

# Comparison of Live Satisfaction and ITS Components in Current Teachers and Selected Profession GROUPS

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## **Abstract**

Psychological research of life satisfaction in teachers has a long tradition in many countries. Satisfaction expresses a certain degree of personal balance, personal happiness and very often personal activity and status within a society. The issue of life satisfaction associated with a profession and work satisfaction is generally understood as a mental condition of an individual characterised by feelings of joy, happiness, self-confidence and optimism towards the subjects and conditions of a specific work environment and own professional results. An optimum combination of life and work satisfaction presents a significant determinant of the teaching profession. The present study focuses on the assessment of the current state of life satisfaction and its components in current teachers in comparison with selected profession groups. The research involved a total of 544 adults of various professions, of which 213 were teachers. The aim of the research plan was to contribute to understanding the aspects that currently influence life satisfaction of teachers in comparison with selected professions. The main findings are presented and discussed in this paper.

**Keywords:** educational employees, live satisfaction, work specialization

## Introduction

The general concept of satisfaction expresses a certain degree of personal balance, personal happiness and very often personal activity and status within a society. However, common understanding simplifies the concept into mental states after achieving certain goals and is based on a statement that satisfaction is the result of satisfied needs of an individual. An analysis of satisfaction though cannot be based merely on such simplified statement as this is a dynamic phenomenon closely correlated with human motivation and human driving and activating components.

An increasing interest of psychologists has recently been observed in the area of positive psychology, which, *inter alia*, focuses on the quality of life, in literature frequently referred to as QOL or well-being (Kebza & Šolcová 2005). This concept is usually expressed periphrastically in relation to other related concepts: in Anglo-Saxon terminology most frequently to 'satisfaction', often as 'life satisfaction'.

Each of the existing theoretical concepts dealt with positive life aspects. New systematic research of positive states and well-being started only in 1980s. The new area of scientific interest was marked 'Psychology of well-being'; currently it is a well-established psychological discipline. Thus a new direction in psychology was formed focusing on understanding positive forces in a human and their development (Blatný, Dosedlová, Kebza, & Šolcová, 2005).

Provided that we base our presumptions on psychological determinism, we accept that all life events are natural. We live in causal contexts determined by numerous circumstances of the natural or social life. Psychological determinism emphasises the acceptance of all behaviour, ideas and feelings as a natural result of a complex of psychological laws (Plevová, 2004).

Generally it can be presumed that the determination of overall subjective satisfaction of an individual is based upon two groups of factors: environment and personality. One factor includes external, occupational, social, political and economic conditions, and the other one includes personality characteristics of an individual. The same applies to the population of teachers; therefore, in analysing satisfaction of the teaching profession (both life and occupational) both these perspectives should be considered.

A significant factor of an individual's satisfaction is the area of work. Work is a life-long aspect and presents a significant part of human identity. The nature of work is production; however, it also presents an important aspect of personality shaping. Work activities develop an individual's capabilities, professional interests, attitudes, life opinions, personality and physical qualities. Contrary to other human activities (interest-based), work is always associated with responsibilities; therefore it has an effect on shaping an individual's volitional qualities. Work activity and the results of such activity influence the level of aspiration and self-confidence of an individual, while these qualities influence the course of the motivation processes. This is also related to the fact

that work is primarily a social category as it is a fundamental and natural condition of the existence of the human society. In this context, Jahodová (according to Mayerová, Růžička, 2001) define five basic needs satisfied through employment. For an employed individual, work thus creates a real time structure. It is an opportunity for regular shared social experience outside the family and allows an individual to share objectives and purposes reaching beyond employment. Employment defines the personal status and personal identity and last but not least activates a number of processes to which an individual is not motivated without employment.

