

Summary

Teacher health and well-being: Between resilience and a life worth living

This monograph is devoted to the issue of teachers' mental health and well-being in the context of the contemporary challenges associated with the teaching profession. As a social institution, the school plays a key role in the processes of education, socialisation and preparing future generations to function in a changing world. At the same time, the work of a teacher involves numerous demands, responsibilities and the need to constantly adapt to social, cultural and organisational changes. The subject literature describes teachers as a group particularly vulnerable to stress and burnout, which prompts researchers to seek out factors that support their mental health and well-being.

The starting point for the discussions in the book is the salutogenic understanding of health. According to this, maintaining well-being depends not only on minimising risk factors, but also on developing the resources that enable the individual to function adaptively despite difficulties.

The theoretical section of the monograph examines contemporary approaches to understanding resilience, psychological flexibility and job satisfaction among teachers. A prominent place is given to the concept of psychological flexibility, a concept derived from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and emphasising the importance of acting in accordance with one's values, despite the presence of difficult experiences. While resilience and job satisfaction have already been the subject of numerous studies concerning teachers, psychological flexibility remains relatively underexplored in Poland.

The aim of the author's own research was to determine the relationship between resilience, psychological flexibility, job satisfaction and selected socio-demographic and occupational variables among teachers. The analysis took into account such factors as age, gender, length of service, career progression, the number of training courses attended, the number of classes and subjects taught, and whether the teacher acted as a form tutor. The study took the form of quantitative research and was conducted amongst primary school teachers.

The findings indicate that the teachers in the study exhibited an average level of mental resilience and psychological flexibility, whilst also reporting a high level of job satisfaction. Significant correlations were observed between the participants' gender and the number of subjects they taught, and selected aspects of mental resilience. However, most of the socio-demographic and occupational variables analysed did not reveal

any significant correlations with resilience, psychological flexibility or job satisfaction. Furthermore, the expected relationships between job satisfaction and the other two constructs were not confirmed.

The study's most significant finding was confirming significant correlations between psychological flexibility and psychological resilience. Psychological flexibility correlated with both the overall measure of psychological resilience and all its analysed components: personal competencies, family relationships and social competencies. These results indicate a partial overlap between the areas described by both constructs and suggest the potential existence of shared mechanisms that support teachers' adaptive functioning.

The analyses also prompt reflection on the role of job satisfaction in research into teachers' well-being. The absence of links between job satisfaction and the health domains and occupational variables analysed may indicate that job satisfaction, as it is traditionally understood, does not fully capture the contemporary picture of teachers' well-being. Rather, the results suggest a need to take into account broader theoretical perspectives that relate to a sense of meaning, the realisation of values, and the ability to act in accordance with what matters most to an individual, despite the difficulties and pressures associated with their work.

This monograph attempts to broaden our understanding of teachers' health and well-being. The discussions and findings of the author's own research highlight the need to expand knowledge regarding the mechanisms that support teachers' functioning within the reality of the modern school. A particularly promising avenue for further research appears to be an in-depth exploration of the significance of psychological flexibility, understood as the ability to act in accordance with one's values despite the presence of difficulties and constraints. This perspective can serve as a valuable complement to existing approaches to analysing teachers' well-being, drawing attention not only to the presence of resources and protective factors, but also to the importance of values, a sense of meaning, and the ability to act in accordance with what is important to the individual.

Keywords: teachers, wellbeing, psychological flexibility, resilience, values

Translated by
Rob Pagett