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Subjective well-being of the teachers of secondary schools as an indicator of psychological safety of educational environment

Samopoczucie nauczycieli szkół średnich jako wskaźnik bezpieczeństwa psychologicznego w środowisku edukacyjnym

Abstract

The article deals with the problem of the correlation between subjective well-being of Ukrainian teachers and psychological safety of the educational environment of the school. The distinctive features and factors of the well-being of Ukrainian teachers are established. The essence and basic signs of psychological safety of the educational environment of secondary schools are revealed. The relationship between the subjective well-being of teachers and the safety of the educational environment has been investigated.

The advisability of the development of teachers' well-being is stated, taking into account the necessity of creating a psychologically safe educational environment.

Keywords: subjective well-being, educational environment, psychological safety, teacher.

Streszczenie

W artykule poruszono problem korelacji między samopoczuciem ukraińskich nauczycieli a bezpieczeństwem psychicznym środowiska wychowawczego szkoły. Wyróżnia się cechy i czynniki dobrego samopoczucia ukraińskich nauczycieli. Podkreślono istotę i podstawowe oznaki bezpieczeństwa psychicznego środowiska edukacyjnego szkół średnich. Zbadano związek między subiektywnym samopoczuciem nauczycieli a bezpieczeństwem środowiska edukacyjnego.

Wskazano na celowość rozwoju dobrostanu nauczycieli, biorąc pod uwagę konieczność stworzenia psychologicznie bezpiecznego środowiska edukacyjnego.

Słowa kluczowe: samopoczucie, środowisko edukacyjne, bezpieczeństwo psychiczne, nauczyciel.

Introduction

The effectiveness of the work of modern educational organizations in the conditions of social transformations depends to a large extent on taking into account the needs and intentions of each participant in the educational process. As we know one of a basic human need is the need for safety. The experience of psychological safety is

one of the leading conditions for the formation, the full functioning and development of the individual in society, the condition of both self-actualization and adaptation to the environment and, consequently, ensuring their subjective well-being.

Subjective well-being is a generalized and relatively persistent feeling that has a special significance for the individual. It is to a great extent that it determines the characteristics of the dominant mental state: favourable state – harmonic mental processes, successful behaviour that supports mental and physical health, or, conversely, unfavourable health (A. Durayappah¹, C. Riff², etc.). That is why subjective well-being is the powerful potential of the individual which is essential for effective teaching.

However, there are key contradictions of the position of the Ukrainian teachers which can reduce subjective effectiveness their professional life and well-being:

- the contradiction between *high positional requirements* and actual educationists' status;
- the contradiction between the profession's personality-related requirements and *the teacher's actual level of preparedness to perform professional functions*;
- the contradiction between *typical system of educationists' training* and creative character of their work;
- the contradiction between *the necessity to educate a unique and independent personality* capable of constructive acting under sustained socio-economic changes and a set of social norms and values peculiar to a given culture;
- the contradiction between the necessity to make independent and innovative decisions and *considerable limitations of independence by superiors*;
- the contradiction between the necessity to take an uncompromising stand for the institution to survive in a tough competition and to be tolerant, humane and ethical which can develop *a dissonance between the teachers' self-assessment of personal attributes, behaviours, activities, interactions and expectations of other people*³.

In our opinion, it is possible to separate several main groups of factors of the subjective well-being of teachers: 1) *at the macro level (level of society)*: socio-economic stability and resource efficiency; focus on sustainable development; political freedom, etc; 2) *on the meso level (level of educational organization)*: a safe educational environment; social support and quality of relationships with the environment, etc; 3) *at the micro level (level of personality)*: the value of

¹ A. Durayappah, *The 3P Model: A General Theory of Subjective Well-Being*, J Happiness Stud, 2010, Available at: <http://fabriquespinoza.fr/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Durayappah-2010-3P-SWB-model.pdf>

² C.D. Ryff, *Eudaimonic well-being and education: Probing the connections* [in:] D. W. Harward (ed.), *Well-being and higher education: A strategy for change and the realization of education's greater purposes*. Washington DC 2016, pp. 37–48.

³ О.І. Бондарчук, *Соціально-психологічні основи особистісного розвитку керівників загальноосвітніх навчальних закладів у професійній діяльності*, Київ 2008, pp. 79–82.

self-development; positive thinking; emotional maturity; adequate self-esteem; the ability to self-control and self-regulation, etc.

