

## **SOURCES OF STRESS AND MOTIVATION FOR WORKING STUDENTS**

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### **Abstract**

Previous theoretical and empirical achievements in the field of educational psychology indicate that most research and studies are directed towards students, while there is a lack of research on the teacher's role and status in the educational process.

If we regard teaching as an interactive process in which the leading actors are the teachers and the students, we must not disregard the impact of the ones on the others. It should be particularly highlighted that the teacher's behaviour has an effect on: the student's security, the level of anxiety, the value system, the mood, the adaptation and inadaptation, the academic success, the emotional balance as well as other types of behaviour.

This research opens perspectives to many questions concerning teachers' professional development and the characteristics they need to possess in order to fulfill their professional role successfully. The previous theoretical and empirical achievements in the field of educational psychology show that most research focuses on the students in the teaching process, thus neglecting the role of the teacher and their status in the educational process.

**Key words:** Professional development of teachers, sources of stress, motivation for work.

### **Sources of Stress and Motivation for Working with Students**

The teaching process is an everyday interaction with the school administration, the students and the parents and it requires teachers to play various roles and spend many hours working hard on a daily basis (lectures, maintaining discipline during instruction, assessment, questioning, meeting with parents, etc). That is the reason why the specified activities

(creativity, class management and implementation of teaching methods) might be called into question if the teacher experiences a high level of stress (Krnjaic, 2003).

Over the past twenty years, professional stress has increasingly become a problem particularly faced by teachers, but also by many others whose professions entail helping other people. Research has shown that 25%-30% of teachers from all over the world are exposed to high level of stress, which results in serious consequences such as: job dissatisfaction, health problems and emotional exhaustion (Pop-Jordanova, 2005).

Generally, when talking about sources of stress among teachers, Vizek-Vidović (1990) underlines that this refers to chronic stressors which exist in our social communities to a larger or lesser extent. Research on stress reveals a large number of stressors among teachers, most of which are the same, regardless of whether they occur among teachers from urban or other areas.

Most common sources of stress among teachers appear to be the following: role conflict, role ambiguity, workload, bad social support from colleagues and the principal, lack of opportunity to make progress in their job, etc.

Analysing the results from a significant amount of empirical research, Boyle et al. (1995) indicate that there are at least four major dimensions of teacher stress: student misbehaviour, time/resource difficulties, professional recognition needs and poor relationships.

This is what gives rise to the fundamental question to which this paper will attempt to give an answer: *Is there a connection between the sources of stress among primary school teachers and secondary school teachers and the motivation for working with students?*

## Research

The sample of this research comprises 208 teachers from three primary schools in Skopje (PS Rajko Zinzifov, PS Stiv Naumov and PS Zivko Brajkovski – 103 teachers) and three secondary schools in Skopje (SSS Nikola Karev, SSS Josip Broz Tito and SSS Gjorgji Dimitrov – 105 teachers) from Skopje (Table 1).

**Table 1. An overview of the research participants according to sex and job position (primary and secondary education)**

	Primary education		Secondary education		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Male	34	33.01	41	39.05	75	36.10
Female	69	66.99	64	60.95	133	63.90
Total	103	100.00	105	100.00	208	100.00

In order to examine the sources of stress and motivation for working with students among teachers, the following instruments were applied:

- A scale for measuring teacher stress created on the basis of a research conducted by Boyle et al (1995) as well as in the research of Griffith et al. (1999), and which was later translated for the needs of a research conducted in Zadar, Croatia. The scale comprises 25 questions divided into three subscales by using a factor analysis – **student misbehaviour**, **professional recognition needs** and **workload**.
- Teacher motivation scale for instruction of students created by Dragana Petrovic in 1993. This scale examines the teachers' motivation for working with students and instruction and it consists of 10 statements regarding the satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the possibilities in terms of working with students.

Before analysing the results of this research in accordance with the established hypotheses, the data concerning the descriptive characteristics of primary and secondary education teachers who were part of the sample will be presented.

