ASSESSING ANXIETY AND CONFLICT TENDENCIES AMONG EDUCATORS DURING EDUCATIONAL REFORM PROCESSES

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Abstract

Reforms in the education system often cause changes that can lead to anxiety and stress among teachers and other relevant actors. This article focuses on determining the relationship between the degree of anxiety and conflict tendencies among educators, teachers and other employees in the education sector during reform processes in education. The research objective is to understand how anxiety and conflicts manifest and influence each other in the context of change and adaptation within educational institutions. In addition, this research aims to provide a deeper insight into the emotional and interpersonal challenges faced by professionals during the reforms. The methodology of information gathering is based on the creation of questionnaires for respondents which consisted of two parts, a standardized test for the assessment of anxiety in the workplace (APS), and the expression of the respondents' attitudes on the impact of reform processes on the occurrence of conflicts. The results may provide an insight into the needs of adapting reform processes in order to reduce anxiety and conflicts and improvement in the quality of education. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the development of strategies that support educators during periods of significant institutional change.

Keywords: anxiety, conflicts, reform changes. education

Introduction

Conflict is the result of an interaction in which participants behave by opposing their interests against the interests of others. Conflicts are a very important social phenomenon. When any two individuals, groups, organizations or states come into contact and try to achieve their goals, they become incompatible (Dobrijević, 2010). In every organized human activity, individuals and groups interact with each other. These interactions often create conflicts. Conflicts can be functional and dysfunctional. Those conflicts that support group goals and improve performance are functional, and those that prevent good group work are dysfunctional or destructive. (Lewicki, Saunders, Barry, 2006).

According to Hrustemović (2023), productive, functional conflicts arise as a confrontation of different attitudes and perspectives of problems and lead to better solutions. Dysfunctional, negative conflicts block actions and lead to conflict and communication breakdown. What kind of conflicts will arise as a result of interactions in the organization and what kind of consequences they will cause for the organization depends mostly on the ability of managers to manage conflicts. Therefore, it is important for managers to know the sources, effects, types and methods of conflict management.

Organizational conflicts are disagreements between two or more members of an organization or groups that appear due to the fact that they share resources, work tasks, have different goals, attitudes or perceptions. Conflict refers to a situation in which individuals or organizational units work against each other instead of with each other. Conflict is a process that begins when one party perceives that the other is taking or intending to take an action that threatens its interests. Common to all definitions of conflict is that conflict represents a form of relationship between individuals or organizational units (groups), in which the appearance of disagreement, opposition and conflict dominates, or simply when individuals or organizational units work against each other (Petković, Janićijević, Bogićević 2002) .

In the literature, the following are considered the basic organizational causes of conflicts: sharing of limited resources by two or more individuals or groups, interdependence in the performance of work activities, mutually conflicting goals, high differentiation of organizational units, differences in performance evaluation criteria and reward system, insufficiently clear division of labor or delegation of authority and personal causes of conflicts. Conflicts can be differentiated and classified from the causes of the conflict and the hint of the impact they have on the performance of the organization. Several criteria can be defined for differentiating conflicts:

- According to the cause: personal and organizational;
- According to the process: horizontal and vertical;
- According to the content: cognitive and affective and
- According to the consequences: functional and dysfunctional (Petković, Janićijević, Bogićević, 2002).

Personal and organizational: These conflicts are related to the psychological being and its internal processes in which emotions, experiences and perception are shaped. The occurrence of intrapersonal conflict is manifested in the form of psychological consequences such as: apathy, frustration, anxiety, closed-mindedness and physical consequences, such as: fatigue, aggression or alienation. Role conflicts are a special type of intrapersonal conflicts that arise when individuals in the organization have two or more roles that conflict with each other or

when an individual cannot fulfill the expectations related to a function, position or job, because his personal potentials (knowledge, skills, abilities) insufficient. Horizontal and vertical conflicts: Horizontal conflict manifests itself as a conflict of interest between individual functions or job holders at the same level in the organization. Vertical conflict is a hierarchical conflict that arises in relations between higher and lower levels in the organization. An important vertical conflict critical to organizational performance is the conflict between management and employees. Cognitive and affective conflicts: Cognitive conflict is a form of disagreement among members of a group or team about a problem, regarding which they have different opinions, attitudes and ideas for solving it. Affective conflict is a form of destructive behavior, which results in poor decisions, less commitment, less cohesiveness and poor performance. The opposite of problem-related cognitive conflict, the affective conflict is related to personality, personal intolerance, envy and hatred.

Functional and dysfunctional conflicts: The basic criterion of this classification of conflicts is their effect on the organization. Functional conflict is one that has a positive impact on organizational performance. Mutual confrontation of individuals or organizational units that leads to an increase in organizational performance and benefits belongs to functional conflict. Dysfunctional conflict is any confrontation between individuals or between groups that harms the organization or prevents the achievement of organizational goals. Dysfunctional conflict is a consequence of destructive behavior that hinders the functioning of the organization (Hrustemović, 2023).

Stress in the work of teachers

Stress could be defined as a state of tension that manifests when an individual is confronted with unusual demands, compulsions or opportunities. Stress is both bodily and physical effort that an individual feels as a result of the influence of surrounding factors. This condition physically and psychologically affects the health of the individual who is exposed to it. It will also affect the efficiency of employees by reducing their concentration and ability to make optimal decisions. Stress can also cause employee absenteeism and high costs for organizations. Therefore, it is important to study stress and learn to manage it, and this can be achieved if the symptoms of stress are recognized in time.

According to their occurrence, stressors can be individual or simultaneous, and according to their duration, short-term or of long-term impact, so that, with regard to the time dimension, acute and chronic are mentioned stress, and depending on the severity, minor, major and traumatic stress. Acute stress, the causes of which are minor but unpleasant events, has a short-term effect and is easily overcome, and manifests itself noticeably unusual physical reactions, while the causes of chronic stress are more permanent, intense and/or more often unpleasant situations that are associated with the dysfunction of the body. Traumatic events such as a threat to one's own and/or another's bodily integrity, serious bodily injuries, the death of a close person, etc. after which intense fear and helplessness appear in the individual, leading to a state of traumatic stress, which can hardly be overcome independently without professional help (Barat, 2010).

Significant research, theories and models of work stress have been developing since the 1970s. century, and are based on interactional and transactional models of stress. In the seventies of the 20th century, models of (dis)harmony between the individual and the work environment

were developed (McGrath's model, French et al.'s model, Harrison's model) which explain stress at work as a consequence of the discrepancy between the individual's personal characteristics (attitudes, skills, abilities, resources) and requirements work environment, which results in difficulties at the individual and organizational level (Mark, Smith, 2008). The World Health Organization (WHO) states that "workplace stress is a response that people may have when their work demands and pressures are not aligned with their knowledge and abilities, and which question their ability to cope. It occurs in a wide range of work circumstances, where it increases if employees feel low support from superiors and colleagues and low control over work processes".

Stressors related to the intrinsic characteristics of work are related to specific tasks that an individual performs and refer to the inadequacy of working conditions, organization of working hours, workload, risks and dangers at work and the application of new technologies (Slišković, 2016). The perception of the work role in the organization is linked to the norms, beliefs and thinking of the individual about one's own responsibility and role in the organization and refers to the ambiguity of the role, conflict within roles and role overload, which consequently leads to insecurity in the performance of work tasks, and at the same time results in unclear work performance, dissatisfaction, impaired well-being, burnout at work and health problems (Slišković, 2016). Unfavorable interpersonal relations, as frequent sources of work stress and causes of leaving the organization, are linked to an unfavorable culture and climate in the organization, i.e. lack of social support, unprofessional interpersonal relations, inadequate communication, disrespect, intolerance, harassment, ignoring, gossip, threats, mobbing, violence and the like (Slišković, 2017).