At the same time, this relationship is bilateral, so subjective well-being can be a direct or indirect indicator of the quality of each of these factors, including the safety of the educational environment. At the same time, the main focus of the researchers is on the psychological safety of the educational environment for pupils and students (O. Eliseyeva⁴, T. Shcherbakova⁵, etc.); instead, the psychological safety and subjective well-being of the personnel of educational organizations is much less studied.

The *aim* of the investigation is to find out the levels of teachers' well-being and their correlation with psychological safety of the educational environment of the school

Theoretical bases of investigation

Subjective well-being have already been the subject of attention of many researchers: as a cognitive-judgmental process which determined satisfaction with life (E. Diener, D. Kahneman, N. Schwarz⁶, etc.), as a concept of positive psychology (M. Seligman⁷, A. White⁸, etc.), as multi-dimensional indicator of personal and psychological health (C. Riff⁹, etc.), as indicator of substantive freedom – the ability of people to live the lives that they themselves value (A. Sen¹⁰, etc.).

On the other hand, the issues of the educational environment were investigated in the works of scientists such as D. Hopkins¹¹, T. Panchenko¹², etc. which the educational environment is considered as a subsystem of the socio-cultural environment

⁴ О.А. Елисеєва, *Суб'єктивне благополуччє подросткєв и психологическая безопасность образовательной среды*. Электронный журнал „Психологическая наука и образование”, 2011, нр 3. Available at: www.psyedu.ru

⁵ Т.Н. Щербакєва, *К вопросу о структуре образовательной среды учебных учреждений*, Молодой ученый. 2012. нр 5, pp. 545–548.

⁶ N. Schwarz, F. Strack, *Reports of subjective well-being: judgemental process and their methodological implications* [in:] D. Kahneman, E. Diener, N. Schwarz (eds.), *Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology* (). US: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999, pp. 61–84

⁷ M.E.P. Seligman, *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*, 2nd ed., New York 2006.

⁸ A. White, *A Global Projection of Subjective Well-being: A Challenge To Positive Psychology?* Psychtalk, 2007, нр 56, pp. 17–20.

⁹ C.D. Ryff, *Eudaimonic well-being and education: Probing the connections* [in:] D.W. Harvard (ed.), *Well-being and higher education: A strategy for change and the realization of education's greater purposes*. Washington DC 2016, pp. 37–48.

¹⁰ A. Sen, *Development as freedom*. Oxford-New York 2001, p. 291

¹¹ D. Hopkins, *Every School a Great School*. Maidenhead, Berkshire 2007.

¹² Т.Л. Панченко, *Психологична безпека інклюзивного освітнього середовища*, Науковий часопис НПУ імені М. П. Драгоманова. Сер. 19: Корекційна педагогіка та спеціальна психологія. 2014, Вип. 28, pp. 327–332.

as a combination of factors, circumstances, historical situations and the integrity of the specially organized conditions for the development of the personality of the subjects of the educational process.

The components of the educational environment (according to E. Klimov¹³) are: a) social-contact (features of internal and external interaction, structure of teams (presence of groups, stars, isolated, etc.), level of protection against various kinds of claims); b) informational (accepted norms and rules of interaction of participants in the educational process, traditions, means of visual presentation of information); c) substantive (material and hygienic conditions); d) somatic (health, well-being).

Safety is seen as a key psychological characteristic of the educational environment (V. Slobodchikov¹⁴, etc.), and a psychologically safe educational environment is seen as a condition for the personal growth of subjects of the educational process through their interaction, free of manifestations of psychological violence; referential significance and the involvement of each subject in the design and maintenance of the psychological comfort of the educational environment; human-centeredness, humanistic orientation, etc.

Also productive for our research is the use of such vectors of analysis of psychological security of the educational environment as¹⁵: 1) freedom – dependence (whose interests are priority in this educational environment (person or group); who is adapted to the process of pedagogical interaction (educator to child or child to educator); 2) activity – passivity (whether is stimulation of the initiative of the participants in the educational process, whether creative activity of participants in the educational process has positive feedback in the environment ; whether is punishment practice in this educational environment, etc).

