

# **JOB SATISFACTION AND STRESS FACTORS AMONG TEACHERS AND HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN KOSOVO: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Naim Fanaj<sup>1</sup>**

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Erika Melonashi<sup>2</sup>**

**Dr. sci. Sevim Mustafa<sup>3</sup>**

**Dr. Fleura Shkëmbi<sup>4</sup>**

**Xhemajl Dugolli<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> College of Medical Sciences Rezonanca, Prishtina, Kosovo

<sup>2</sup> Barlety University, Tirana, Albania

<sup>3</sup> College AAB, Prishtina, Kosovo

<sup>4</sup> Mediterranean University of Albania, Tirana, Albania

<sup>5</sup> Special Institute, Shtime, Kosovo

## **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Healthcare workers and teachers represent two professional categories experiencing high levels of occupational stress. The purpose of the present study was to assess job satisfaction and stress factors among teachers and healthcare professionals in Kosovo, particularly focusing on patterns arising in terms of gender, age or working experience.

**Subjects and methods:** This cross-sectional study included 508 primary and secondary school teachers as well as 300 health workers with a mean age of 41.28 years (SD = 11.19). They completed a self-report questionnaire designed by the authors for the purpose of the research.

**Results:** Results revealed high job satisfaction for both teachers and healthcare workers, but teachers were significantly more satisfied as compared to healthcare workers. Also, weak stress factors were reported by both groups, but healthcare workers scored significantly higher than teachers across all factors except for 'physical working conditions' and 'difficult cases/tasks to solve'. The strongest stressor reported by both teachers and healthcare workers was 'inadequate salary', while the weakest one was 'Family problems'. Teachers and healthcare workers in Kosovo do not represent high risk categories for job-related stress; indeed, factors were rated as quite weak. However, results should be carefully considered particularly as regards findings on stressors, as there might be other more relevant, context/culturally related stressors which have not been investigated.

**Conclusion:** Findings on job satisfaction also require further investigation, particularly because of paradoxical results such as teachers being more satisfied

than healthcare workers but less likely to report that they would choose the same job again.

**Keywords:** *Job satisfaction, stress factors, teachers, healthcare, Kosovo*

## INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction and workplace stress have been extensively investigated particularly as regards two job categories considered at risk for high stress levels: healthcare workers and teachers [1]. Studies have consistently demonstrated that the teaching profession is highly demanding and therefore very stressful with findings being replicated worldwide and across different cultures [2]. Figures would go as high as 10–40% of teachers reporting high stress levels in European countries [3]. Stress factors related to the teaching profession include: managing student behavior [4], poor relationship with colleagues [4]; job demands; workload [4]; time pressure [4]; working experience [5]; educational level [5]; lack of support from co-workers, friends and family [4], [5] and lack of control [5].

Similarly, to teachers, healthcare professionals also experience high job stress and are at a higher risk for burnout. Based on Lyndon (2015) burnout syndrome is increasingly recognized among healthcare professionals estimating that it may affect up to 10–70% of nurses and 30–50% of physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants [6]. Birhanu (2018) cites several studies that revealed high levels of stress among nurses in Sweden (80%), Saudi Arabia (68.2%), India (73.5%), the Netherlands (55%), Belgium (40.4%) and Iran (34.9%) [7].

Koinis et al (2015) cited findings of Cooper et al. (2002) who rated among the top workplace stress factors: time pressure, deadlines, poor working conditions, excessive workload, prolonged working hours, conflict between different beliefs, interpersonal relationships and maladministration [8]. To summarize research suggests the need to investigate and provide further understanding of stress factors among these two job categories: Teachers and healthcare workers. This kind of research is particularly important in countries such as Kosovo, due to the considerable challenges in education and healthcare sectors, resulting from sociopolitical transitions in the recent years. Indeed, some existing research from Kosovo demonstrates high stress levels among teachers and healthcare workers. Shkëmbi, Melonashi and Fanaj (2015) found that 33.2% of Kosovo teachers (sample of 799 teachers) reported high rates of occupational stress. Workplace stress was significantly predicted by place of residence and level of education but not age, gender, marital status, or working experience [9]. The most frequently reported stressors were inadequate wages (36.8%), physical working environment (30.1%), and undisciplined students (26.2%) [7]. Bujari (2019) found that 38.6% of teachers participating in the study (sample of 420 participants) experienced moderate stress, while 5.8% high or extreme levels, with women being significantly more stressed than men [10]. Bujari (2019) reported

