



Preliminary Study on Occupational Well-Being among Albanian Teachers in Lower Secondary School

Ortaokulda Çalışan Arnavut Öğretmenlerin Mesleki İyi Oluşu Üzerine Bir Ön Çalışma

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the level of occupational well-being and its three constructions, Organizational, Workload, and Pupil interaction well-being, among Albanian teachers working in lower secondary schools and the effect of demographic features and socioeconomic factors on occupational well-being. The analysis of information obtained from the interview of 198 teachers showed that teachers working in lower secondary schools reported a moderate level of occupational well-being. The levels of both organizational well-being and pupil interaction well-being were positive. Teachers have reported that workload well-being was slightly negative overall. The level of organizational WB, workload WB, and pupil interaction WB varies depending on the teachers' demographic features and social and economic factors. Female teachers, teachers with children, and teachers from families with low and medium incomes declare a higher level of well-being. Teaching experience affects the level of well-being. Teachers in public schools and teachers working in schools located in urban areas declare a higher level of occupational well-being. Based on these results, it is recommended that future reforms and programs in the pre-university education system aimed at increasing occupational well-being should be designed and implemented. This is because of the complexity of the factors responsible for occupational well-being and the characteristics of educational institutions related to their ownership status and location.

Keywords: Albanian Teachers, Secondary School, Well-Being

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, ortaokulda görev yapan Arnavut öğretmenlerin mesleki iyi oluş düzeyinin yanı sıra öğretmen iyi oluşunun örgütsel, iş yükü ve öğrenci etkileşimi iyi oluşu olmak üzere üç yapısını ve demografik özelliklerin ve sosyo-ekonomik faktörlerin mesleki iyi oluş üzerindeki etkisini değerlendirmektir. 198 öğretmenle yürütülen çalışmadan elde edilen verilerin sonuçları, ortaokuldaki öğretmenlerin orta düzeyde mesleki iyi oluş dönütü sunduklarını göstermiştir. Hem örgütsel iyi oluş hem de öğrenci etkileşimi iyi oluş düzeyleri pozitif çıkmıştır. Öğretmenler iş yükü iyi oluşunun genel olarak biraz olumsuz olduğunu bildirmiştir. Örgütsel iyi oluş, iş yükü iyi oluşu ve öğrenci etkileşimi yönünden iyi oluş düzeyi, öğretmenlerin demografik özelliklerine ve sosyo-ekonomik faktörlere bağlı olarak değişmektedir. Kadın öğretmenler, çocuklu öğretmenler ve düşük ya da orta gelirli ailelere mensup öğretmenler daha yüksek düzeyde iyi oluş beyan etmektedir. Öğretmenlikte deneyim durumu iyi oluş düzeyini etkilemektedir. Devlet okullarındaki öğretmenler ve kentsel alanlardaki okullarda çalışan öğretmenler daha yüksek düzeyde mesleki iyi oluş beyan etmektedir. Bu sonuçlara dayanarak, üniversite öncesi eğitim sisteminde mesleki iyi oluşu artırmaya yönelik gelecekteki reform ve programların, mesleki iyi oluştan sorumlu faktörlerin karmaşıklığı ve eğitim kurumlarının mülkiyet durumları ve konumları ile ilgili özellikleri dikkate alınarak tasarlanması ve uygulanması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arnavut Öğretmenler, Ortaokul, İyi Oluş



Introduction

Teaching is one of the most challenging professions, the effects of which are significant for the future development of society. Its practical and successful realization is conditioned by the practitioner of this profession, the teacher. Regardless of the educational system that is implemented, the teacher is one of the most critical factors in achieving the objectives of each educational system: the academic, professional, social, and emotional development of the new generation. (Elias & Arnold, 2006). The teacher could accomplish the mission and objectives of the task when the institutional, social, and physical environment offers supportive and encouraging conditions at work. Consequently, it can be affirmed that success in the work of the teacher is influenced to a significant extent by occupational well-being (Duong et al., 2023; Chan et al., 2023)

In current literature, occupational well-being is treated as a psycho-emotional state of the teacher. This is the result of the action and interaction of complex factors closely related to the individual and factors of the external, institutional, and social environment in which the teacher works (Kyriacou, 2001; Van Horn et al., 2004; Klusman et al., 2008; Brouskeli et al., 2018). In this literature, the opinion prevails that occupational well-being is a reflex of the teacher's behavior and emotional reaction to the task, which affects the quality of teaching (Klusman et al., 2008; Collie 2014; Benevene et al., 2020; Dreer-Goethe, 2021; Duong et al., 2023; Chan et al., 2023).