A significant source of stress, especially pronounced in traditional societies for women, occurs in the imbalance and conflict between the business and private segments of life, i.e. the impact of business difficulties on private life and vice versa (Slišković, 2016). This source of stress was particularly contributed by changes in the family structure, greater involvement of women in the work sphere, striving for greater control over life, self-actualization, etc. Although a large number of parameters indicating stress can be objectively measured, there are also those that are subjective in nature, which has certain advantages and disadvantages (Slišković, 2017). Through self-assessment (surveys, questionnaires, interviews), as the most commonly used method of measuring stress, an individual expresses his views on personal (affective, somatic, cognitive) and environmental (sources, support, resources at work) factors essential for experiencing stress. As individual assessment of the situation and personal coping resources are predictive of stress outcomes, the individual's participation in the statement is considered essential, but shortcomings should also be taken into account, such as giving desirable answers, individual knowledge about stress and resilience and personal experiences of stress (Slišković, 2017).

Table 1. Possible reactions to stress

PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTIONS	difficulty in concentration and memory and confused thinking poor judgment and difficult decision-making reduced creativity and interest in performing tasks bad mood, nervousness, restlessness, anger, listlessness, depression, irritability, rudeness, intolerance, severity, impotence, anxiety, fear, feelings of inferiority, sadness, anxiety, loneliness, loss of self-confidence, depression, etc.
PHYSIOLOGICAL REACTIONS	headache, fatigue, exhaustion, muscle tension, chest pain sleep, digestion, cardiovascular and immune system difficulties
BEHAVIORAL REACTIONS	hypersensitivity to small and unimportant problems outbursts of anger, rage and aggressiveness avoidance of associates and isolation avoiding work obligations change of life habits consumption of psychoactive substances, etc.

Adapted according to Slišković 2017.

*Scheme 1. Possible outcomes of stress at work*
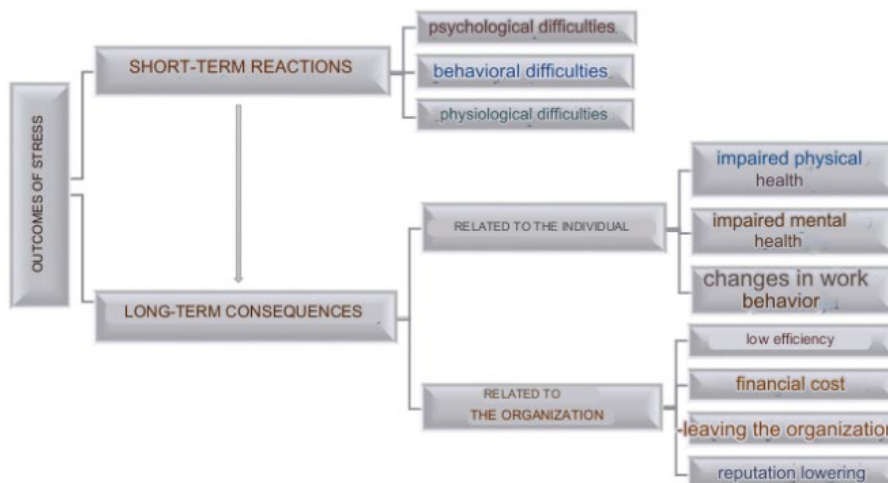
Adapted from Slišković 2016.

Research on stress among educational workers has resulted in a series of theories, concepts and models in which stress is considered any psychological and/or physiological deviation from normal functioning, which is a consequence of inadequate conditions and circumstances in the working environment. In explaining teacher stress as a process, Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978)

took into account, apart from the characteristics of the work environment that the individual perceives as threatening, i.e. work stressors and personal characteristics of teachers as elements that significantly influence the experience and outcome of stress (Scheme 2).

Scheme 2. Model of teacher stress
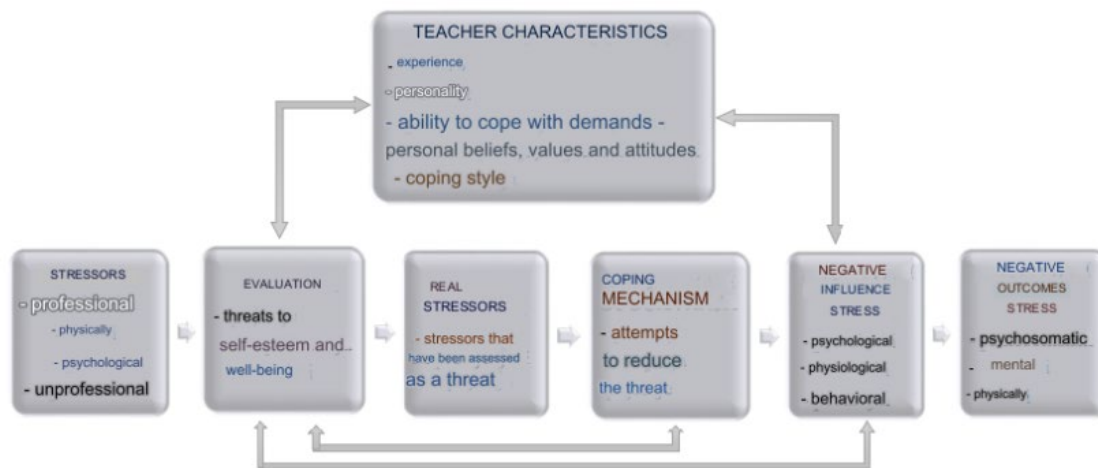
Adapted from Kyriaco and Sutcliffe 1978.

The process model of teacher stress introduced in the German-speaking area by Rudow, according to Foro (2015), includes the connection between the personal characteristics of the teacher and the workload and specificity of the teaching job. According to Rudow's model, if an individual primarily assesses work demands and workloads as threatening, an assessment of their own coping resources will follow, i.e. secondary assessment, which through the coping phase leads to reassessment and/or the emergence of fear, which, depending on personality traits, can lead to chronic stress and its possible permanent consequences.

Böhm-Kasper (2004) adds specific factors of the school to his model of teacher stress and, similar to the settings of the previously described models, states that the perception of work tasks, environmental and organizational factors and personal resources of the individual influence the individual assessment of the stressfulness of the situation. The above can result in short-term and long-term reactions and consequences, and the more unfavorable the outcome, the more difficult it is for the individual to cope with new demands. Quantitative research into the perception of the stressfulness of the profession in all parts of the world indicates that educational workers perceive their profession as stressful and/or extremely stressful, with a tendency to increase over time (Schmeck and Leutner, 2015).

According to the research conducted by Tomašević, Horvat and Leutar (2016) on a sample of teachers in some primary schools in Vinkovci and the surrounding area, 55.6% of them say that they experience work stress at a medium, high and very high level, and 44.2% at a low and very high level. low, while Debak (2017) on a sample of teachers in primary schools in the Split-Dalmatia County records that 87.1% of them state that they experience stress sometimes, often and very often, and 12.9% that they never or almost never experience work

stress. The causes of stress in teachers can be divided into several categories: workload, student behavior, working conditions and relations with management. A more detailed presentation of the categories can be found in Table 2 (Adapted from Ferguson, Frost, and Hall, 2012).

Table 2. Causes of stress among teachers

WORKLOAD	too much work
	lack of time to work
	lack of time for informal gatherings, i.e. creation
	and maintenance of the social support network
	increase in workload
	imbalance between work and private life
	time burden for preparations
	too much documentation
	not enough time to help students
	seminars/education during work
	sharing workspace
STUDENT BEHAVIOR	poor student motivation
	bad behavior of students in class
	student attitudes towards work/learning
	rude behavior of students
	lack of respect for teachers
WORKING CONDITIONS	poor possibility of advancement
	employment insecurity
	lack of professional support
	inadequate salaries
RELATIONS WITH ADMINISTRATION	unsatisfactory relations with superiors
	lack of communication
	superior's attitudes and behavior
	non-participation in decision-making

How someone will react in stressful situations is influenced by coping strategies that are different for individuals. According to Slišković (2016), coping strategies refer to the cognitive, behavioral, emotional and physiological efforts of an individual with the aim of eliminating and/or reducing stressors, assessing their harmfulness and reducing the stress reactions that are experienced. In stressful situations, problem-focused strategies and/or emotion-focused strategies can be practiced. Antoniou, Ploumpi and Ntalla (2013) state that teachers who rationally and actively solve problems, i.e. use problem-oriented coping strategies, experience a lower level of stress compared to those who are passive, i.e. they avoid the problem and experience a higher level of stress and its consequences.