the following workplace stress factors: working conditions, salary, relationships with colleagues, gratitude and appreciation by the director, pressure and workload, communication with students, student behavior, student motivation, communication with the students' parents etc. [10].

Even higher rates of job-related stress have been reported among healthcare professionals. Bardhi (2016) found that 63.3% of doctors and nurses (sample of 300 participants) stated that they experience stress during working hours and mentioned the following factors: lack of support and safety, low wages, and work overload [11]. Kraja et al. (2018) examined 200 employees of different profiles: doctors, nurses and administrative employees of Family Medicine in Prizren and found as main causes of stress and burnout – inadequate vacations (18 %), lack of gratitude (12.5 %), insecurity at work (9.5 %), excessive work (8%), inadequate payment (7%) etc. [12].

Sopi (2019) examined fifty randomly selected nurses (ages 41.02 yr.) at the Pediatric Clinic of the University Clinical Center of Kosovo and revealed that the majority were not satisfied with the salaries (58%) and payment for extra work (64 %), examination rooms (56%), offices (48%), or the quality of food (84%) [13]. Recently, Podvorica et al. (2020) examined 90 nurses (45 working in Emergency Clinic and 45 working in Central Intensive Care and reported that 81% of participants were classified with moderate to high levels of stress [14]. The purpose of the present study was to assess job satisfaction and stress factors among teachers and healthcare professionals in Kosovo.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study sample and Procedure**

The sample included teachers and healthcare workers from Kosovo. The schools and healthcare facilities chosen for the purpose of the study were officially contacted explaining the purpose of the research, and asking for permission to conduct study in those settings. Authorities at each institution gave written permission to contact the personnel. Researchers also asked each participant to sign the informed consent form. Authors declare compliance with all ethical guidelines for data collection through self-reported questionnaires for adults. Paper and pencil questionnaires were administered to consenting participants and the data collection procedure was completed in two weeks. Approval for this research was obtained from the Ethical-Professional Committee of the University Clinical Hospital Service of Kosovo.

The final sample of teachers included 259 teachers from 20 primary schools and 249 teachers from 19 high schools. The response rate for teachers' sample was 65 %. The sample of healthcare workers included 300 participants: 32 medical doctors, 22 psychiatrists, 212 nurses, 12 psychologists, 4 social workers (missing data for 18). The response rate for healthcare workers was 55 % The

healthcare workers were employed in a. one general family health center (N=75), b. seven mental health centers (N=153), c. one special residential facility (N=42) and d. one general hospital (N=30).

In terms of gender composition, the teachers sample included 172 men and 328 women, while the healthcare sample included 90 men and 206 women. Age of participants ranged from 21 to 65 with mean age of 41.28(SD=11.19) for teachers and from 19 to 64 with mean age of 41.20 (SD=9.34) for healthcare workers. There were significant age group differences between the samples of teachers and healthcare workers ( $\chi(4) = 10.744, p = .03$ ). There were significant gender differences in both samples, but no significant gender differences between samples  $\chi(4) = 1.344, p = .24$ .