Different authors (Kyriacou, 2001; Van Horn et al., 2004; Klusman et al., 2008; Collie et al., 2015; Benevene et al., 2020; Song, et al., 2020; Hascher & Wabe, 2021; Tsuyuguchi, 2023) have stated that occupational well-being should be considered as an expression of the many effects of stress, burnout, motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction of teachers.

Collie (2014) argued that the well-being factors are related to external and internal constructs of job satisfaction, work motivation, commitment, and stress. These authors have argued that teachers' occupational well-being is affected by the demographic features of teachers like gender, age, work experience, civil status, and the economic status of their families.

Chan et al. (2023) emphasize that improving the well-being of teachers is one of the main objectives that every educational institution should have because well-being has the potential to improve the quality of teacher-student interactions, which is one of the most effective ways to increase the quality of teaching and the educational system.

The profound changes in the political, economic, and social systems that occurred at the beginning of the 90s in Albania conditioned the need for transformative reforms in the pre-university education system. Part of them are the reforms whose object is the teacher. In the literature of the time, it is emphasized that the conception of these reforms and their successful implementation are essential and conditioned by the quality, completeness, objectivity, and scientific truth of the information used for their design. The identification and deep knowledge of the factors that condition the occupational well-being of teachers are among the crucial challenges of scientific research in Albania, as part of the efforts made in this country for the transformation and development of the pre-university education system aligned with the systems implemented in countries with developed democracies and in the EU.

The aim of this study is the identification of determinant factors of well-being among-Albanian teachers working in lower secondary schools. The results shown are preliminary and will serve as a good reference point for further development of this scientific argument.

Methodology

Research hypothesis

The occupational well-being of Albanian teachers working in lower secondary schools is the result of a complex interaction between intrinsic factors and extrinsic institutional, economic, social, and environmental factors.

Research questions

Question no. 1. What is the average level of three specific factors of occupational well-being (Organizational, Workload, and Pupil interaction) of Albanian teachers working in lower secondary schools?

Question no. 2. What is the effect of demographic features and socio-economic factors on the occupational well-being of Albanian teachers working in lower secondary schools?

Quantitative Data

Following Collie et al. (2015) and Jellis et al. (2021), to conduct the interviews, a questionnaire was drawn that contains 16 items that correspond to different aspects related to the exercise of the teaching profession in lower secondary schools and that affect teachers' well being (6 items that relate to organizational well-being, 6 to the Workload well-being and 4 Pupils' interaction well-being). Unlike these authors, the answers for each of the items of the questionnaire used in this study; generate the values of Likert variables, with 5 scales and not 7 scales, where 1 score indicates a very negative effect on the teacher, 3 scores indicate neutrally and 5 scores indicate a very positive impact of the corresponding item on teachers' well-being.

The information collected through the interviews was tested to assess its reliability level (Table 1).

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha coefficients

| Item | Components | Number of questions | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Occupational well-being | | 16 | 0.81 |
| | Organizational well-being | 6 | 0.83 |
| | Workload well-being | 6 | 0.80 |
| | Pupils' interaction well-being | 4 | 0.79 |

The calculated values of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient show that the collected information is valid and can be used to assess well-being reliably.

Sample characteristics

In the sample, about 18% of teachers are male. In Albania, male teachers in lower secondary education schools make up about 16%. About 12.6% are teachers who work in private schools. At the national level, private schools of lower secondary education make up about 11% of the total number of schools in this cycle. The sample is also representative of the distribution of schools in urban and peri-urban/rural areas (71.8%/28.8% vs. 67.3%/32.7%; $p < 0.05$).