Reform changes

The educational system of Sarajevo Canton is undergoing significant reforms with the aim of improving the quality of education and adapting it to the needs of students and teachers. These reforms covered a number of key areas that are grouped into several categories:

Standards and curricula	
Pedagogical standards and norms:	New standards for basic education that set clear guidelines for the teaching process.
	Curriculum reform that includes 22 core subjects, ensuring a comprehensive education for students.
22 curriculum subjects:	Introducing and improving online teaching as a response to modern educational needs.
Online classes:	
Regulations for the improvement and regulation of the educational system	
Rulebook on the procedure for reporting corruption:	A rulebook was established for internal reporting of corruption within the Ministry of Education of the KS.
	There are regulations that define nutrition standards for primary and secondary schools.
Rulebook on student nutrition:	Clear criteria for employment in primary schools and public institutions.
Rulebook on criteria for hiring workers:	
Inclusion and protection of students	
Rulebook on inclusive education:	Promoting inclusion and adapting educational content for all students.
	Regulations for monitoring and solving problems of unacceptable behavior among students.
Rulebook on keeping records of unacceptable forms of behavior:	
Improvement of working conditions	
Collective agreement for educational workers:	The contract that regulates the rights and obligations of employees in preschool, primary and secondary

	education.
Rulebook on professional development:	It arranges the continuous training of educators, teachers and professional associates.
Safety and efficiency	
Law on textbooks:	Regulation of publication and use of textbooks in KS.
	Implementation of an information system for better organization of educational data.
Rulebook on the reception and information of the EMIS system:	
Support and innovation	
Rulebook on Amendments and Supplements for Educational Support:	It focuses on ways to provide additional support to students.
	Government initiatives for the improvement of educational institutions.
Special program of the KS Government for the improvement of initiatives:	

Goal of the paper

The implementation of extensive educational reforms, which were previously described for the Canton of Sarajevo, can potentially lead to conflicts among employees. Such changes often cause different reactions and can affect the work environment. In relation to all of the above, the goal of the research was defined. The goal was to understand how anxiety and conflicts manifest and influence each other in the context of changes and adaptations within educational institutions.

Methods

The research was conducted through an online questionnaire consisting of 17 closed-ended questions, divided into two categories. Respondents had the opportunity to answer questions ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represented complete disagreement and 5 complete agreements. Basic data was collected through the first five questions.

The first part of the questionnaire referred to questions from the standardized test for assessing anxiety at work (APS The Workplace Stress Scale™), while the second part referred to the personal attitude towards educational reforms and their impact on the occurrence of conflicts.

The following participated in the research: teachers, teachers, professional associates and other positions in the teaching process. The total number of respondents was 183, of which 87.2% were female, with an average age of 35 - 44 years, while 73.9% worked for an indefinite period of time.

Results

We've surveyed 180 people and collected data about their workplaces. This graph gives us an insight into the diversity of positions and their representation. It can be concluded that: teachers make up the largest part, with 71.7 % of employees, workers in professional services make up 18.3%, directors are represented with 5.8% and there is also a smaller part of employees in other positions (Figure 1). Additionally, gender structure of the sample is shown in Figure 2, age in Figure 3, and employment status in Figure 4.

Figure 1Work position

You are currently employed in the position:
180 responses
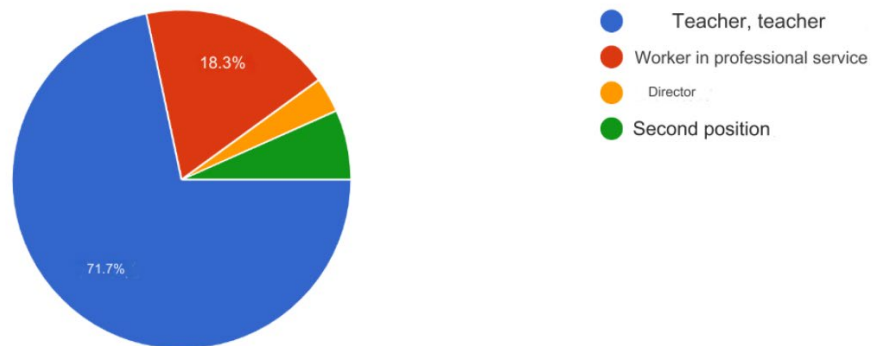
Figure 2. Gender structure of the sample

What is your gender?
180 responses
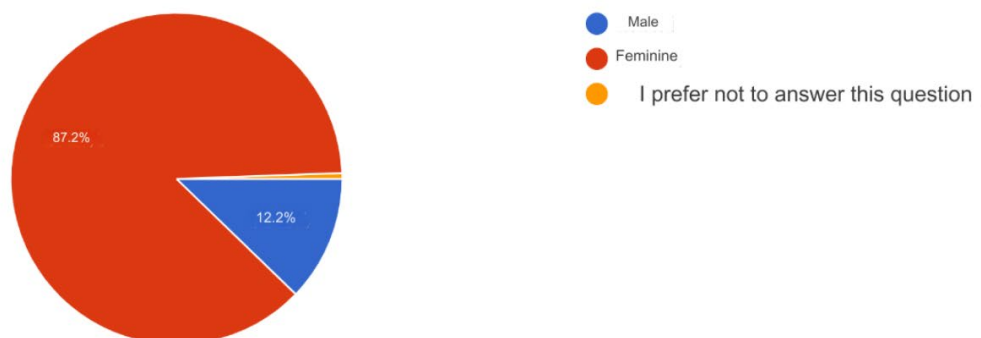
Figure 3. Age of the sample

What age group do you belong to?
180 responses
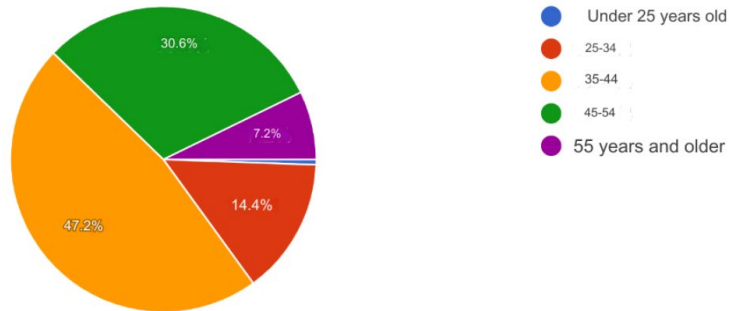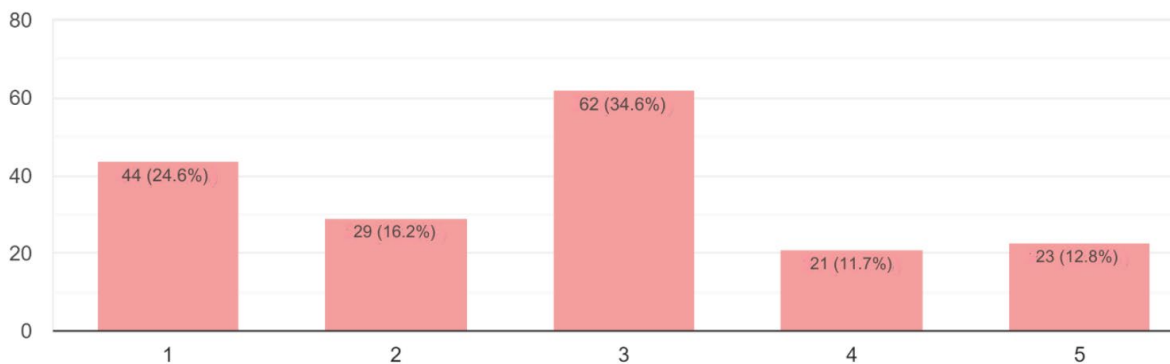

