tasks provided by the government and school administration (Comber and Nixon, 2009). Those challenges of their profession require emotional and intellectual resources that may sometimes lead to burnout, depression or other physical and psychological health related issues (Chang, 2009). Being considered as a specific sample of employees, who have different operating conditions in comparison

with typical organizations' employees (Klassen et al., 2010), teacher job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are influenced by a number of variables. Dinham and Scott (1998) suggested that the sources of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction may be classified into three domains: intrinsic rewards of teaching - the actual work of teaching, working with the students, and seeing students learn and develop, all of which are primary motives for becoming a teacher and a main source of satisfaction among teachers (Scott, Stone, and Dinham, 2001), factors extrinsic to the school which include imposed educational change, external evaluation of schools, negative portrayal of teachers in the media, and a decrease in the status of teaching, and school-based factors or contextual variables at school which include relations with colleagues, parents, and the school leadership, as well as time pressure, disruptive student behaviour, and the values emphasized at the local school. Because teachers usually do lack many extrinsic rewards - high salaries, promotional opportunities, they mainly need to derive satisfaction from intrinsic sources, such as working with children and developing warm, personal relationships with them, the intellectual challenge of teaching, having autonomy and independence, developing social relations with colleagues and having opportunities for growth (Mykletun, 1984; Lathan, 1998; Lee et al., 1991; Troman, 2000; Lortie, 2002).

A difference in teacher job satisfaction on the basis of gender is a widely researched issue in numerous studies where rather inconsistent results seem to be obtained. Ma and MacMillan (1999) surveyed elementary school teachers and found that female teachers were more satisfied with their professional role as a teacher compared to their male counterparts. Klecker (1997) also indicated that females were more satisfied than males. Gender was a significant factor in a study by Klecker and Lodman (1999) who found that female elementary teachers rated their job satisfaction more positively than their male colleagues. The similar results were obtained by Chen and Sun (1994), Bedeian et al. (1992) and Hill (1994). Conversely, Abdullah, Uli and Parasuraman (2009) showed that male teachers were more satisfied. Crossman and Harris (2006) reported that males were slightly more satisfied than females while a study by Feng (2007) found that satisfaction among female teachers in every dimension of job satisfaction was slightly lower than among male teachers. According to some studies, gender difference in job satisfaction of teachers exists only in some aspects of job

(Galloway et al., 1985; Zhang, 2000) or do not exist at all (Brush et al., 1987; Clark et al., 1996).

## METHOD

### Research instruments

*Job satisfaction.* Job satisfaction is measured by means of the Job Satisfaction Survey questionnaire (Spector, 1985). This questionnaire has 36 items relating to the nine dimensions of job satisfaction. The dimensions of job satisfaction are: Pay, Promotion, Supervision, Fringe Benefits, Contingent Rewards, Operating Procedures, Co-Workers, Nature of Work and Communication. The answers are measured by a 6-point Likert scale (1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - Somewhat disagree; 4 - Somewhat agree; 5 - Agree; 6 - Strongly agree).

### Respondents and data collecting

The research was carried out in Serbian primary schools. The questionnaires were distributed personally to all the teachers in the sampled primary schools. A total of  $N(0) = 383$  teachers from 57 schools answered the questions. After the initial analysis, because of the significant dispersion of results, 21 questionnaires were rejected. Thus, the total number of respondents was  $N = 362$ . The total number of respondents  $N = 362$  consisted of 250 women and 112 men. This small sample number of men is the result of the employee structure in the Serbian education system (according to gender). According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2011), 67% women and 33% men are employed in our education system. If we observe primary schools, the percentage of women is even higher than in secondary schools and higher education.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive analysis

The descriptive statistics for the dimensions of job satisfaction are shown in Table 1. In the table, among other things, the names of the dimensions, the short names for each dimension (which are used hereafter), mean size, standard deviation, standard error mean and Cronbach's Alpha, are given for each dimension. The values of Cronbach's Alpha range in the interval from  $\alpha = 0.703$  to  $\alpha = 0.855$ .

**Independent sample T test analysis**

The comparative results of the average values of all nine dimensions of job satisfaction of male and female primary teachers are presented in Table 2. T-test (independent samples test) was used for the comparison of two sets of data (job satisfaction of male teachers and job satisfaction of female

teachers). The main results of statistical analysis are also given in Table 2. It can be noted that in two dimensions (JS3 and JS8) there is a statistically significant difference between observed groups of data. The results of these two dimensions are marked in Table 2.