Table 2: Sample characteristics

| Feature | Number | % |
|--------------------------------|--------|------|
| Gender | | |
| Female | 162 | 81.8 |
| Male | 36 | 18.2 |
| Age | | |
| 20-30 years old | 49 | 24.7 |
| 31-40 years old | 80 | 40.4 |
| >40 years old | 69 | 34.8 |
| Work experience | | |
| < 5 years | 55 | 27.8 |
| 5-10 years | 67 | 33.8 |
| >10 years | 76 | 38.4 |
| Civil status | | |
| Single | 31 | 15.7 |
| Married | 126 | 63.6 |
| Divorced | 29 | 14.6 |
| Widowed | 12 | 6.1 |
| Family status | | |
| With child | 132 | 66.7 |
| Without child | 66 | 33.3 |
| Family income | | |
| Low | 55 | 27.7 |
| Middle | 107 | 54.0 |
| High | 36 | 18.2 |
| Ownership of the school | | |
| Private school | 25 | 12.6 |
| Public school | 173 | 87.4 |
| School location | | |
| Urban area | 141 | 71.8 |
| Rural area | 57 | 28.8 |

Data analysis methods

To evaluate the level of occupational well-being, Organizational, Workload, and Student interaction, a descriptive analysis was carried out. The correlation analysis was used to identify the relationships between the three primary constructs of well-being and between these components and demographic and socio-economic factors.

Results

Descriptive analysis

The data in Table 3 show that the interviewed teachers, generally, express themselves positively about occupational well-being. The average levels of both organizational well-being and pupil interaction

well-being among respondents were optimistic. Teachers have reported that workload well-being was slightly negative overall. This result is similar to that reported by Jellis et al. (2021).

Table 3: Means and standard deviations for occupational well-being and their constructs

| | Mean scores | SD |
|-------------------------|-------------|------|
| Occupational well-being | 3.38 | 0.62 |
| -Organizational WB | 3.53 | 0.71 |
| -Workload WB | 2.91 | 0.48 |
| -Pupil interaction WB | 3.72 | 0.56 |

To evaluate the effect caused by different items of Organizational, Workload, and Pupil interaction on well-being among teachers, the results presented in Figure 1 are used. Figure 1 summarizes the average scores for the teachers' well-being corresponding to each item.

Based on the information shown in Figure 1, it can be proven that aspects of teachers' work contributing to the organizational well-being factor were generally rated neutral or slightly positive. Meanwhile, all aspects of teachers' work contributing to the Pupils' interaction and well-being are declared positive by the interviewed teachers. In details, according to the interviewed teachers, *class management, pupils' motivation, communication between staff members of the school, and recognition for their teaching* are the most important aspects that positively affect their well-being as teachers. The workload related to *working late to attend meetings and activities, working to finish their teaching preparation tasks, and teaching work outside of school hours* are aspects that negatively affect teachers' occupational well-being.

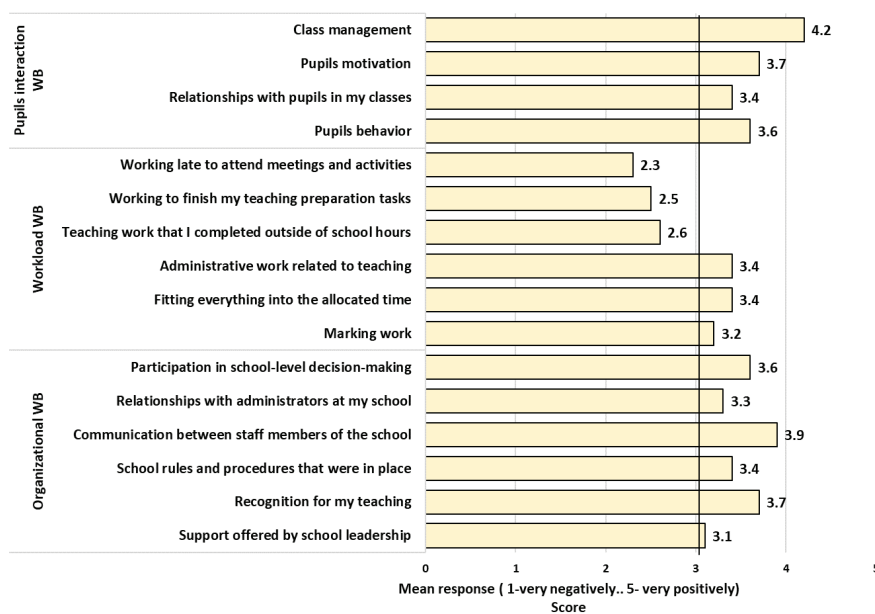


Figure 1 Items' average scores of three components (constructs) of occupational well-being