An interesting aspect is a multidisciplinary perspective of work. Economists tend to define work as an opportunity to earn money. In their opinion it is a means of making money to ensure provision of goods or services and productive life. Psychologists perceive work as an opportunity to express oneself. Through meaningful work, an individual's needs and aspirations are saturated, an individual creates, shares and has an opportunity to find out about what he/she really is like (Blonna, 2005). Sociologists see work as an arena in which human interaction takes place. In this arena we take various roles and are engaged in a number of relationships. Being in these roles and exploring these relationships helps us achieve our full potential as social beings. We need others to self-actualize, and this can only happen in relationship with other individuals (Gill, 1999). Political scientists view workplace as a battlefield, where fight for power takes place, which is, according to them, the main determining factor of human occupational relationships (Blonna, 2005).

In our culture, work and employment play a crucial role. They are deeply embedded in the society and in an individual's psyche. According to Freud (in Mayerová, Růžička, 2001) work is a tie to reality. Giddens (according to Mayerová, Růžička, 2001) summarizes six characteristics of paid work that have a key significance for a human being: money, activity level, variety of living, time structure, social contact and personal identity.

The importance of work for an individual thus lies in the fact that the life of each individual and the whole society is affected. Work position influences the life of each individual, allows self-actuation and is a manifestation of an individual's social activity (Mayerová & Růžička, 2001; Pugnerová & Plevová, 2009). A total of six principal dimensions were identified that define the meaning of work for an individual. The first dimension is centrality, where work is in the centre of an individual's interests, which supports the fundamental role of work in an individual's life. Studies aimed at this phenomenon point to a fact that in developed countries work is regarded more important than free time, faith, society and family (which comes second) (Gill, 1999). Economic orientation is included in external needs and corresponds with a conviction that an individual is primarily motivated by a material perspective. Several research studies confirmed that the economic perspective is the main criterion associated with work. Internal orientation, i. e. internal work aspects, correspond with variables such as creativity, autonomy,

interest, variability and challenge and provide space for an individual's self-expression. Research indicates that internal work aspects present a significant predictor of work centralization. The fourth dimension comprises interpersonal relationships. Humans are social beings who need human interaction for healthy functioning. For some individuals work provides a place where they meet other people; for some it is even the centre point of collective activities instead of family and friends. Another dimension is the right of an individual for work. This area includes both the right and responsibility of an individual. The sixth dimension includes obligations, which present the other side of law. This means belief in social norms, each individual is responsible for respecting them and contributing to the development of a 'good' society through work (Blonna, 2005).

Teachers present a relatively stable socio-professional group and are subject to research studies with various objectives. Research objectives are defined by their potential utility or actual necessity: e.g. how teachers perceive their status, how they perceive the status of various teaching qualifications, what is their self-assessment in terms of their own occupation, what is the school climate, etc. A significant variable is the issue of quality of life appearing in the area of life satisfaction and its individual components. The total number of teachers in the Czech Republic is approximately 175 thousand (Průcha, 2005). Almost 40% of all teachers in the Czech Republic are basic school teachers. These data support the need for capturing the teachers' external as well as internal environment and their correlations. At the same time, space is provided for educational as well as psychological research of the teaching profession (Urbanovská & Kusák, 2005).

The aim of our research study is to identify the current level of life satisfaction and its components of the teaching profession. At the same time this study compares the values with selected professions.

## Material and methods

### *Subjects*

The research involved a total of 544 respondents. Data of 213 (195 women, 18 men) teachers from basic schools in the Olomouc Region were analysed. The average age of the monitored sample was 41.9 years, the most frequent age being 47, the age range was 20 to 67 years. The average length of teaching practice was almost 19 years.

The following professions were used for comparison purposes: public servant, practical nurse, sales representative, manager and medical doctor. A public servant ( $n = 111$ ) is an individual carrying out an administrative function in a state authority. A practical nurse is an individual employed as a medium-level health professional. In the research practical nurses were employees from the University Hospital Hradec Králové and the University Hospital Olomouc ( $n = 78$ ). A Sales representative ( $n = 54$ ) is an employee of a private business company whose job is active promotion of the company, products

and professional representation of the company in a region. For the purposes of the research a manager ( $n = 42$ ) is an individual in an executive position in private companies in the profit sector in the Czech Republic. A medical doctor is a graduate from university study of medicine (MUDr.) and works as a private physician ( $n = 46$ ).