Figure 4. Employment status of the sample

What is your current employment status?
180 responses
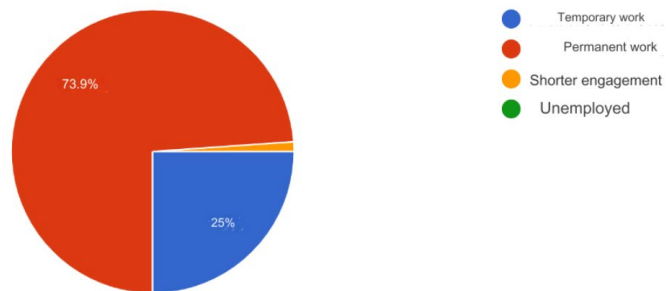
We next examined the attitudes towards expression of the opinion. The distribution of answers in shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Opinions towards free expression

At work, I can't honestly say what's really on my mind or what's bothering me.
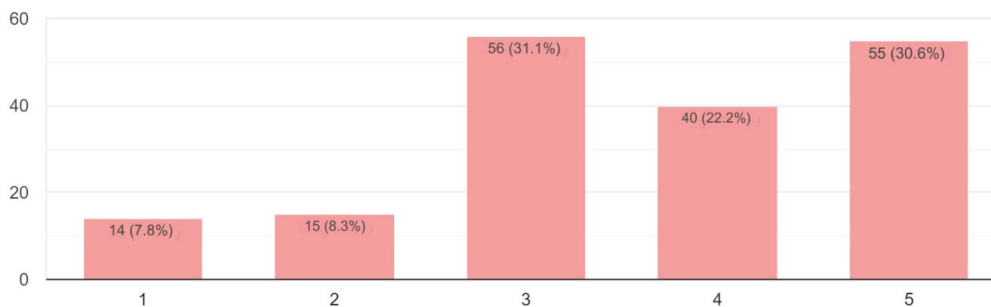179 responses

The largest number of answers (34.6%) was neutral, which suggests that a significant part of respondents feel neutral or ambivalent about the possibility of honest expression at work. This rating reflects a state in which employees "may" feel partially free to express their thoughts but also experience a degree of discomfort or insecurity. This may indicate that there are certain barriers to communication or that there are situations where they are unsure whether it is safe or appropriate to be completely open. The next question was a matter of responsibility (Figure 6)

Figure 6. Attitudes towards responsibility

My job has a lot of responsibility, but I don't have a lot of authority.
180 responses

The largest number of responses (31.1%) was parameter 3. This parameter reflects a state in which a significant number of respondents feel neutral or uncertain about their responsibilities and powers. This may mean that many employees perceive their work position as balanced, but at the same time feel a certain degree of discomfort and insecurity. They may recognize that they have significant responsibility but at the same time feel that they lack adequate power or authority to make key decisions. This neutral position is often an indicator of situations where employees have limited authority and may feel frustrated by their inability to adequately influence the outcomes of their work.

52.8 % of respondents indicate a group that agrees with the statement that they have a lot of responsibility, but little authority. They perceive the work environment as hostile or unsuitable for open communication, feel restricted in expressing their true thoughts, and feel that they are given too much responsibility without adequate authority. These employees often experience powerlessness and frustration due to the lack of support and the ability to make important decisions.

Figure 7. Attitudes towards time management

If I had more time, I could do the job much better.
179 responses
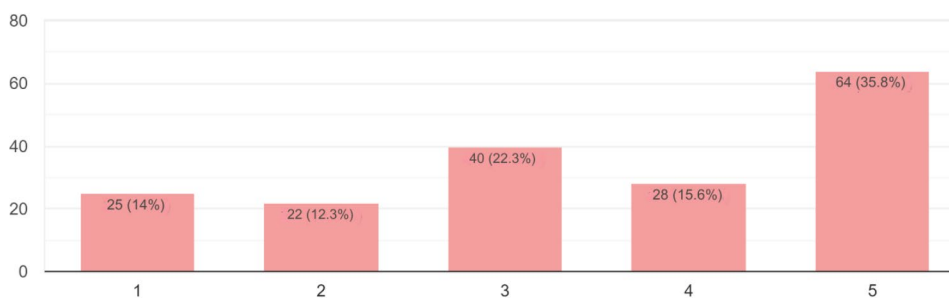
The largest number of answers (35.8%) was parameter 5, which clearly indicates that a significant part of respondents agree that additional time would significantly improve the quality of their work. This data suggests that most employees face time constraints that hinder their ability to perform their tasks at an optimal level. This can be a reflection of overcrowded schedules, insufficiently planned project deadlines or expectations that exceed real capacities.

Indicator 3 (22.3% of respondents) represents the group that feels neutral or uncertain about additional time. These employees may feel that additional time would help, but they are already effectively managing their tasks within existing time constraints.

Indicator 4 (27.4% of respondents) indicates that a significant number of employees believe that additional time would have a positive impact on the quality of their work. This group along with parameter 5 makes up the majority of responses, indicating a widespread opinion among employees that current deadlines are often not adequate to achieve the best results.

Figure 8. Attitudes towards gratitude I receive at work
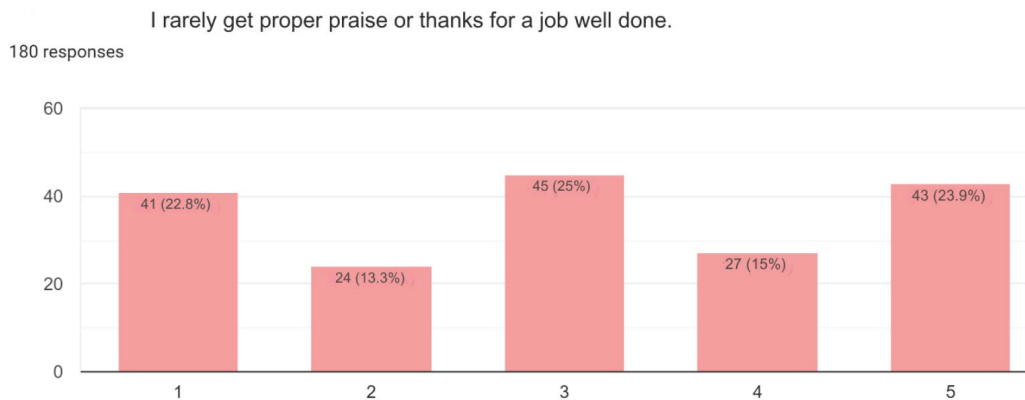
The chart shows how respondents feel about receiving praise or recognition for their work. Parameter 1 (22.8 % of respondents) indicates that one group completely disagrees with the statement that they rarely receive praise for their work. They probably feel that they regularly receive praise or recognition for their efforts and work, which can positively affect their satisfaction and motivation in the workplace.

13.3 % of respondents express some discomfort or dissatisfaction on this issue. They may receive praise occasionally, but they don't feel it is often or consistently enough. 25% of respondents feel neutral or undecided about the statement. They may not have a clear attitude or perceive receiving praise as a key aspect of their work experience. 15% of respondents generally believe that they rarely receive praise for their work. This may suggest a sense of lack of recognition or validation for their efforts, which may affect their motivation or satisfaction in the workplace. 23.9 % of respondents completely agree with the statement that they rarely receive praise for their work. They perceive the lack of recognition as a significant problem, which can negatively affect their satisfaction and motivation at work.