The data in Table 4 showed that gender is identified as a factor that affects the occupational well-being of teachers in two of its constructs: Organizational WB and Workload WB ($p < 0.05$). The differences between male and female teachers that are related to Pupils' interaction WB are not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). The gender of the teacher has a statistically significant effect ($p < 0.05$) on the difference between the average occupational well-being among male and female teachers (3.55 ± 0.62 (F) vs. 3.23 ± 0.59 (M)).

Table 4: Average scores and Standard deviation*

| Items | Organizational WB | Workload WB | Pupils' interaction with WB |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Age | | | |
| Female | 3.88±0.52 ^a | 3.06±0.53 ^a | 3.71±0.46 ^a |
| Male | 3.19±0.49 ^b | 2.76±0.66 ^b | 3.74±0.31 ^a |
| Work experience | | | |
| 0-5 years | 3.16±0.61 ^a | 3.71±0.67 ^a | 3.12±0.53 ^a |
| 6-10 years | 3.02±0.60 ^a | 2.94±0.35 ^b | 3.38±0.56 ^a |
| >10 years | 3.49±0.48 ^b | 3.87±0.39 ^a | 3.41±0.49 ^a |
| Civil status | | | |
| Single | 3.68±0.39 ^a | 3.16±0.42 ^a | 3.62±0.33 ^a |
| Married | 3.51±0.44 ^a | 2.64±0.47 ^b | 3.88±0.36 ^a |
| Divorced | 3.34±0.41 ^a | 2.77±0.38 ^b | 3.44±0.39 ^a |
| Widowed | 3.48±0.39 ^a | 3.09±0.51 ^a | 3.94±0.32 ^a |
| Family status | | | |
| With child | 3.73±0.67 ^a | 2.74±0.59 ^a | 4.02±0.36 ^a |
| Without child | 3.28±0.53 ^b | 3.08±0.33 ^b | 3.42±0.32 ^b |
| Family income | | | |
| Low | 3.64±0.66 ^a | 3.11±0.44 ^a | 3.72±0.54 ^a |
| Middle | 3.88±0.62 ^a | 3.08±0.53 ^a | 3.78±0.61 ^a |
| High | 2.98±0.25 ^b | 2.54±0.18 ^b | 3.66±0.24 ^a |
| Ownership of the school | | | |
| Private school | 3.12±0.32 ^a | 2.62±0.31 ^a | 3.75±0.24 ^a |
| Public school | 3.86±0.66 ^b | 3.21±0.34 ^b | 3.69±0.14 ^a |
| School location | | | |
| Urban area | 3.81±0.51 ^a | 3.14±0.42 ^a | 3.91±0.25 ^a |
| Rural area | 3.21±0.50 ^b | 2.68±0.39 ^b | 3.53±0.31 ^b |

* The difference between averages in the same column marked with different letters is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

The sample data shows the case of Albanian teachers in the lower secondary cycle. The work experience is identified as a factor that has a statistically significant effect ($p < 0.05$) on occupational well-being. Among teachers with 10+ years of seniority, higher levels of well-being were found compared with less experienced teachers. Meanwhile, it should be noted that about the construct "pupil interaction well-being", no significant differences are evident between teachers with different seniority. These results are similar to those published by Collie et al. (2015) and Jellis et al. (2021).

Differences in civil status between teachers is a factor whose effect does not appear according to the same rule in the three well-being constructs. The effects of this factor appear significant ($p < 0.05$) in the construct "Workload WB", while in the construct "Organizational WB" and "Pupil interaction WB", their effects are not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

Teachers with children declare a higher level of well-being related to organizational well-being and pupil interaction well-being constructs, and a low level related to workload well-being, compared to teachers without children.