*Table 1*

Characteristics of study participants ( $n = 544$ )

	Number of participants (n)	Age (years $\pm$ SD)	Men (n/%)	Women (n/%)
Teachers	213	41.9 $\pm$ 7.19	18/8.5	195/91.5
Public servants	111	42.5 $\pm$ 8.54	33/30	78/70
Practical nurses	78	39.8 $\pm$ 6.48	7/9	71/91
Medical doctors	46	43.7 $\pm$ 5.62	29/63	17/37
Sales representatives	54	34.3 $\pm$ 6.01	22/41	32/59
Managers	42	38.4 $\pm$ 5.09	35/83	7/17
TOTAL	544			

#### *Ethical aspects*

The study was conducted in compliance with ethical aspects. The survey involved adult individuals on a voluntary basis. Each participant was informed of a possibility to terminate participation at any stage without giving any reason and without any sanction. All data were processed anonymously, it was impossible to identify specific respondents. The survey participants consented to anonymous data processing and use for scientific purposes.

#### *Psychological assessment*

To assess the current level of life satisfaction, the research study used a standardized psychodiagnostic tool – Life Satisfaction Questionnaire (LSQ) (Rodná & Rodný, 2001). The Czech version of the LSQ is based on the original German questionnaire Fragebogen zur Lebenszufriedenheit (FLZ) (Fahrenberg, Myrtek, Schumacher, & Brähler, 2000). The LSQ is designed for standardized description of inter-individual and intra-individual life satisfaction variability. The questionnaire aims at the assessment overall life satisfaction and its individual components: health, work and employment, finance, leisure time, partnership, relationship with own children, own person, sexuality, friends and acquaintances, living.

Each of the specified items contains seven statements. For each statement in each item the respondent tries to express the current level of satisfaction by selecting on a seven-grade scale. 1 = very dissatisfied, 7 = very satisfied. The overall value of life satisfaction is represented by the sum of gross score values in the seven defined items;

work and employment, partnership and relationship with own children are not taken into account (Rodná & Rodný, 2001).

### *Statistical analysis*

With respect to the overall design of the survey the monitored values were compared by expressing material significance (effect size) based in Cohen's  $d$  according to the following formula:

$$d = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{SD_{pooled}}, \text{ where } SD_{pooled} = \sqrt{\frac{[(n_1 - 1) \cdot SD_1^2 + (n_2 - 1) \cdot SD_2^2]}{[n_1 + n_2 - 2]}}$$

The value of Cohen's  $d < 0.2$  = small change,  $d 0.2-0.5$  = medium change and  $d > 0.8$  = large change (Cohen, 1988; Thomas, Nelson & Silverman, 2011). Statistical processing was performed by the Statistica programme, v. 10.0 (Statistica, Tulsa, USA).

## **Results**

Tables 2 and 3 present the main findings of the survey of life satisfaction in teachers and selected professions. Compared with other professions, overall life satisfaction in current teachers is very low. Even lower values were reached only by practical nurses (Table 2, Fig. 1). On the contrary, the highest values of overall life satisfaction were scored by medical doctors and managers. The category that mostly saturates the level of life satisfaction in current teachers is own children, followed by satisfaction in partnership and friends. Teachers' satisfaction with housing is also relatively high. Significantly lowest values were scored in the finance category. Compared with other professions, teachers reported the lowest values of subjective health assessment (Table 2, Fig. 1).