This arrangement provides a better insight into the perception of employees about the recognition of their work and effort in the workplace, which can be key to improving the system of praise and recognition within the organization.

Figure 9. Attitudes towards job satisfaction

In general, I am not particularly proud and satisfied with my job.
180 responses
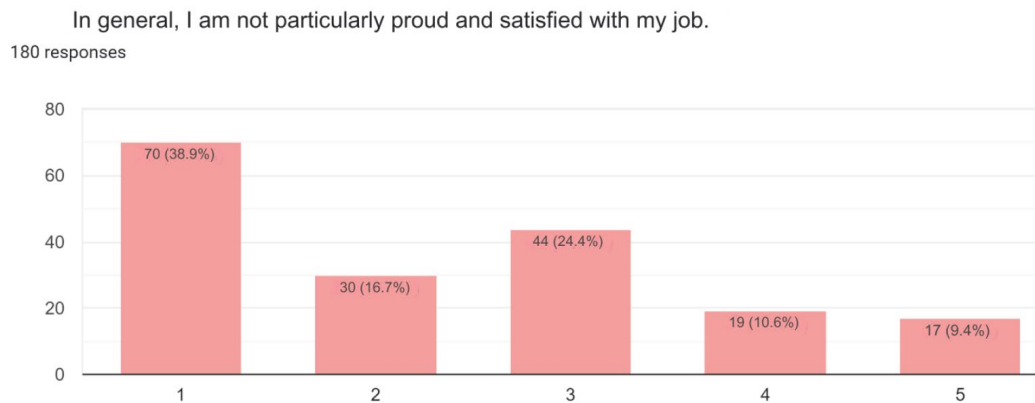
20% of respondents point out that they are not satisfied with their job. Job dissatisfaction among employees in educational institutions is a worrying indicator, especially when it is a high percentage of 20%. This indicates that almost a quarter of the workforce in education feels significant problems. This is a high rate of dissatisfaction that can have serious consequences for the quality of education and the working atmosphere.

Figure 10. Attitudes towards discrimination at work

I have the impression that I am often in someone's way and that I am somehow discriminated against at work.
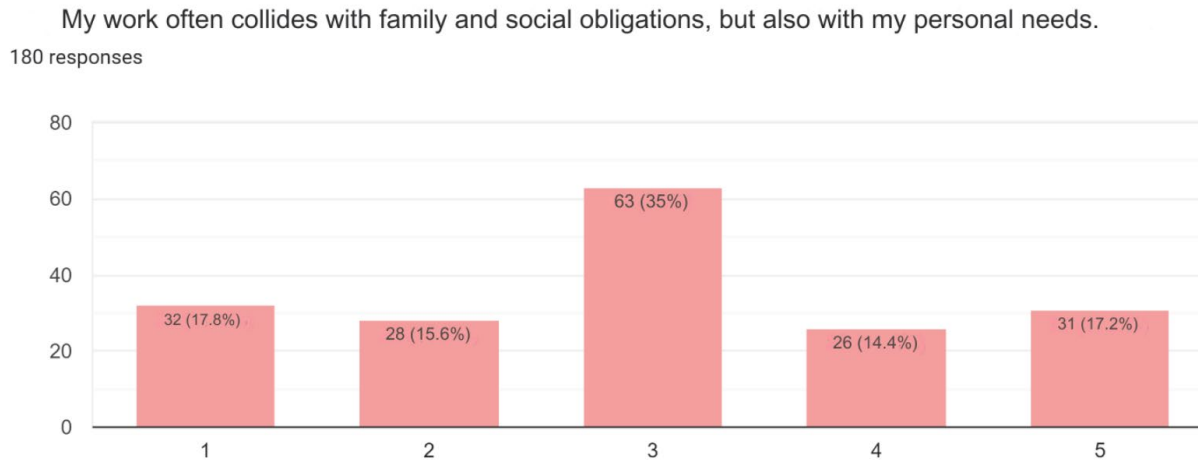180 responses
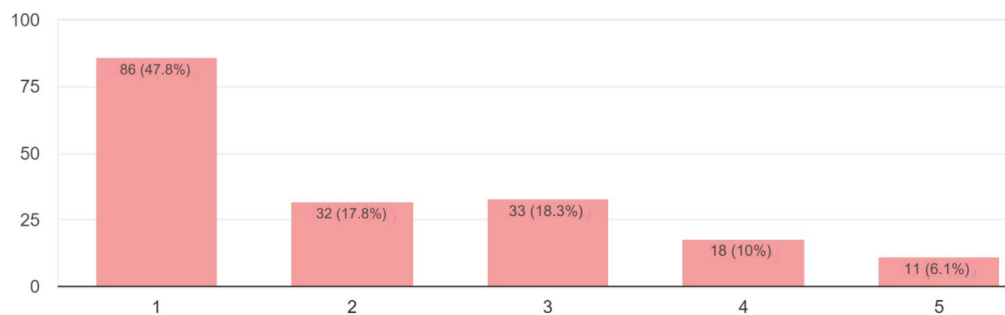
If 16.1 % of respondents from educational institutions believe that they feel discriminated against at work, this is a serious indicator of problems in the working environment. Discrimination can have various forms and far-reaching consequences for employees, the institution and the quality of education. Discrimination can significantly reduce employee morale and motivation.

Employees who feel discriminated against often withdraw, are less productive and less engaged in their work. Long-term discrimination can cause serious mental and physical health problems, including anxiety, depression and stress.

Figure 11. Attitudes towards work-family balance

My work often collides with family and social obligations, but also with my personal needs.

180 responses

A total of 180 responses were analyzed to this statement, and the distribution of responses by category is as follows: Parameter 1 (32 responses, 17.8 %) represents people who do not agree at all with the statement that their work often collides with family and social obligations, as well as their personal needs. This group successfully balances work and personal life, which may indicate that their work environment supports flexibility or that they have effective strategies for managing their responsibilities. They are able to work in environments that understand and respect the importance of work-life balance, allowing them to adequately meet their professional and personal needs.

Parameter 2 (28 responses, 15.6 %) consists of participants who only partially agree with the statement. This group may occasionally feel a conflict between work and personal obligations, but this is not a constant state. They may have certain periods when they face challenges in managing their responsibilities, but this does not significantly affect their daily life. These respondents may have some flexibility in their work schedule or support to help them balance their responsibilities, but there are still situations where work can interfere with their personal plans.

Parameter 3 (63 answers, 35%) are people who moderately agree with the statement and at the same time make up the largest group with 35% of answers. This suggests that most respondents experience some form of conflict between work and personal obligations. These employees often feel pressured to balance professional and personal responsibilities, which can lead to feelings of overwhelm and stress. Their work environment may not offer enough flexibility or the demands of the job exceed their ability to devote adequate time to family and social responsibilities. This group can often be faced with the need to make difficult choices between work and personal priorities.

Parameter 4 (26 responses, 14.4 %) consists of participants who occasionally agree with the statement. These individuals experience conflicts between work and personal obligations only in certain situations or periods, perhaps when faced with special work tasks or during important family events. Their ability to balance these conflicts may vary, depending on specific circumstances. They may be able to adjust their schedules occasionally to reduce these conflicts, but in general, they may feel that they have a decent amount of control over their work and personal commitments.

Parameter 5 (31 responses, 17.2 %) are employees who completely agree with the statement that their work often collides with family and social obligations, as well as their personal needs. These employees feel constant pressure and stress due to the conflict between professional and private obligations. Their work environment likely demands a significant portion of their time and energy, leaving little room for personal and family activities. They may feel that they are constantly conflicted with trying to balance work and private life, which can have serious consequences for their mental and physical health, as well as the quality of their relationships outside of work.