*Table 1: Descriptive Statistics*

Dimensions	Short name	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	Cronbach's Alpha
Pay	JS1	1.00	6.00	3.0711	1.04518	.05493	.709
Promotion	JS2	1.00	6.00	3.4710	1.31547	.06914	.845
Supervision	JS3	1.00	6.00	4.6906	1.14312	.06008	.870
Fringe benefits	JS4	1.00	6.00	2.9544	1.34867	.07088	.838
Contingent rewards	JS5	1.00	6.00	3.5753	1.29203	.06791	.838
Operating procedures	JS6	1.00	6.00	3.2106	1.04305	.05482	.703
Co-Workers	JS7	1.75	6.00	4.5981	.93377	.04908	.784
Nature of work	JS8	1.50	6.00	5.2666	.84890	.04462	.855
Communication	JS9	1.00	6.00	4.8094	.95043	.04995	.827
Valid N (list wise)	362						

*Table 2: Comparative results of the average values of all nine dimensions of job satisfaction of male and female primary teachers (t-test)*

JS dimension	Group Statistics					Independent Samples Test					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
JS1	Men	112	3.1092	1.07299	.12734			.341	360	.733	.04730
	Women	250	3.0619	1.03995	.06096	.337	.562	.335	104.440	.738	.04730
JS2	Men	112	3.3873	1.31664	.15626			-.597	360	.551	-.10408
	Women	250	3.4914	1.31664	.07718	.097	.756	-.597	106.791	.552	-.10408
JS3	Men	112	4.4225	1.13593	.13481			-2.216	360	.027	-.33348
	Women	250	4.7560	1.13723	.06667	.000	.983	-2.217	106.879	.029	-.33348
JS4	Men	112	3.0951	1.32582	.15735			.980	360	.328	.17497
	Women	250	2.9201	1.35421	.07939	.019	.889	.993	108.476	.323	.17497
JS5	Men	112	3.6021	1.30629	.15503			.195	360	.846	.03338
	Women	250	3.5687	1.29072	.07566	.001	.973	.194	105.870	.847	.03338
JS6	Men	112	3.3310	.98178	.11652			1.085	360	.279	.14971
	Women	250	3.1813	1.05700	.06196	.778	.378	1.134	113.010	.259	.14971
JS7	Men	112	4.5810	.94281	.11189			-.172	360	.864	-.02125
	Women	250	4.6022	.93315	.05470	.379	.539	-.171	105.999	.865	-.02125
JS8	Men	112	5.0141	.97458	.11566			-2.822	360	.005	-.31409
	Women	250	5.3282	.80523	.04720	7.018	.008	-2.514	94.627	.014	-.31409
JS9	Men	112	4.7183	1.00706	.11952			-.900	360	.369	-.11331
	Women	250	4.8316	.93656	.05490	1.251	.264	-.861	101.569	.391	-.11331

**DISSCUSION**

Within descriptive statistics (Table 1), it is important to give consideration to the total average grade for all nine dimensions of teachers' job satisfaction which is 3.9308. This total average grade is not so bad considering the unfavourable

status of teachers and teaching profession in Serbian society.

The highest average grades of all job satisfaction dimensions are evidenced for the JS8 - Nature of work, JS9 - Communication and JS3 - Supervision, while the lowest average grades can be noticed at JS4 - Fringe benefits, JS1 - Pay and JS6 -

Operating procedures. These results indicate that Serbian primary teachers are focused on the intrinsic work satisfaction and value intrinsic or non-material satisfaction more than the extrinsic or material. They like being teachers, welcome the opportunities to work closely with colleagues to improve their pedagogical skills, are willing to overlook the lack of fringe benefits, low pay and remain in the teaching profession despite the heavy workload. The results are consistent with findings of Zhang (2000) whose study concluded that teachers were fairly or basically satisfied with the job itself, relations among colleagues, and school principal leadership – supervision.

According to Table 1, Serbian primary teachers are most satisfied with JS8 – Nature of work meaning that their greatest pleasure comes from the core aspect of their work: teaching students. Teaching is a great profession with many precious opportunities to build a student's self-concept, contribute to their growth and development, help shape a dream, provide redirection, and impart knowledge and wisdom, as well as to be creative, explore different ways to teach some ideas and constantly improvise. Having these opportunities and acting on them is what Serbian teachers value most about their job. In their study, Cheng and Sun (1994), also found that the nature of job was the main source of teachers' satisfaction.