Table 2

Life satisfaction and its components in current teachers and selected profession groups

Live satisfaction	Teachers	Public servants	Practical nurses	Medical doctors	Sales representatives	Managers
Health	35.0 ± 6.51	36.9 ± 6.48	37.9 ± 7.01	37.4 ± 6.81	37.6 ± 7.52	35.1 ± 6.75
Work	35.8 ± 5.82	34.6 ± 6.57	33.8 ± 6.82	38.1 ± 5.34	38.2 ± 6.18	44.3 ± 4.12
Finance	30.1 ± 7.21	30.6 ± 8.11	27.5 ± 7.59	41.4 ± 5.27	34.7 ± 6.47	46.2 ± 3.07
Leisure time	35.5 ± 7.27	34.1 ± 7.65	31.5 ± 7.14	36.8 ± 6.58	34.9 ± 6.80	22.3 ± 7.10
Partnership	38.7 ± 8.71	39.1 ± 6.73	38.3 ± 7.56	34.9 ± 6.94	40.6 ± 5.89	31.4 ± 7.86
Child	41.2 ± 6.50	40.4 ± 5.27	40.4 ± 5.12	41.3 ± 5.23	40.7 ± 6.71	38.8 ± 6.97
Own person	35.2 ± 6.43	36.4 ± 5.52	34.7 ± 6.23	38.6 ± 5.67	36.6 ± 5.98	44.9 ± 4.65
Sexuality	35.1 ± 7.86	36.3 ± 6.99	36.8 ± 7.54	34.2 ± 7.82	40.8 ± 6.70	32.3 ± 7.26
Friends	37.3 ± 5.60	37.2 ± 4.93	35.7 ± 4.89	41.7 ± 4.53	36.4 ± 5.17	35.6 ± 5.84
Housing	37.4 ± 6.79	36.8 ± 6.39	36.2 ± 5.87	43.8 ± 5.47	37.5 ± 6.13	44.5 ± 4.92
TOTAL	244.4 ± 28.54	247.5 ± 34.03	240.2 ± 37.15	274.1 ± 23.42	258.9 ± 29.31	261.6 ± 21.19

A comparison of individual professions revealed minimum differences in overall life satisfaction as well as its individual components between teachers and public servants. A similar trend was observed in a comparison with practical nurses (Table 3). However, there was a significant difference in the area of satisfaction with leisure time. In this item teachers reported the highest degree of satisfaction. A comparison of overall life satisfaction between teachers and doctors revealed significantly higher values ( $d = 1.72$ ) in doctors. In comparison with doctors, teachers are significantly less satisfied with finance, own person, friends and overall housing quality. A comparison of overall life satisfaction between teachers and sales representatives reported a material difference of a medium significance ( $d = 0.510$ ) in terms of a higher degree of satisfaction in sales representatives. Significant differences were observed in two more items. Sales representatives were more satisfied in the area of finance and sexuality (Table 3). The highest number of significant differences was observed in a comparison of teachers and managers. Managers are in general significantly more satisfied ( $d = 0.626$ ). Significant differences were also observed in life satisfaction of managers in the area of work, finance, own person and housing. On the contrary, significantly higher values of life satisfaction than managers were reported by teachers in the area of leisure time and partnership (Table 3).

Table 3

Effect size (Cohen's *d*) of differences in life satisfaction components in teachers and selected profession groups

Effect size (Cohen's <i>d</i> )	Teachers × Public servants	Teachers × Practical nurses	Teachers × Medical doctors	Teachers × Sales representatives	Teachers × Managers
Health	0.292	0.436	0.366	0.387	0.015
Work	0.197	0.328	0.401	0.407	1.523**
Finance	0.066	0.356	1.635**	0.651*	2.398**
Leisure time	0.189	0.553*	0.182	0.084	1.823**
Partnership	0.049	0.048	0.451	0.231	0.851**
Child	0.131	0.130	0.016	0.076	0.365
Own person	0.196	0.078	0.539*	0.221	1.570**
Sexuality	0.158	0.219	0.115	0.746*	0.361
Friends	0.019	0.295	0.811**	0.163	0.301
Housing	0.090	0.183	0.973**	0.015	1.088**
TOTAL	0.102	0.135	1.072**	0.510*	0.626*

Legend: \* – effect size significance (medium effect); \*\* – effect size significance (large effect)

## Discussion

In our research we focused primarily on the assessment of own life satisfaction and its components in teachers compared with selected profession groups. As mentioned in the introduction, literary sources are not in agreement as far as the definition of life satisfaction is concerned. There are several definitions of life satisfaction, e.g. 'well-being', 'subjective well-being' or 'quality of life'. In our paper we mostly adhere to well-being.