Figure 12. Attitudes towards relationship with others

I often come into conflict with superiors, colleagues or parents.
180 responses
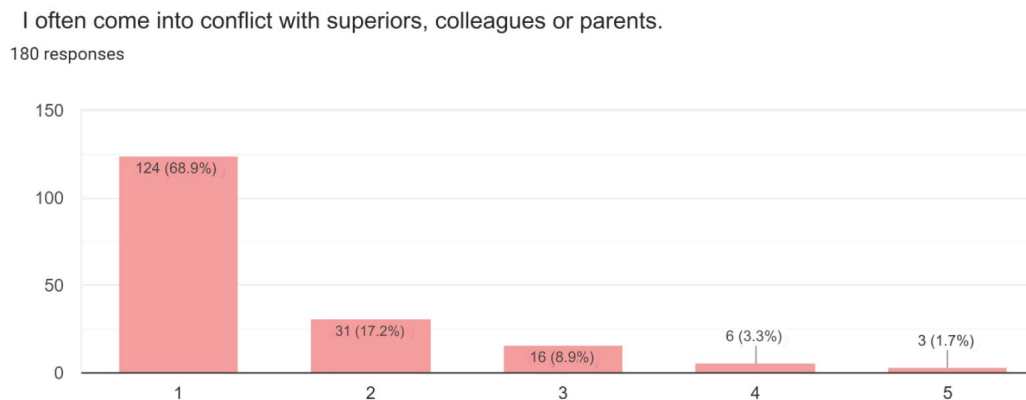
Conflicts between employees, especially when they involve superiors and colleagues, can have a significant impact on the functioning of an educational institution. Although the 5% of respondents who state that they come into conflict seems like a small percentage, in reality it can have serious consequences for the working atmosphere, efficiency and quality of education. Conflicts can significantly reduce employee morale and motivation.

Employees who feel insecure or in conflict with colleagues or superiors may be less engaged and interested in their work.

Figure 13. Attitudes towards control over ones life

Most of the time I feel like I have very little control over my work life.
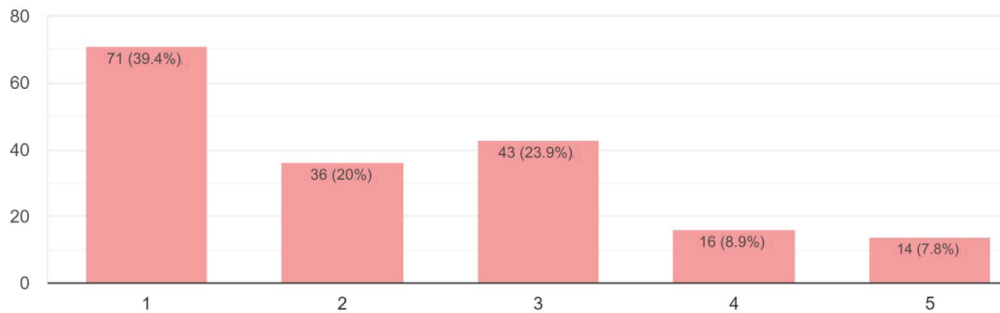179 responses

When 16.7 % of respondents in educational institutions feel that they have very little control over their work life, this can have serious consequences for their job satisfaction, mental health and overall work efficiency. This percentage indicates the presence of a significant problem that can affect the broader dynamics and functioning of the institution. If 42.5 % of respondents from educational institutions do not agree with the statement that they have very

little control over their work life, this means that most employees feel that they have a sufficient or satisfactory level of control over their work tasks and environment. This percentage is important because it indicates positive aspects of work dynamics within these institutions, but still leaves significant room for improvement.

Figure 14. Attitudes towards work environment

16.7% of respondents believe that their working environment is not very safe and pleasant, 23.9% of respondents are not sure or do not know if they agree with the statement, while 59.4% of respondents do not agree with the statement, which means that they believe that their work environment safe and comfortable. This percentage is not negligible and indicates that there is a smaller but significant part of employees who remember insecurity or discomfort at work.

Figure 15. Attitudes towards administration duties
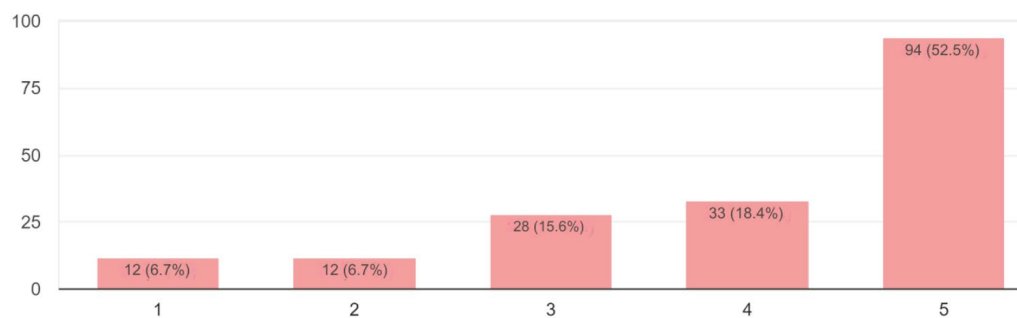
This high percentage indicates a significant problem in the working environment of educational institutions. When over two-thirds of employees express dissatisfaction with administrative workloads, it can have serious implications for efficiency, productivity and overall job satisfaction. Further, it may involve unnecessary duplication of processes, excessive record keeping, complex procedures and bureaucratic requirements that do not directly contribute to their main work tasks. When employees feel overwhelmed by administrative tasks, it can reduce the time and resources they can devote to key aspects of their work, such as working directly with students or developing educational content.

Figure 16. Attitudes towards educational policies
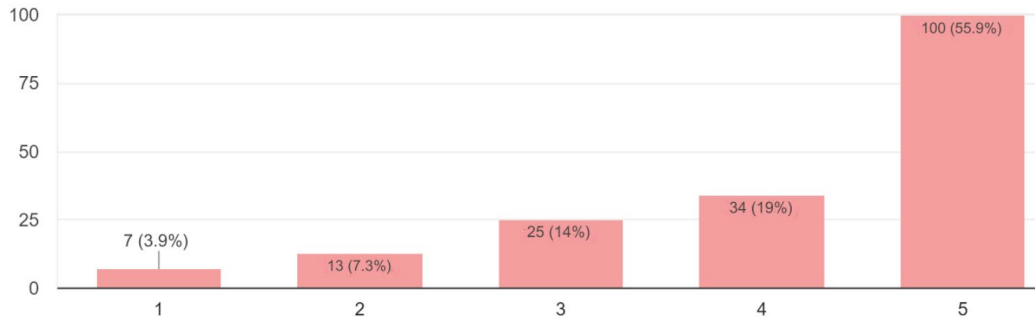
74.9 % of the respondents from educational institutions stated that they are disturbed by the constant changes in educational policies. This high percentage indicates a significant concern among employees in educational institutions regarding the constant changes in educational policies. When more than two-thirds of employees express anxiety about these changes, it can have serious implications for work dynamics, stability and quality of the educational process. Change often requires adapting to new rules, procedures and expectations, which can be extremely challenging and stressful. Changes in policies can lead to a lack of continuity in the educational process, which can make planning and teaching difficult.