The data sample identifies Family income as a socio-economic factor that has a significant effect ($p < 0.05$) on organizational well-being and workload well-being. These effects are consequences of differences in well-being among teachers that belong to families with low and medium incomes, and teachers belonging

to high-income families. Differences in family income do not affect the pupil interaction well-being of teachers.

The ownership of the school appears to be a factor that affects teachers' occupational well-being. The difference of +0.43 scores in occupational well-being between teachers who work in public schools and their colleagues in private schools, is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This difference is a consequence of the difference between them in "Organizational well-being" (+0.74 scores) and "Workload well-being" (+0.59 scores) ($p < 0.05$).

Factor " School location " was identified as a factor that affects occupational well-being in three constructs. The well-being among teachers working in urban areas is significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) than among teachers who work in peri-urban/rural areas.

Relationships between teacher well-being factors, demographic features, and socio-economic factors

The Pearson's correlation coefficients were evaluated to identify the relationships between the three constructs of teachers' occupational well-being. (Table 5) shows that between these constructs, there are moderate linear correlation relationships that are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). This result is broadly in line with results published by Collie (2014) and Jellis et al. (2021).

Table 5. Pearson's correlations (r) between well-being measures

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|-----|----|
| Occupational well-being | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 Organizational WB | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 Workload WB | .52** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 3 Pupils' interaction with WB | .47** | .62** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Demographic feature | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 Gender | .31* | .19 | .08 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 5 Seniority | .32* | .21 | .36* | -.11 | 1 | | | | | |
| 6 Civil status | .18 | .29* | .09 | .03 | .22 | 1 | | | | |
| 7 Family status | .14 | .25* | .21 | .09 | .06 | .12 | 1 | | | |
| Socio-economic factors | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 Income family | -.31* | -.28* | -.11 | .07 | .12 | .09 | -.08 | 1 | | |
| 9 Ownership of the school | -.29* | -.31* | .12 | .08 | .16 | -.14 | .06 | -.14 | 1 | |
| 10 School location | .27* | .30* | .09 | .07 | .11 | .04 | .09 | -.18 | .06 | 1 |

* $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$

The sample data only identify a statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) between gender and organizational well-being. The relationship between gender and workload well-being is identified only as a tendency that is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

The statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) between teachers' seniority and organizational well-being and workload well-being identifies seniority as an affecting factor on teachers' occupational well-being. The correlation coefficients that assess the relationship between teachers' civil status and their well-being show that changes in civil status are accompanied by changes only in the level of workload well-being. In the same way, teachers' family status affects their occupational well-being.

The data sample shows that the three socio-economic factors considered affect teachers' occupational well-

being. Family income shows this impact through the differences in the answers of the teachers regarding the impact of these factors that are part of the organizational well-being and workload well-being constructs on their well-being. In the same way, the school location factor affects the occupational well-being of teachers, while the effect, statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), of the ownership of the school (public or private school) is only related to workload well-being.

Those results are in line with those published by Collie et al. (2015), Alves et al. (2021), Dreer (2022), and Chan et al. (2023).

Discussion

The study of teachers' occupational well-being is conditioned by the need to understand the behavior of teachers in the performance of their duties. These studies are intended to identify the factors that influence the behavior of the teacher toward the task as the most important institution of the educational system. The explanation of how these factors act and the assessment of their impact on the realization of the objectives of the educational system are necessary to design and implement development policies and programs aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the education system. In particular, the need for such studies is evident in countries that, after a long period of governance in the dictatorship system, are reforming the pre-university education system by the needs of a democratic system and an open society.