## Measuring Instruments

The measuring instruments included one self-report questionnaire designed by the authors for the purpose of the research with sociodemographic factors, one question about job satisfaction, one question about choosing same job again and ten questions about most stated work-stress factors, from related research. The question was 'In your opinion which of the following factors are most stressful to you?' 10 factors included 1. Lack of gratitude from others for the work you do; 2. Lack of security / Threats; 3. Work overload; 4. Family problems; 5. Coping with difficult cases; 6. Difficult cases/tasks to solve; 7. Unsatisfactory relationship with colleagues; 8. Lack of respect from supervisors; 9. Physical working conditions and 10. Inadequate salary. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from "not at all" (0) to "to much" (4). The instrument was piloted in a sample of 10 teachers and 10 healthcare workers to ensure that target groups have proper understanding of questionnaire items. No issues were reported during the process.

## RESULTS

### *Job satisfaction and stress factors: Teachers versus healthcare workers*

Regarding job satisfaction results revealed mean values of 4.45 for teachers and 4.22 for healthcare workers (range 1-5), suggesting high job satisfaction for both groups. More specifically 55.8% of teachers and 52.7% of healthcare workers reported being 'satisfied a lot'. Additionally, almost half the sample (45.6% of teachers and 56.7% of healthcare workers) reported they would choose again the same job (5 in a range 1-5). Mann-Whitney test revealed significant differences between teachers and healthcare workers for satisfaction scores ( $Md_{teacher}=5, N=500; Md_{health}=4, N=300; Z=-2.023, p<.04$ ); teachers showed higher mean ranks. Mann-Whitney test revealed significant differences between teachers and healthcare workers for choosing again same job ( $Md_{teacher}=4, N=500; Md_{health}=5, N=300; Z=-2.735, p<.00$ ); healthcare workers showed higher mean ranks. Mann-Whitney test revealed significant gender differences in satisfaction scores only for teachers ( $Md_{females}=5, N=328; Md_{males}=4, N=172; Z=-2.950,$

$p < .00$ ) females showed higher mean ranks for job satisfaction and were also more likely to report choosing again same job ( $Md_{\text{females}}=5$ ,  $N=328$ ;  $Md_{\text{males}}=4$ ,  $N=172$ ;  $Z=-3.047$ ,  $p < .00$ ). Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed significant differences by age-group, for teachers  $X^2(4, n=493) = 10.532$ ,  $p < .03$ , i.e., the age group 26 to 35 years old had the significantly highest mean ranks scores for job satisfaction as compared to the other three groups. Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed significant differences by age-group, for healthcare workers  $X^2(4, n=275) = 31.067$ ,  $p < .00$ , as the age group 18-25 years old had the highest mean ranks scores of job satisfaction as compared to the other three groups.

Kruskal-Wallis analyses revealed significant differences by working years, for teachers  $X^2(4, n=463) = 9.958$ ,  $p < .04$ ; teachers with 0-5 working years had the highest mean rank scores of job satisfaction as compared to the other four groups.

Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed significant differences by working years also for healthcare workers  $X^2(4, n=281) = 21.474$ ,  $p < .00$ ; as healthcare workers with 0-5 years' experience had the highest mean rank scores of job satisfaction as compared to the other four groups.

No significant differences were found in terms of age-group or working years as regards 'choosing again the same job'; the finding was confirmed both for teachers or healthcare workers.

Evaluation of stress factors in the range from 1-5, has revealed perceptions of weak stress factors both among teachers (mean of 1.19) and healthcare workers (mean of 1.59). More specifically stress factors for teachers in descending order (strongest to weakest) include: Inadequate salary (1.81), Difficult cases/tasks to solve (1.69), physical working conditions (1.59), Coping with difficult cases (1.50), work overload (1.04), Job insecurity/threats (0.70) etc. Similarly, stress factors for healthcare workers include: Inadequate salary (2.17), Coping with difficult cases (1.95), work overload (1.70), Difficult cases/tasks to solve (1.68), Job insecurity/threats (1.63) etc. The weakest stress factor on both samples was 'Family problems'. Mann-Whitney test revealed significant differences of stress factor scores between samples as healthcare workers scored higher than teachers across all factors except for physical working conditions and Difficult cases/tasks to solve.