Figure 17. Attitudes towards curriculum
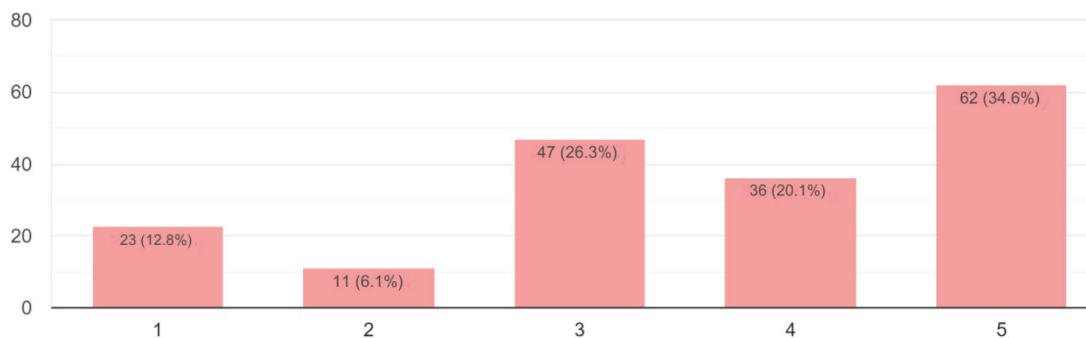
54.7 % of respondents believe that deficiencies in plans and programs negatively affect their work. This data points to serious concerns among employees in educational institutions regarding the quality of plans and programs that are the basis of their daily work. More than half of the employees believe that the existing plans and programs are not adequate, which can have far-reaching implications on the efficiency of their work and the quality of the education they provide.

Figure 18. Attitudes towards feeling protected at work

I believe that I am unprotected and that the emphasis is on the performance of the work.
180 responses
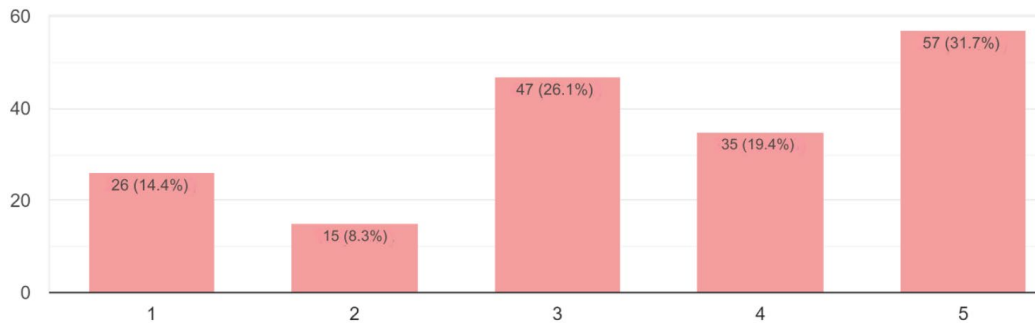
51.1 % of respondents from educational institutions believe that they are unprotected and that there is too much emphasis on the performance of work. This data reveals that half of the employees in educational institutions feel a lack of protection, while at the same time they perceive that too much pressure is placed on their performance. This feeling can significantly affect the working atmosphere, motivation and overall efficiency in educational institutions. When employees feel that they are not adequately protected, it may mean that they perceive a lack of support from management or the education system. Lack of protection may include inadequate legal support, protection from conflict or harassment at work, and lack of resources to work in a safe environment.

Figure 19. Attitudes towards working conditions

I believe that I work in inadequate working conditions and that I have a low salary.
180 responses
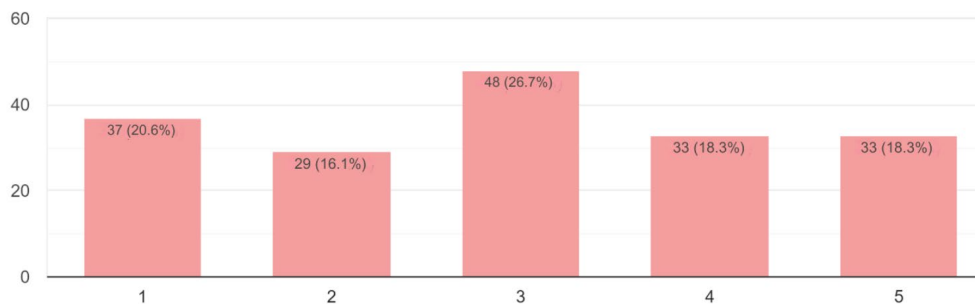
The results of the research show that there is a significant split of opinion among respondents about working conditions and salary. More precisely, 36.6 % of respondents believe that they work in poor conditions and that they have a low salary. On the other hand, 36.7 % of respondents do not agree with that statement, which indicates a variation in perception among workers. This division can have deeper implications for the organization and their relationship with employees. Some workers may feel that they are not adequately compensated for their work or that their working conditions are not satisfactory. On the other hand, there is a group that does not see the situation in the same way, perhaps because of different standards or experiences with working conditions.

Such results can be the basis for further research or actions in the organization, in order to improve working conditions or to better communicate the perception of employees about their conditions and salary.

Figure 20. Attitudes towards conflicts with colleagues

I often come into conflict with my colleagues.

180 responses
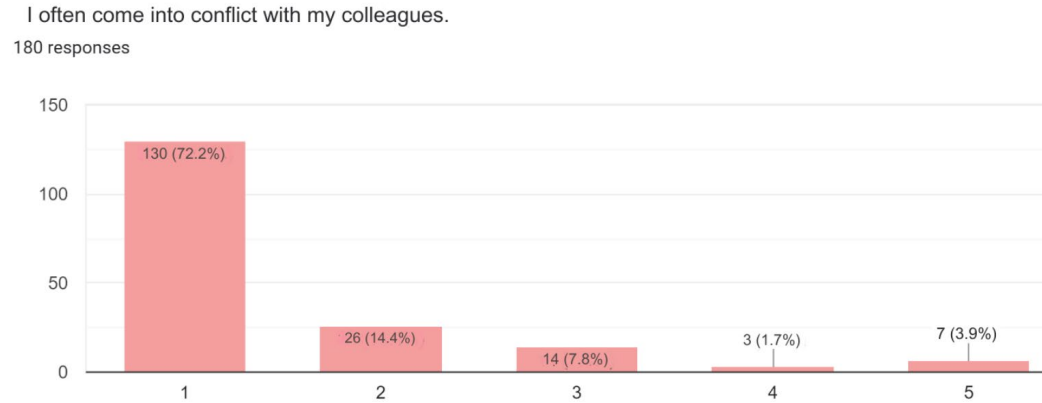
According to the results, the respondents state that they do not often come into conflict with their colleagues. However, it should be noted that there is a certain number of respondents (5.6%) who confirm the accuracy of this statement. In Figure 21. are reasons for conflicts.

Figure 21. Reasons for conflicts with my colleagues

The reasons why I get into conflicts are (multiple answers allowed):

133 responses
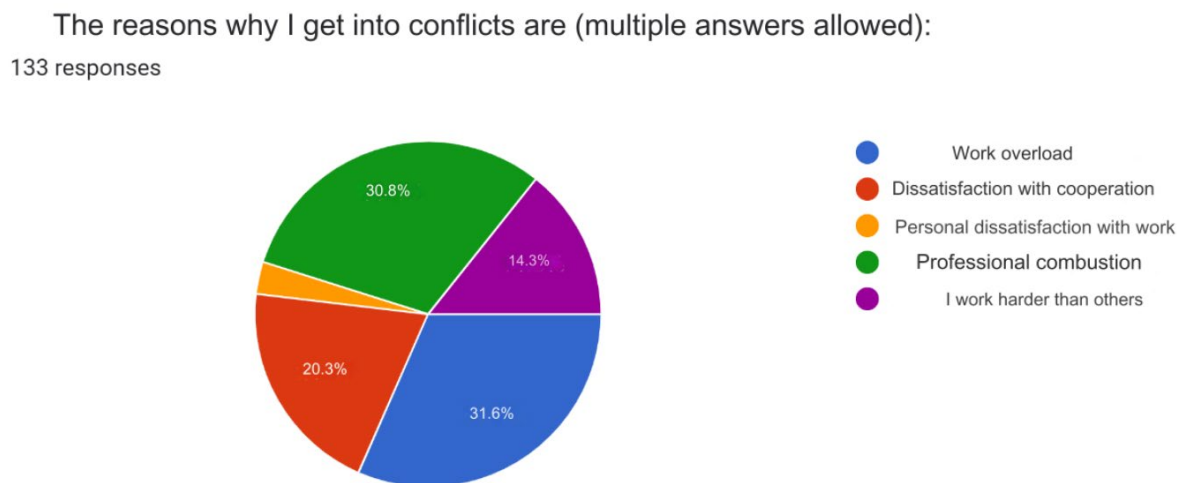
The research results show that the majority of respondents believe that workplace conflicts cause work overload and professional burnout. This may indicate a high level of stress and pressures that lead to conflicts among colleagues or with superiors. A smaller number of respondents stated that the cause of conflicts is personal dissatisfaction. This may include dissatisfaction with working conditions, pay, promotion, or other personal factors that affect job satisfaction.