Methods and design of investigation

The following research instruments have been used: a) The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS, E. D. Diener et al¹⁶); b) Index of psychological safety of educational environment (author – I. Baeva¹⁷, modified by O. Bondarchuk); c) Counterproductive

¹³ Е.А. Климов, *Психология: воспитание, обучение*, Москва 2000, р. 139.

¹⁴ В.И. Слободчиков, *Образовательная среда: реализация целей образования в пространстве культуры*, Новые ценности образования: культурные модели школ. 1997, №7, pp. 177–184.

¹⁵ Т.Н. Щербакова, *К вопросу о структуре образовательной среды учебных учреждений*, Молодой ученый. 2012. nr 5, pp. 545–548.

¹⁶ W. Pavot, E. Diener, *Review of the Satisfaction with Life Scale*, Psychological Assessment, 1993, nr 5(2), pp. 164–172.

¹⁷ И. Баева, И. Якиманская, *Мониторинг психологической безопасности образовательной среды и качества образования в условиях модернизации*. Психолого-педагогические исследования, 2013, nr 1, Available at: http://psyjournals.ru/psyedu_ru/2013/n1/59067.shtml

Work Behaviours' Scale (R. Bennet, S. Robinson, modified by S. Topolov¹⁸). The obtained data were analyzed using correlation, ANOVA (SPSS-21.0).

The sample included 500 teachers of secondary school from different regions of Ukraine of whom 85.5% were females and 14.5% males. The respondents were divided into four groups according to the length of their service: less than 5 years (19.6% of the respondents), 5–15 years (19.1%), 15–25 years (25.5%), over 25 years (35.8%).

Main results of author's research

Features and levels of teachers' subjective well-being

At the first stage of the investigation on the SWLS scale the average value of *teachers' well-being* was 23.3 points with a standard deviation of 4.8. The possible range of scores on the questionnaire is from 5 (low satisfaction) to 35 (high satisfaction). It should be noted that high and fit levels of life satisfaction were found in a mere 50% respondents (table 1).

Table 1. Groups of teachers in relation to levels of their well-being

Levels of well-being	% of the respondents
Low	18.9
Reduced	31.4
Fit	21.0
High	28.7

Teachers' subjective well-being was shown to correlate with gender and work experience (Fig. 1).

As is seen from fig. 1, the longer the service, the less well-being becomes. At the same time, women, especially those with less professional work experience, have less well-being than men ($p < 0.01$).

Features and levels of psychological safety of educational environment

At the next stage of the investigation the Index of psychological safety of educational environment found out a mere 20.8% of the respondents to identify the psychological safety of their educational environment as completely safe, 45.4% – as safe. It should be noted that 21.2% of the teachers are estimated the psychological

¹⁸ Є.В. Тополов, *Професійна агресивність особистості*. Київ 2011, pp. 382–385.

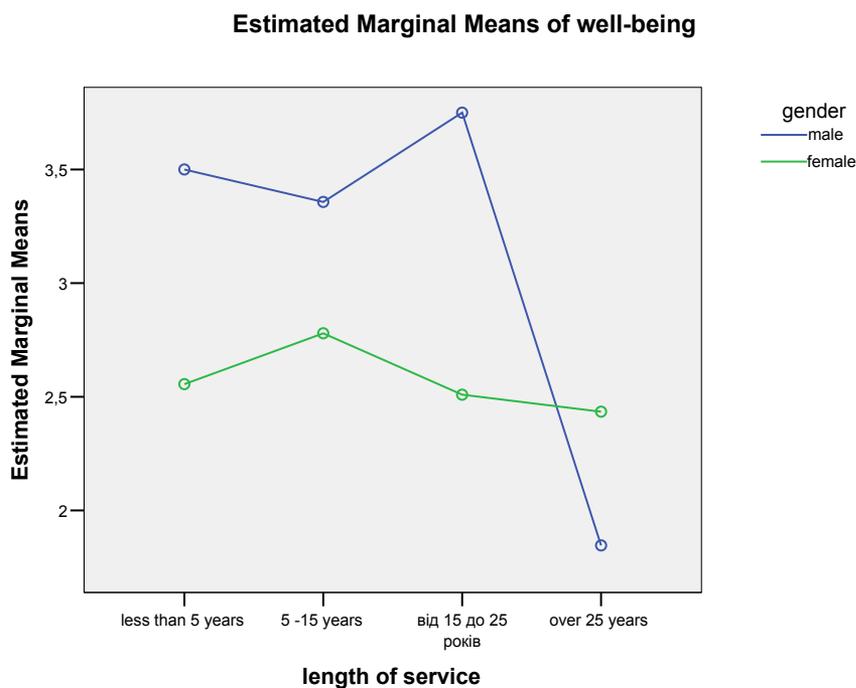


Fig. 1. Subjective well-being in relation to teachers' gender and length of service (ANOVA findings)