Table 2 gives an overview of the arithmetic means, the median and the standard deviations of the three basic variables in this research on secondary school teachers and primary school teachers. It can be noticed that all scores referring to the sources of stress are above the theoretical average score and they are almost identical with the median, which means that more than 50% of teachers are exposed to sources of stress in their workplace. It is important to underline that the total score of sources of stress among teachers ( $M=84.62$ ) is much higher in comparison with the theoretical average score ( $M=75$ ). Teachers' motivation for working with students is also on a high level ( $M=34.28$ ), which is above the theoretical average score ( $M=30$ ).

**Table 2. An overview of the arithmetic mean (M), the median (Mdn) and the standard deviation (Sd) of the sources of stress and the motivation for working with students among primary education teachers and secondary education teachers (N=208)**

	Student misbehaviour	Unsatisfied professional recognition need	Workload	Sources of stress	Motivation for work
<b>M</b>	20.12	36.89	24.27	84.62	34.28
<b>Mdn</b>	20.00	37.00	24.50	85.00	34.00
<b>Sd</b>	3.93	6.23	4.00	12.19	6.59

**Table 3. An overview of the arithmetic mean (M), the median (Mdn) and the standard deviation (Sd) of the sources of stress and the motivation for working with students among primary education teachers (N=103) and secondary education teachers (N=105)**

		Student misbehaviour	Unsatisfied professional recognition need	Workload	Sources of stress	Motivation for work
<b>Primary</b>	<b>M</b>	20.61	37.53	24.60	86.21	33.32
	<b>Mdn</b>	21.00	38.00	25.00	88.00	32.00
	<b>Sd</b>	4.35	6.53	4.30	13.44	7.27
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>M</b>	19.65	36.27	23.95	83.05	35.22
	<b>Mdn</b>	20.00	36.00	24.00	82.00	35.00
	<b>Sd</b>	3.43	5.89	3.66	10.66	5.71

Table 3 gives an overview of the arithmetic means for primary school teachers and secondary schools teachers respectively. It can be noticed that primary school teachers have a higher total score in terms of the sources of stress (M=86.21) but lower scores in terms of the motivation for working with students (M=33.32), in comparison with the whole sample.

In contrast, secondary school teachers have a lower total score in terms of the sources of stress (M=83.05) but higher scores in terms of the motivation for working with students (M=35.22), in comparison with the whole sample.

The main hypothesis of this research states that there is a connection between the sources of stress and the motivation for working with students. In order to establish a potential connection between these variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated.

**Table 4. A connection between the sources of stress among primary school teachers and secondary school teachers and the motivation for working with students (N=208)**

	Student misbehaviour	Unsatisfied professional recognition need	Workload	Sources of stress	Motivation for work
Student misbehaviour	1	,432(**)	,414(**)	,698(**)	-,206(**)
Unsatisfied professional recognition need	,432(**)	1	,593(**)	,898(**)	-,251(**)
Workload	,414(**)	,593(**)	1	,795(**)	-,176(*)
Sources of stress	,698(**)	,898(**)	,795(**)	1	-,281(**)
Motivation for work	-,206(**)	-,251(**)	-,176(*)	-,281(**)	1

df=206

\*Significant correlation on level  $p < 0.05$ \*Significant correlation on level  $p < 0.01$ 

The first sub-hypothesis states that in comparison with secondary school teachers, primary school teachers assess themselves as less motivated for working with students and they have fewer sources of stress. This table gives an overview of the differences between the primary school teachers and secondary school teachers in terms of the motivation for working with students and the sources of stress, calculated by using a t-test for determining the significance of the differences between the groups.