#### Patterns of stress factors by gender, age group and working experience

Mann-Whitney test revealed no significant gender differences of total scores of the stress factors for both samples. Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed significant differences by age-group for teachers in the level of stress factors  $X^2(4, n=492) = 13.429$ ,  $p < .00$ ; as age groups 46-55 years old and 36-45 years old, had the highest mean ranks as compared to the other age groups. However, no significant differences by age-group were found for healthcare workers in the total level of stress factors. Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed significant differences by age-

group for teachers in three stress factors including ‘difficult cases/tasks to solve’, ‘unsatisfactory relationship with colleagues’, and ‘inadequate salary’. More specifically Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed that age groups 46-55 years old and 56-65 years old had highest mean ranks in ‘Difficult cases/tasks’,  $X^2(4, n=492) = 15.304, p < .00$ . Also age groups 36-45 years old and 46-55 years old had the highest mean ranks for unsatisfactory relationship with colleagues,  $X^2(4, n=492) = 9.914, p < .00$ . These same two age groups also had the highest mean ranks of ‘inadequate salary’ as compared to the other groups.

As regards healthcare workers Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed significant differences by age group only in one case; age groups 26-35 years old and 56-65 years old had the highest mean ranks for Job insecurity/threat as compared to the other groups,  $X^2(4, n=275) = 13.709, p < .00$ .

As regards working experience, Kruskal-Wallis analyses revealed significant differences in total stress factors for teachers, as ‘21-30 years’ group had the highest mean ranks as compared to the other groups  $X^2(4, n=463) = 12.435, p < .01$ . Differences were also found for healthcare workers, but the group scoring highest was ‘11-20 years’ category  $X^2(4, n=463) = 29.545, p < .00$ .

As regards analysis on specific stress factors, Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed significant differences by working experience for teachers in two stress factors: Difficult cases/tasks to solve and Lack of gratitude by others. Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed that teachers with 21-30 years of experience had highest mean ranks on ‘Difficult cases’ as compared to all other groups,  $X^2(4, n=281) = 18.348, p < .00$ . Similarly, teachers with 11-20 years of experience had highest mean ranks for ‘Lack of gratitude’ as compared to all other groups  $X^2(4, n=281) = 26.975, p < .01$ .

As regards healthcare workers, Kruskal-Wallis analyses revealed significant differences by working experience for five factors. Healthcare workers with 11-20 years of experience had highest mean scores for Job Insecurity/Threat  $X^2(4, n=281) = 26.768, p < .01$ ; Work Overload,  $X^2(4, n=281) = 19.261, p < .01$ ; Unsatisfactory relationship with colleagues,  $X^2(4, n=281) = 14.363, p < .01$  and Working physical conditions,  $X^2(4, n=281) = 27.303, p < .01$ . Conversely healthcare professionals belonging into the category of 6-10 years of experience had significantly highest mean ranks for Family problems,  $X^2(4, n=281) = 45.448, p < .01$ ; and Lack of supervision,  $X^2(4, n=281) = 41.677, p < .01$ .

Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed significant differences by work settings of healthcare participants in the total level of stress factors  $X^2(4, n=799) = 116.754, p < .01$ ; whereas mental health healthcare workers had the significantly highest mean ranks as compared to the other groups (residential institution, general hospital and family health center). Healthcare workers in residential institution had the significantly highest mean ranks as compared to the other groups for stress factors difficult cases/tasks to solve  $X^2(4, n=800) = 93.659, p < .00$

and Coping with difficult cases  $X^2(4, n=800)=42.696, p<.00$  and healthcare workers of general hospital had the significantly highest mean ranks for inadequate salary  $X^2(4, n=800)=13.977, p<.00$ .