Job satisfaction dimension JS9 – Communication also has a very high average grade (Table 1), indicating that teachers in Serbian primary schools consider communication with other school members to be a strong aspect of their satisfaction with teaching. Even if teaching is quite an autonomous profession (Clement and Vandenberghe, 2000), what makes Serbian primary teachers satisfied and means a lot to them is the opportunity to share opinions, solve problems together relating to students or teaching process, and to get constructive feedback on their performance from school administrators. According to Burnett (2001), positive social relationships with colleagues are important sources of teachers' emotional health, because colleagues are seen as a source of friendship and a source of social and emotional support.

In terms of job satisfaction dimension JS3 – Supervision, a fairly high average grade can be noticed. In Serbia, primary schools are public institutions in which there is less uncertainty in the process of governance and management. In this regard, school principals are under less pressure

compared to the leaders in other sectors. Consequently, teachers feel less pressure from the management, which results in increase of satisfaction with supervision.

Very low average grades of dimension JS4 – Fringe benefits and JS1 – Pay (Table 1), indicate that Serbian primary teachers are not much satisfied with how much they are paid as well as with compensations made to them beyond regular wages or salaries. This finding is not surprising considering the fact that, in Serbia, teaching is the lowest paid profession of all professions that require university degree. Besides being underpaid, primary teachers in Serbia are underappreciated, rarely provided with non-financial incentives, while the reputation of their profession has deteriorated in the past two and a half decades. There are also numerous studies, (Dinham and Scott, 1998; Osborn et al., 2000; Van den Berg, 2002), in which low pay is a factor that has been linked to teachers' dissatisfaction.

In terms of dimension JS6 – Operating procedures, a very low average grade can be noticed. Serbian primary teachers' dissatisfaction with operating procedures is real and understandable. Administrative tasks, documentation and paperwork associated with pupils' assessment, progress, behaviour, report writing and reporting to parents, and frequent changes of policies and directives governed by the Serbian Ministry of Education result in increased pressure among Serbian primary teachers and prevent them from focusing on teaching. According to the survey "Perception of educational changes in Serbia", held by the Institute for Educational Research (2012), that was conducted among 1800 teachers from 150 primary schools in Serbia, 88 percent of the participants thought that administrative requirements took too much of their time.

The results of t-test analysis, presented in Table 2, indicate that job satisfaction is slightly higher among female teachers, but statistically significant gender differences exist only in two aspects of job satisfaction: JS3 – Supervision and JS8 – Nature of work. Besides the opportunity to work with children, teaching offers a number of benefits (i. e. attractive working schedule with short working days and long vacations; teaching is a profession that does not require career oriented people) which make it very attractive occupation especially for women. Female primary teachers are more satisfied with the dimension JS8 – Nature of the work because they do a noble job, are not expected

to pursue a career and have more time for their own families.

Also, female teachers are more than their male counterparts satisfied with the dimension JS3 – Supervision. Unlike women, men, by their nature, have higher career aspirations and pay more attention than female teachers to leadership factors and fairness of administration and supervision, therefore they have the opportunity to notice a situation they are not satisfied with. At the same time, being satisfied with the nature of their work, female teachers pay less attention to the work of the principal and supervision.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Serbian primary teachers are more satisfied with the intrinsic or non-material factors (Nature of work, Communication and Supervision) than with the extrinsic or material ones such as Fringe benefits and Pay. This suggests that while Serbian policy makers in the field of education should improve teachers' material remuneration, they should not ignore the teachers' needs for self-fulfillment or other such positive factors which should be protected and encouraged. When it comes to the gender difference in job satisfaction, T-test analysis shows slightly higher satisfaction among female teachers, while statistically significant difference exist only in two dimensions: Supervision and Nature of work.

The findings demonstrate that there is a need for Serbian responsible authorities to recognise the fact that educational quality is largely related to teacher job satisfaction and to strategic means of helping boost teacher satisfaction in Serbian primary schools. By incorporating mechanisms that will encourage professional development and teacher involvement in the planning process, decision making and implementation of change in the education system Serbian primary teachers' job satisfaction can be raised which will contribute to the quality of their teaching, to better student achievement, as well as to Serbian primary school effectiveness as a whole.

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