Life satisfaction is influenced by a number factors, most frequently age, gender, health and work. In relation to work Hnilica (in Payne, 2005) speaks of the possibility to influence work as such. Individuals are more satisfied with work if they have more control over their work and if their work is less mentally demanding. It was confirmed that a higher degree of an employee's control is correlated with a feeling of higher mental demands. Control over work is characterized by work autonomy, possibility to apply own competences and interests and possibility of personal development. Work satisfaction does not have a direct effect on overall satisfaction, its influence is defined by the degree of control. A significant predictor of life satisfaction is represented by health. Despite this fact the relationship between satisfaction and health and the above mentioned work satisfaction are relatively independent areas. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction in either of them does not influence the other area. Satisfaction with health,

contrary to work satisfaction, has a direct effect on overall life satisfaction and quality of life. Some authors even claim that it is a stronger predictor of life satisfaction than social support and partnerships (Kebza & Šolcová 2005).

With respect to gender differences Hnilica (in Payne, 2005) claims that men are more satisfied than women in the most important areas of their lives (partnerships and work) as well as their lives in general. In terms of the influence of age in both genders, there is a slight linear decrease in satisfaction with age, minimum is reached around fifty years of age. During this stage there is a decrease in both overall life satisfaction and satisfaction with partnership and sexuality. Satisfaction with health decreases between fifty and sixty years of age, while the significance of health as such increases. The significance of satisfaction with marriage, partnership and sexuality decreases after seventy years of age. In overall terms, life satisfaction is strongly associated with work, existence of a partnership, positive self-assessment, good income and absence of anxiety and depression (Beutel et al., 2009). In men there is a decrease in satisfaction with sexuality with age, particularly after sixty years of age. At the same time, there is a slight increase in satisfaction in the area of partnership (Beutel et al., 2010). In spite of this fact, age does not have to be a clear criterion. Some studies indicate that life satisfaction in men in the area of leisure time, partnership, sexuality, own person and social integration is very similar around forty to forty-seven years of age, and in men over fifty years of age until about sixty-five. On the contrary, the period between forty-eight and fifty-five is typical for a decreased level of life satisfaction and its components (Seikowski, Stöbe, & Harth, 2008). Women tend to be most satisfied with family life and children. In overall terms, main gender differences in life satisfaction are in the areas of health, finance and family life (Daig et al., 2009).

In the context of our study, the issue of current life satisfaction and its components is analysed for various professions. The principal monitored profession is current teachers. For practical reasons we performed a comparison with individuals of the following positions: public servant, practical nurse, sales representative, manager and medical doctor.

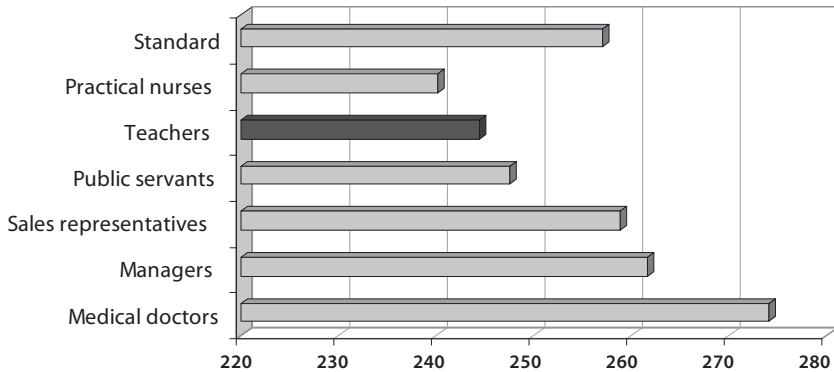
In terms of life satisfaction, the monitored group of teachers reported lower values than reference standard values. Compared with selected professions, current teachers reported almost the lowest values of overall life satisfaction (Fig. 1). The lowest values of overall life satisfaction, even lower than teachers, were scored by practical nurses. The highest values scored by teachers were in the item of satisfaction with own children and in the area of partnership. In comparison with selected professions, teachers scored the lowest values in the item of subjective health assessment. The lowest values of life satisfaction for teachers were scored in the area of satisfaction with finance. This fact can be based on long-term concerns about financial difficulties because after more years of practice one wants to afford more than basic needs. Teachers usually satisfy just their basic needs, which corresponds with the impossibility to satisfy more demanding needs