**Table 5. Significance of differences between primary school teachers and secondary school teachers in terms of the self-assessment of efficiency, motivation for working with students and sources of stress (N=208)**

	School	N	M	Sd	t-test	p
Student misbehaviour	Primary	103	20.61	4.35		
	Secondary	105	19.65	3.43	1.757	$p < 0.05$
Unsatisfied professional recognition need	Primary	103	37.53	6.53		
	Secondary	105	36.27	5.89	1.459	$p > 0.05$
Workload	Primary	103	24.60	4.30		
	Secondary	105	23.95	3.66	1.172	$p > 0.05$
Sources of stress	Primary	103	86.21	13.44		
	Secondary	105	83.05	10.66	1.878	$p > 0.05$
Motivation for working with students	Primary	103	33.32	7.27		
	Secondary	105	35.22	5.71	-2.105	$p < 0.05$

df = 206

 $p < 0.05$ ;  $t = 1.65$  $p < 0.01$ ;  $t = 2.36$ 

The obtained results reveal that, statistically, there are differences between the two compared groups only in terms of the student misbehaviour ( $t = 1.757$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and in terms of the teachers' motivation for working with students ( $t = -2.105$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The acquired differences are

in favour of the secondary school teachers, which means that they are more motivated for working with students and the student misbehaviour is less of a source of stress for them.

The second sub-hypothesis states that there are differences in terms of the sources of stress, the motivation for working with students among primary school teachers and secondary school teachers with different marital status. Table 6 gives an overview of the differences between teachers with different marital status (married, divorced, single, widow/er) in terms of the sources of stress and the motivation for working with students, calculated by using a one-way ANOVA.

**Table 6. Differences between teachers with different marital status in terms of the sources of stress, motivation for working with students and self-assessment of the teachers' efficiency, calculated by using ANOVA (N=208)**

		N	M	$\sigma$	F-test	p
<b>Student misbehaviour</b>	Married	109	20.14	3.26		
	Divorced	21	19.27	4.25		
	Single	64	21.01	3.61		
	Widow/er	14	19.85	3.40		
	Total	208	20.12	3.93	2.12	>.05
<b>Unsatisfied professional recognition need</b>	Married	109	37.74	6.29		
	Divorced	21	36.02	5.91		
	Single	64	35.67	6.40		
	Widow/er	14	36.87	6.98		
	Total	208	36.89	6.23	1.80	>.05
<b>Workload</b>	Married	109	23.13	4.25		
	Divorced	21	24.17	3.91		
	Single	64	24.43	4.89		
	Widow/er	14	23.46	3.66		
	Total	208	24.27	4.00	2.26	>.05
<b>Sources of stress</b>	Married	109	86.61	8.76		
	Divorced	21	85.87	11.07		
	Single	64	84.84	14.94		
	Widow/er	14	83.16	9.14		
	Total	208	84.62	11.19	2.15	>.05
<b>Motivation for working with students</b>	Married	109	33.62	6.18		
	Divorced	21	33.34	6.11		
	Single	64	34.95	5.38		
	Widow/er	14	35.93	7.18		
	Total	208	34.28	6.59	2.17	>.05

df = 3

p<0.05; F=2.60

p<0.01; F=3.78

The data presented in Table 6 show that there are no differences between the primary school teachers and the secondary school teachers with different marital status in terms of the sources of stress and the motivation for working with students.

The third sub-hypothesis states that there are differences in terms of the sources of stress and the motivation for working with students among primary school teachers and secondary school teachers of different age. Table 7 gives an overview of the differences between teachers of different age, grouped into four categories (20-30 years old, 31-40 years old and 51-60 years old) in terms of the sources of stress and the motivation for working with students, calculated by using a one-way ANOVA.

Table 7 shows that primary school teachers and secondary school teachers of different age differ only in terms of the workload ( $F=3.67$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and the older the teachers, the more the workload appears as a larger source of stress.