An even smaller number of respondents believe that conflicts are caused by dissatisfaction with cooperation with colleagues or the feeling that they are more engaged and put more effort into their work compared to other colleagues. This may indicate potential problems with teamwork or the perception of inequality in the distribution of work and engagement within teams.

The results of this research can help organizations better understand the factors that contribute to workplace conflict and develop strategies to improve working conditions, manage stress and improve teamwork to reduce conflict and improve employee satisfaction.

Discussion

Conflicts stimulate critical analysis. In a conflict situation, people are additionally stimulated by looking for arguments against a rival opinion, which reveals the hidden flaws of a proposal. The motivation for the analysis of the proposed decision is additionally increased when the one who performs the analysis is in conflict with the proposer. Conflicts motivate people to achieve a result simply because they are in conflict with someone to whom they want to prove that they can achieve that result. In such situations, spite initiates the individual to achieve a result that is disputed in the conflict. Conflicts are often a sign and cause of necessary organizational changes. They are the companions of organizational changes, and often represent the necessary initial capsule for the necessary changes. Organizational changes are often necessary, but they do not happen because of the fear of conflict they may cause. Conversely, conflict can initiate a process of change. Conflicts purify the internal environment and eliminate hidden conflicts. Sometimes conflicts exist as hidden and latent and cannot be resolved until they surface in the form of conflict. If they are not on the surface, conflicts "poison" the climate in the institution and interpersonal relations. When a hidden conflict occurs, there is a very violent reaction caused by the release of the accumulated frustration of the participants in the conflict. Conflicts between groups stimulate cooperation within the group. Group cohesion increases when a group is in conflict with another group. The conflict between the two groups brings the members of the group closer together, erasing their mutual differences and strengthening their cooperation. Conflicts between groups have significant effects on the processes that take place in those groups. Conflicts between two groups result in the following processes within each of them: cohesion within the group is increased, which overcomes previous disagreements, and tolerance towards differences within the group is reduced.

Conflicts affect a distorted picture of reality by group members exaggerating their abilities and covering up their shortcomings, while at the same time diminishing the virtues and exaggerating the shortcomings of rivals. The tendency to view everything through negative stereotypes exaggerates differences between groups, and differences within groups diminish the effect of conflicts. Conflicts reduce the intensity of communication between groups, and it is not uncommon for all communication to be interrupted, which can be very bad for the institution if it is about organizational units that are interconnected. Conflicts disrupt the normal functioning of the institution. When conflicts arise, organizational members invest their time and energy in solving them instead of performing their normal work tasks, which disrupts the functioning of the organization. The result is a drop in employee productivity, lower quality of decisions made, slower response of the institution to changes in the environment and worse performance of that institution. Conflicts emphasize emotion over reason when making decisions. They are almost always taken personally, and there are also emotional reactions from members of the organization. When a conflict arises, individuals are no longer in conflict with an idea, but with an individual, which amounts to a conflict of personalities. Then it can happen that people are led by emotions and not by rational arguments when making decisions. Acceptance of a proposal by a person with whom the individual is in conflict is most often interpreted as a defeat, which is why such alternatives are rejected in advance regardless of whether there would be an adequate solution.

Conflicts divert attention from organizational to personal goals. Since they are personalized, individuals see the solution of the conflict as a personal loss or gain, and so they behave. "Victory" in a conflict is placed above the interests of the organization, so a decision is accepted that leads to the satisfaction of the interests of an individual or group even when it threatens the interests of the organization. Conflicts cause more human reactions with extremely negative effects (stress, frustration). They can have a number of negative consequences for the members of the organization. During the conflict, they experience stress, frustration and other negative, psychophysical states. This reduces their productivity and job satisfaction.

A teacher cannot always have complete control over numerous, diverse and potentially stressful situations in the work environment. If the teacher recognizes in a timely manner, rationally analyzes potentially stressful situations and the possibilities of their successful resolution, and if he discusses the same with colleagues and/or superiors, it is to be expected that he will more effectively adapt his behaviors and reactions, that is, he will be more adaptive to situations over which he has no complete control (Brkić and Rijavec, 2011). The perception of school situations, the possibility of influencing them, social support and personal and professional competence significantly influence the selection of strategies that teachers use when solving numerous challenging and demanding situations at work (Brkić and Rijavec, 2011; Foro, 2015). By encouraging participation in the overall work of the school, autonomy and transparency in work, developing competences and improving the school culture and climate, teachers are provided with greater opportunities to deal effectively with potentially stressful situations, which will consequently reduce their experiences of stress and possible consequences.

The research results show the need for better planning and time management within institutions. Employers should consider how they set deadlines and manage workload expectations to enable employees to perform their tasks well. Given the high percentage of respondents who believe that additional time would significantly improve their work, institutions should review their deadline-setting practices and ensure that expectations are aligned with the actual capacities of employees. Recognition and praise contribute to a sense of psychological security and trust among employees. When workers feel supported and valued, it increases their sense of belonging and security within the institution.

Chronic work-life conflict can lead to serious mental and physical health problems, including increased levels of stress, anxiety and exhaustion. This highlights the importance of flexible working conditions and organizational support in balancing professional and personal responsibilities.

Conclusion

Although the number of employees in schools is significant, unfortunately, only 183 employees filled out the questionnaire. This data is worrisome because it indicates a low level of response and interest of employees in participating in research that can be crucial for the improvement of the educational system. Despite the importance of their role, employees often cannot express their problems at work. The research results provide an insight into the working atmosphere and culture of the organizations from which the respondents come.

A high percentage of neutral or negative responses suggests that there is a significant number of employees who feel insecure or uncomfortable expressing their true feelings and opinions at work.

Their work responsibilities are too great in relation to the powers they possess, which creates additional stress. Their work often collides with family obligations and personal needs, which puts an additional burden on their daily life. It is worrying that 13.9% of respondents often come into conflict with superiors and colleagues, and many feel that they have very little control over their life at work. Almost half of the respondents point out that their working environment is neither pleasant nor safe. A mismatch between responsibility and authority can have a negative impact on employee morale, leading to feelings of stress, insecurity and lack of motivation. It is important to create a work environment where employees feel empowered and supported to take initiative and responsibility.

These data point to an urgent need for interventions that will improve working conditions, increase employee empowerment and enable a better balancing of professional and private obligations.

Employees are burdened with useless administrative requests, and they are often disturbed by frequent changes in educational policies. Deficiencies in the curriculum negatively affect their work, which further contributes to the feeling of insecurity. Reducing the administrative burden will allow staff to focus more on their main tasks, which will improve the quality of education and support for students.

Although the 5% of respondents reporting conflicts with superiors and colleagues may seem like a minor problem, the impact of such conflicts can be significant. Educational institutions should seriously devote themselves to the prevention and resolution of conflicts in order to ensure a positive working environment and maintain a high quality of educational work.

The most common cause of conflict at work is professional burnout, overloading with work duties and dissatisfaction with cooperation with colleagues. Improving working conditions and strengthening employee support is key to creating a safer and more productive work environment. Without these changes, it is difficult to expect an increase in satisfaction and efficiency in the education sector.

While additional time can help improve the quality of work, it is also important to consider strategies to increase productivity and efficiency within existing time frames. This may include training in better time management or introducing new tools and technologies that can help employees work more efficiently.

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