safety of their educational environment as uncertain, 10.8% – as unsafe, 1.8 – as completely unsafe (table 2).

Table 2. Groups of teachers in relation to levels of psychological safety of their educational environment

Levels of psychological safety of educational environment	% of the respondents
Completely unsafe	1.8
Unsafe	10.8
Uncertain	21.2
Safe	45.4
Completely safe	20.8

The investigation found weak statistically significant correlations between the groups of teachers with different psychological safety of educational environment and their gender: males feel more psychologically safety than females ($p < 0.01$). This result, in our opinion, is a consequence of gender inequality in

our society. At the same time, recently, positive trends in solving this problem should be noted.

In addition, statistically significant correlations between *psychological safety of educational environment* and professional characteristics (*length of professional service and positions*) of teachers have been established. In particular: the longer the length of professional service, the less psychological safety of teachers ($p < 0.01$). It should also be noted that managers feel more psychologically safety than ordinary teachers ($p < 0.01$).

Subjective well-being of the teachers and psychological safety of their educational environment

At the same time the levels of teachers' well-being was found to *positively correlate with the respondents' psychological safety* of their educational environment ($\rho = 0.280, p < 0.01$). Figure 2 shows the relationship between well-being and the safety of the educational environment for female and male teachers.

Estimated Marginal Means of subjective well-being

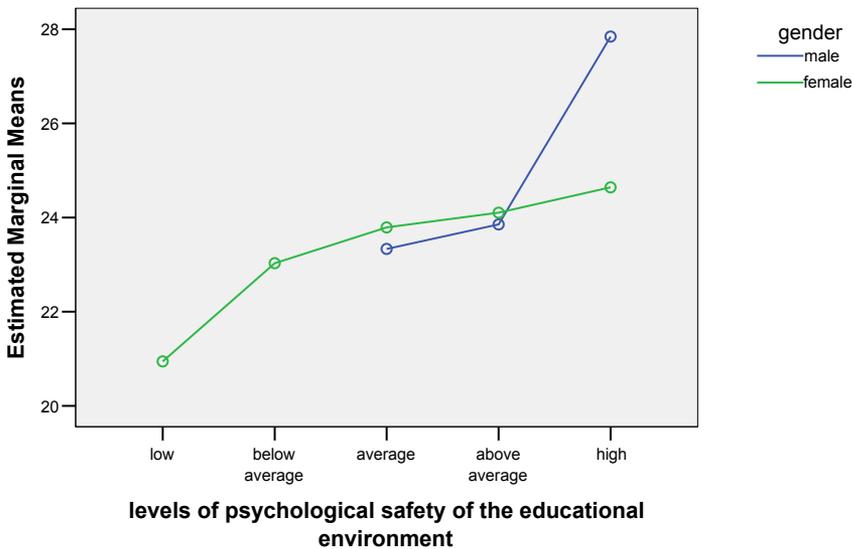


Fig. 2. The relationship between subjective well-being and the psychological safety of the educational environment for female and male teachers (ANOVA findings)

As is seen from fig. 2, the higher the psychological safety of the environment, the higher the indicators of the subjective well-being of teachers ($p < 0.01$). Thus,

the assumption that the subjective well-being of teachers may be an indicator of the psychological safety of the educational environment has been confirmed.

The significance of the relationship between subjective well-being and the psychological safety of the educational environment was also confirmed as a result of additional research into the characteristics of *counterproductive behaviour of teachers* by Counterproductive Work Behaviours' Scale (R. Bennet, S. Robinson, modified by S. Topolov) (table 3).