**Table 7. Differences between teachers with different marital status in terms of the sources of stress, motivation for working with students and self-assessment of the teachers' efficiency, calculated by using ANOVA (N=208)**

		N	M	$\sigma$	F-test	p
<b>Student misbehaviour</b>	20-30 years old	89	19.41	3.26		
	31-40 years old	45	19.72	3.25		
	41-50 years old	60	21.27	2.61		
	51-60 years old	14	21.68	4.40		
	Total	208	20.12	3.93	2.12	>.05
<b>Unsatisfied professional recognition need</b>	20-30 years old	89	36.47	6.29		
	31-40 years old	45	36.52	6.91		
	41-50 years old	60	36.67	5.40		
	51-60 years old	14	36.79	7.98		
	Total	208	36.89	6.23	1.80	>.05
<b>Workload</b>	20-30 years old	89	23.13	4.25		
	31-40 years old	45	24.17	3.91		
	41-50 years old	60	24.43	5.89		
	51-60 years old	14	24.46	4.66		
	Total	208	24.27	4.00	3.67	<.05
<b>Sources of stress</b>	20-30 years old	89	83.11	11.76		
	31-40 years old	45	84.27	11.07		
	41-50 years old	60	85.14	10.94		
	51-60 years old	14	86.36	9.14		
	Total	208	84.62	11.19	2.27	>.05
<b>Motivation for working with students</b>	20-30 years old	89	33.32	6.18		
	31-40 years old	45	33.34	5.11		
	41-50 years old	60	34.56	7.38		
	51-60 years old	14	35.62	6.18		
	Total	208	32.28	6.59	2.31	>.05

df = 3

$p<0.05$ ;  $F=2.60$

$p<0.01$ ;  $F=3.78$

The fourth sub-hypothesis states that in comparison with female teachers, male teachers assess themselves as less motivated for working with students and they have fewer sources of stress. Table 8 gives an overview of the differences between male teachers and female teachers in terms of the motivation for working with students and the sources of stress, calculated by using a t-test for determining the significance of the differences between the groups.

The results reveal that, statistically, there are significant differences between the two compared groups (male teachers and female teachers) only in terms of the subfactor of sources of stress – student misbehaviour ( $t=-2.785$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and in terms of the total score of sources of stress among teachers ( $t=-2.083$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The calculated differences indicate that male teachers are more exposed to stress, and they particularly consider student misbehavior as a source of stress.

**Table 8. Significance of differences between male teachers and female teachers in terms of self-assessment of efficiency, motivation for working with students and sources of stress (N=208)**

	Sex	N	M	Sd	t-test	p
Student misbehaviour	Male	75	19.13	4.05		
	Female	133	20.69	3.76	<b>-2.785</b>	<b>p&lt;0.01</b>
Unsatisfied professional recognition need	Male	75	36.37	5.91		
	Female	133	37.19	6.41	-.913	p>0.05
Workload	Male	75	23.60	4.59		
	Female	133	24.65	3.58	-1.535	p>0.05
Sources of stress	Male	75	82.29	12.93		
	Female	133	85.93	11.60	<b>-2.083</b>	<b>p&lt;0.05</b>
Motivation for working with students	Male	75	34.90	6.43		
	Female	133	33.93	6.67	1.024	p>0.05

df = 206

p<0.05; t=1.65

p<0.01; t=2.36

## Conclusion

To a large extent, the results have confirmed the assumptions that the three examined variables are in a constant mutual interaction and they participate in the creation of the complex image of a successful teacher. It is, however, important to underline that as any other research, this one has its own limitations and flaws as well but it also contains recommendations for the future researchers in this field.



In addition, in order to acquire more valid data, it is useful to expand the entire group of teachers through examination and comparison by including higher education teachers, teachers from rural and urban environment, teachers working in private and state schools, etc.

On the other hand, some factors which might have an indirect or direct impact on the three examined variables could be included as additional variables: teachers' salary, their nationality, whether their employment is regulated with a permanent employment contract, how many hours weekly they spend in delivering lectures, do they educate themselves additionally and do they attend any forms of professional development, etc.

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