### **Correlations between satisfaction and stress factors**

Correlations between job satisfaction and stress factors for the overall sample revealed weak but significant negative relationships; the strongest negative correlation was to the total score ( $r = -.277$ ), while the 3 most strongly related stress factors included family problems, unsatisfactory relationship with colleagues and work overload. Similar correlational patterns were found for men and women, examined separately; the only deviance was for 'inadequate salary' which was not significantly related to job satisfaction among women.

Correlations between job satisfaction and stress factors by professional category, revealed similar patterns; the only exception was for 'inadequate salary' which was not significantly correlated to job satisfaction among healthcare workers.

## **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the present study was to assess job satisfaction and stress factors among teachers and healthcare professionals in Kosovo. Results showed that more than half the sample among both healthcare workers and teachers report high job satisfaction. Teachers are more satisfied than healthcare workers, but nonetheless healthcare workers are more likely to report that they would choose the same job again. The present study does not provide an explanation of this apparently paradoxical finding, and requires further research into this direction (i.e., exploring reasons why healthcare workers' despite being less satisfied than teachers would choose the same job over again and possible gains). Findings on job satisfaction are not in line with those from the survey of 2017 [15] reporting percentages as low as 46% on job satisfaction; most important this survey also found that only 21.7% of the sample were not looking for a new job. However, findings are in line with Sopi (2009) reporting that 84% of the sample was 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' [13].

Patterns of age and working experience were also found in terms of job satisfaction. As expected, professionals of a younger age and little experience reported higher job satisfaction. Obviously, they would be less likely to experience job burnout or come to terms with difficult cases, being at the beginning of their career.

The overall tendency in the sample is towards the reporting of weak stress factors (only about 1/5 of the sample report 'very' much or 'a lot' on stress factors). These findings are not in line with similar research reporting stress levels among teachers, e.g., up to 33.2 % [9] or 36.8 % [10] of the sample or health

professionals (e.g., 63.3%-84%) [11], [14] . However, the findings in the present study might be also due to the fact that not all relevant stress factors might be included the instrument was constructed by choosing stressors from existing research). It must be mentioned that findings are also comparable to research from other countries, e.g., 8.8%-32% as reported in Eurofund (2010).

More specifically, both teachers and healthcare workers reported as the strongest stress factor ‘inadequate salary’, and the weakest one ‘family problems’. These factors are quite context specific, as wages of these two professional categories in Kosovo are definitely lower as compared to European standards. However, it should be mentioned that ‘inadequate salary’ was not significantly correlated to job satisfaction among healthcare workers but only among teachers, hinting towards important differences on the impact of the salary within these two professional categories.

On the other hand, ‘family problems’ are considered as the weakest stressor, a finding which is comprehensible within the collectivistic Kosovo values (extended families, stability of this structure etc.). This explanation is supported also by correlation analysis revealing the strongest negative correlation between job satisfaction and family problems for both teachers and healthcare workers.

Healthcare workers scored higher than teachers on all stress factors, except for physical working conditions and difficult cases/tasks to solve, where no differences were found between groups. However even within the healthcare group, mental health healthcare workers had the significantly highest mean ranks in terms of stressors, as compared to the other groups, residential institution, general hospital and family health center, suggesting the need to focus on this specific category of health professionals. Moreover, patterns of stressors differed based on age group and working experience, a finding which suggests that specificity is quite important in terms of understanding stressors and also designing stress management programs for professionals.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

To conclude, the present study provided comparisons between healthcare professionals and teachers in Kosovo, in terms of their job satisfaction and stress factors. Findings suggested high job satisfaction and weak stress factors in these two professional categories. and revealed several similarities and differences between these two crucial professional categories. Although these findings are very positive, they should be carefully considered, as they are not in line with existing research, and could be the result of the measuring instrument used. Follow-up research of a qualitative character might shed light on concepts of ‘job satisfaction’ as socially and culturally constructed in the specific context as well as relevant stress factors.

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