The literature deals with methodologies and presents different instruments that can be used to identify the factors that determine teachers' occupational well-being. In Albania, there is a lack of studies on this important aspect of the teacher's relationship with the school, students, parents, the institutional educational system, and its administration. Meanwhile, to design policies and programs that will aim to develop an effective system in pre-university education students of all, it is necessary to evaluate the level of occupational well-being. The identification of the factors that determine this level and the evaluation of its effects are necessary. To meet this need, the study presented was carried out using the methodology and instruments elaborated by Collie et al. (2015), Jellis et al. (2021), and Chan et al. (2023). Based on these, the questionnaire given above was drawn up for conducting the study. In this questionnaire, teachers' occupational well-being is treated as a manifestation of teachers' attitudes and psycho-emotional and social behavior in completing their duties. For their quantitative evaluation, the hypothesis was accepted according to which the level of occupational well-being is the result of the multiplication of effects related to the action of three groups of factors: Organizational well-being, Workload well-being, and Pupils' interaction well-being. The assessment of Means scores that correspond to these three component constructs of occupational well-being shows that the reaction of Albanian teachers to the factors that condition their well-being varies depending on the factors. Consequently, the interventions that can be made to increase the level of teachers' well-being must consider this fact.

Based on the results that were presented in Figure 1, it is possible to understand and explain the effect of different items and different aspects of teaching work on three constructs of occupational well-being. The above results show that teachers consider working late to attend meetings and activities, working to finish their teaching preparation tasks, and teaching work outside of school hours as factors with a significant negative effect on their well-being. As a result, it may seem logical that, in order to increase well-being among teachers, interventions in the organization and administration of work in the school to reduce the workload outside of school hours should be implemented. Meanwhile, it is essential to note that such an intervention may not, in every case, result in the anticipated outcome. This is because the result obtained in evaluating the correlations between the three component constructs of occupational well-being shows that there are statistically significant correlations between them. As a result, the interventions that can be made in the constituent factors of one construct will also affect other well-being constructs. Such a result requires that the process for designing policies and programs that have as their objective the increase of occupational well-being among teachers in lower secondary schools, be developed as a process in which all aspects, factors and issues that relate to teachers' well-being should be addressed.

The results, in general, showed the effect of teachers' demographic features and socio-economic factors on occupational well-being. As a rule, female teachers in Albania declare a higher level of well-being than male colleagues. Teachers with children and teachers who belong to families with low and medium incomes also

declare a higher level. These results show that a teacher–student team of pre-university teacher–student in Albania, reformed by the conditions of a system of democratic government and open society, is relatively new. The institutional organization and its operation have effects on teachers' well-being that do not differ essentially from those of other countries with more experience in the development of the education system. These considerations are also confirmed by the results obtained in this study regarding the effectiveness of working experience on teacher well-being. This result is the same as that communicated by Chi et al. (2014), Collie et al. (2015), Huang & Yin (2018); Alves et al. (2021), Jellis et al. (2021), Mathew, (2023) and Dreer, (2023).

The statistically significant effect of ownership of the school (public or private) and school location (urban or peri-urban/rural area) on teachers' well-being shows that although public or private educational institutions in urban areas or peri-urban/rural in Albania are organized and must function following the same legal framework, in practice the implementation of this legal framework is not the same. The differences in the implementation of the legal framework, the differences in culture and social behavior in Albania towards the private education system and differences in the economic and social development of urban and rural areas influence the differences identified in the level of teachers' occupational well-being. Therefore, to achieve success in policies and programs aimed at increasing teachers' occupational well-being, it is necessary to carry out reforms and implement programs for the development of the pre-university education system, which should be considered the difference between the public and private educational systems and between schools that are located in urban and peri-urban/rural areas.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Albanian teachers working in the lower secondary schools reported a moderate level of occupational well-being. The levels of both organizational well-being and pupil interaction well-being were positive. Teachers have reported that workload well-being was slightly negative overall.

Occupational well-being is the result of the economic-social state and behavior of the teacher, which are conditioned by organizational, workload and pupils' interaction factors.

The level of organizational WB, workload WB and pupils' interaction WB varies depending on the teachers' demographic features and social and economic factors. Female teachers, teachers with children, and teachers belonging to families with low and medium incomes declare a higher level of well-being. Teaching experience affects the level of well-being.

Public school teachers and teachers working in urban areas declare a higher level of occupational well-being.

Reforms and programs in the pre-university education system aimed at increasing occupational well-being must be designed and implemented, considering the complexity of the factors responsible for occupational well-being and the characteristics of educational institutions related to their ownership status and location.

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