in terms of finance. In overall terms, there is a trend of significantly lower life satisfaction of teachers and employees in the public sector and state administration (practical nurses, public servants) compared with private sector professions (medical doctors, sales representatives, managers) (Fig. 1). Similar conclusions were stated by Vašina (1999), who investigated occupational satisfaction of teachers in basic and secondary schools in comparison with occupational satisfaction of bankers or HR employees. The teaching profession had significantly lower satisfaction.

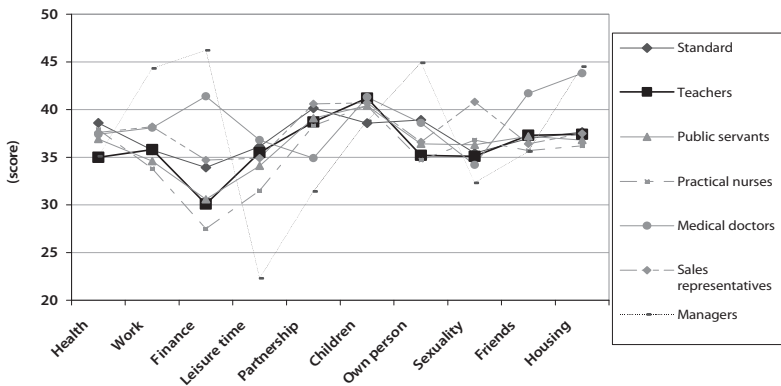
In terms of overall life satisfaction, the highest level was observed in medical doctors. Individuals in this profession group did not show considerable dissatisfaction in any of the areas, on the contrary, their life satisfaction is more significant in several areas. Individuals in this sample have all qualifications and longer experience, which might have an effect on their life satisfaction and its components.

A relatively high life satisfaction was reported by the sample of managers although the structure is somewhat specific. In terms of life satisfaction managers are significantly satisfied in the area of work and employment, finance and housing. Similarly, Mikšik (2009) in his study aimed at the correlation between the attitudes to life reality and the nature and type of occupation revealed that managers of international business companies and leading public administration employees are significantly satisfied with material provisions. However, as early as 1960s it was becoming evident that continuous economic growth does not lead to increased life satisfaction but rather to increased demands that cannot be always satisfied. Hošek (2001) speaks of a hypertrophy of an individual's needs, as a result of which an individual becomes more vulnerable. The analysis of the results of our sample of managers indicates that the items of finance and housing are significantly increased and to a large extent contribute to the results of their overall life satisfaction. In the categories of finance and housing managers reported significantly higher values of life satisfaction also compared with standard values. From a psychological viewpoint it would be desirable to achieve a balance between work and private life. This idea is also supported by the results of an international study carried out in 33 countries investigating whether managers can have 'private life and career' at the same time. It was revealed that those managers who were able to maintain a balance between work and private life were assessed as individuals with a higher career potential than those purely work-oriented (Lyness & Judiesch, 2008).