Table 3. Groups of teachers in relation to levels of their counterproductive work behaviours

Levels of counterproductive work behaviour	% of the respondents
Low	39.0
Average	44.0
High	17.0

Estimated Marginal Means of Counterproductive Work Behaviors

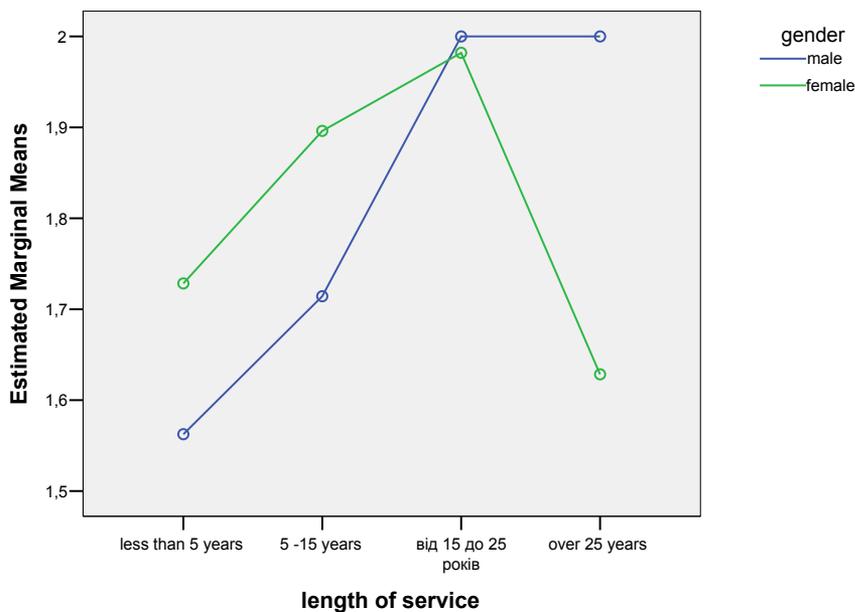


Fig. 3. Counterproductive work behaviour of teachers in relation to their gender and length of service (ANOVA findings)

As is seen from table 3, a mere 39.0% of the respondents had low level of counterproductive work behaviour. 42.9% of the respondents were found with

average level and 17.0% of the respondents had high level of counterproductive work behaviour.

In addition there are statistically significant differences in the manifestations of the teacher's counterproductive work behaviour to depending on their gender and length of service (Fig. 3).

From fig. 3 is seen, teachers' counterproductive work behaviour was shown to correlate with gender and work experience: *the longer the service, the more counterproductive work behaviour especially of male become* ($p < 0.01$).

At the final stage of the investigation the levels of teachers' well-being was found tonegatively *correlate with the respondents' counterproductive work behaviours* ($\rho = -0.303$, $p < 0.01$).

Conclusion

As a result of the empirical study of subjective well-being of teachers of secondary school from all regions of Ukraine, are found an *insufficiently high level* of subjective well-being for a significant number of educators. High and fit levels of subjective well-being were found in mere 50% respondents ($M = 23.3$, $\sigma = 4.8$). At the same time female have less well-being than male, especially which who has lesslength of professional service ($p < 0.01$).

The assumption about the psychological safety of the educational environment as an important condition for the subjective well-being of the teachers of secondary education is proved. It is stated that the safer the teachers feel, the better their subjective well-being, on the contrary, their counterproductive work behaviours-becomes much rarely ($p < 0.01$).

In view of this it is advisable to encourage secondary school teachers' development in order to raise their subjective well-being.

Practical implications

The investigation findings can be used in to elevate Ukrainian teachers' subjective well-being taking into account the necessity of creating a psychologically safe educational environment.

In our opinion, the main conditions for creating a psychologically safe educational environment include:

- monitoring of the psychological safety of the educational environment and participants in the educational process;
- psychological and managerial counselling of educational institutions' managers regarding the management of the educational environment in the context of psychological safety;

- organization of special psychological training of participants in the educational process;
- training of practical psychologists to psychological support of the interaction of participants in the educational process in a safe educational environment.

Suggestions for further researches

It would be valuable to find out cross-culture features of subjective well-beings of Ukrainian and Polish teachers. Also very interesting are also opinions of children about psychological safety of the educational environment of their schools. It is advisable to study the levels of subjective well-being of teachers and the safety of their educational environment, not only for secondary schools, but also for higher education.

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