**Figure 1**  
Overall life satisfaction in teachers and selected profession groups



**Figure 2**  
Structure of life satisfaction in teachers and selected profession groups



Another sample our research focused on sales representatives. Individuals in this sample are most satisfied with work, partnership, own children and sexuality. In other monitored items of life satisfaction they scored average and there is no area in which their life satisfaction would be particularly low. In terms of overall life satisfaction, the sample of sales representatives reported considerable values (Table 3). With respect to individual components, sales representatives are significantly more satisfied than teachers in the

area of finance and sexuality. The content of their work, overall organization, certain autonomy and material conditions can form a basis for a higher degree of life satisfaction in sales representatives than teachers. On the contrary, teachers' jobs have a relatively stable structure, their place of work is stable, their work autonomy is limited by the system and the school environment, their material conditions do not match those of sales representatives. Financial evaluation with motivation components considerably differs between those two groups. The facts mentioned above can influence the overall level of life satisfaction and its components in the context of comparing sales representatives and teachers.

The sample of public servants reported a lower index of overall life satisfaction compared with average standard values. In comparison with teachers, their overall life satisfaction is significantly higher. In terms of the different components, public servants scored highest in the areas of children, partnership and friends. On the contrary, the lowest values were observed in finance, leisure time and work. An analysis of the curves in a line chart (Fig. 2) indicates that in terms of the monitored components of life satisfaction, public servants are closest to teachers.

In overall terms, the lowest life satisfaction was observed in the sample of practical nurses. Practical nurses are relatively satisfied in the social domain, which is represented in this survey by the relationship with own children. However, practical nurses are dissatisfied with economic aspects, i. e. finance. The level of satisfaction in this area is the lowest of all monitored samples. The financial evaluation of practical nurses does not often meet the workload and time spent at work. This might be the cause of their frustration in this area. According to Müllerová (2007), a nurse should introduce a patient into a treatment facility, explain unknown things, advise on the regime, facilitate overall orientation of the patient. A nurse should also try to reduce negative emotions (fear, shyness, anxiety, hopelessness) and establish an involved personal relationship with the patient, express interest. Last but not least a nurse should actively cooperate with, encourage and activate the patient. All this makes the profession of a nurse very demanding and exhausting. In spite of that, this profession can provide a certain degree of life satisfaction. In some individuals this profession can saturate the degree of work satisfaction significantly more than the overall level of life satisfaction, irrespective of age (Kliszcz et al., 2004). These facts can be further accented in cases of positive interpersonal relationships (Lee, Kang, & Kim, 2007).

Optimum interpersonal relationships and a social climate in general contribute to both work satisfaction and life satisfaction, this particularly applies to professions that include frequent personal contact. This category includes teachers analysed in our survey. The teaching profession is a relatively specific and stable social and profession group. Teachers work with children and youth and influence them in terms of education and morals; therefore, it is desirable that their satisfaction be at least acceptable. Teachers' life satisfaction is then reflected in work satisfaction and thus in work with the target group, i. e. children.

The survey is of a pilot nature and provides space for further research studies in the area of life satisfaction of various profession groups.

## Conclusions

The present paper focuses on the assessment of the current state of life satisfaction and its components in current teachers in comparison with selected profession groups. The research study included a total of 544 adults of various professions, of which 213 were teachers. The aim of the research plan was to contribute to understanding the aspects that currently influence life and work satisfaction of basic school teachers. The conclusions of the research study are as follows:

- Current teachers reported lower values of overall life satisfaction than average reference values,
- Compared with selected professions, teachers reported almost the lowest values of overall life satisfaction,
- Lower values of overall life satisfaction compared with teachers were scored only by medium-level health professionals,
- The highest values in teachers were scored in the item of satisfaction with own children and partnership,
- Of all selected professions, teachers scored lowest in the item of subjective health assessment,
- The lowest values of teachers' life satisfaction was reported in the item of finance,
- In overall terms, there is a trend of significantly lower level of life satisfaction in public sector and state administration employees (teachers, practical nurses, public servants) in comparison with private sector professions (medical doctors, sales representatives, managers).

With respect to the overall design, the research is of a pilot nature and provides space for the development of hypotheses and their verification in subsequent research studies.

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