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PSYCHOLOGICAL FEATURES IN A SAMPLE OF TEACHERS FROM NEAMT COUNTY

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ABSTRACT:

Psychological traits are a major component of a teacher's suitability for education. Research supports the link between psychological features and teacher success. This study sought to explore the similarities and differences between high school and urban/rural school teachers' psychological features. Results of the assessments emphasize the importance of dispositions and cognitive areas as a major area of a framework for effective teaching.

Keywords: psychological trait, cognitive functioning, teacher

REZUMAT:

Caracteristicile psihologice reprezintă o componentă majoră a adaptării profesorilor la cerințele mediului educațional. Studiul nostru cercetează asemănările și diferențele la nivelul caracteristicilor psihologice între profesorii de liceu și cei din școlile urbane/rurale. Rezultatele subliniază importanța ariilor investigate în procesul educațional.

Cuvinte-cheie: trăsături psihologice, funcționări cognitive, profesor

Introduction

Psychological traits are a major component of a teacher's suitability for education. Research supports the link between psychological aspects and the teacher's success or job satisfaction and the involvement of these in the development of educational workforce (1).

Statement of the Problem

Given the high level of time and resources required to train teachers, their retention in the educational system is important. Extensive literature showed that for a high level of job retention psychological aspects are very important (2).

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to explore the differences and similarities between groups in teacher's psychological traits.

Importance of the Study

Teachers' assessments use psychological profiles to help an individual to manage the teaching process in order to fulfill the demands (3). The results of the assessments emphasize the importance of dispositions and cognitive areas as a major feature of a framework for effective teaching (4).

Method

In our research we used a sample that consists of 1242 teachers from Neamt County from the following schools:

- 8 High Schools – 379 teachers;
- 25 Primary Schools (rural) – 516 teachers;
- 7 Primary Schools (urban) – 347 teachers.

We present several factors, according to the ethical principles for research, with the aid of a semistructured interview focusing on some personality and cognitive domains. We record the clinically significant results that are above a clinical threshold on several domains: emotional lability, hyperemotivity, depression, obsessive elements. The clinical examination has the following parts:

1. Records of general health problems. With the aid of the medical health record we check briefly for somatic disorders and also for neurovegetative problems.

2. Cognitive evaluation for:

- focused attention;
- distributive attention;
- auditory memory.

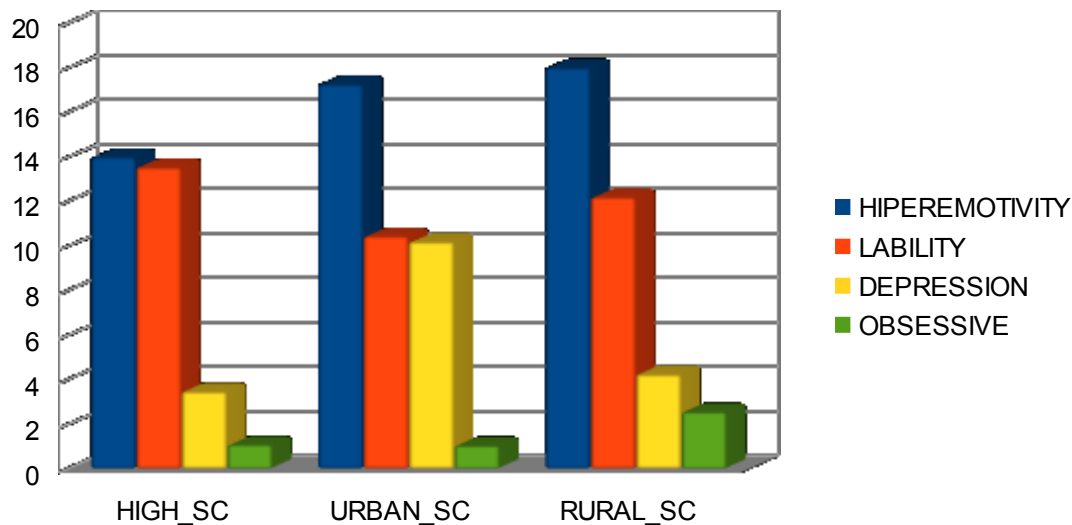
For cognitive evaluation we used small groups of teachers (5 – 8 people per group) at their workplace in order to reduce the stress with an unfamiliar testing site. We choose to assess the teachers at the beginning of their working time to compensate for tiredness.

Results

For our sample we have the data presented below as a result of psychological evaluation of the sample of teachers:

Table 1. *Results for psychological evaluation of the teachers*

School		High schools	Urban schools	Rural schools
Hyperemotivity		13,94 %	17,27 %	18,01 %
Emotional lability		13,54 %	10,44 %	14,19 %
Depression		3,47 %	3,82 %	4,24 %
Obsessive features		2,52 %	2,85 %	10,18 %
Attention	Bad	9,29 %	3,21 %	15,78 %
	Medium	52,33 %	53,74 %	58,54 %
	Good	38,37 %	43,02 %	25,66 %
Memory	Bad	1,88 %	4,86 %	5,60 %
	Medium	68,23 %	64,71 %	72,55 %
	Good	26,86 %	27,88 %	15,82 %

Figure 1. *Personality – affective domains of teachers*

For the personality – affective domains (5), we have the following results:

During the semistructured interview and cognitive testing we record significant levels of psychological distress at the following dimensions:

Hyperemotivity – regarded as a result of an overreacting affective system in relation to other persons or situations; characterized by heightened vegetative reactions;

Emotional lability – swift and often heightened reactivity to psychological stressors; also characterised by exaggerated changes in mood;

Depression – a state which has a low mood, low self-esteem, pessimistic view of the future and loss of pleasure for a vast majority of activities that before were enjoyable;

Obsessive features – some intrusive thoughts that frequently produce apprehension, anxiety or worry; in order to reduce anxiety psychic systems gave birth to repetitive behaviours called compulsions.

In our sample we have almost the same percentage of emotional lability for teachers from urban, rural and high schools. Higher levels of hyperemotivity were recorded on rural schools sample.

Results at general attentional processes evaluation showed that lowered levels were recorded at urban schools (3,21 %), followed by high schools (9,26 %) and rural schools (15,78 %).

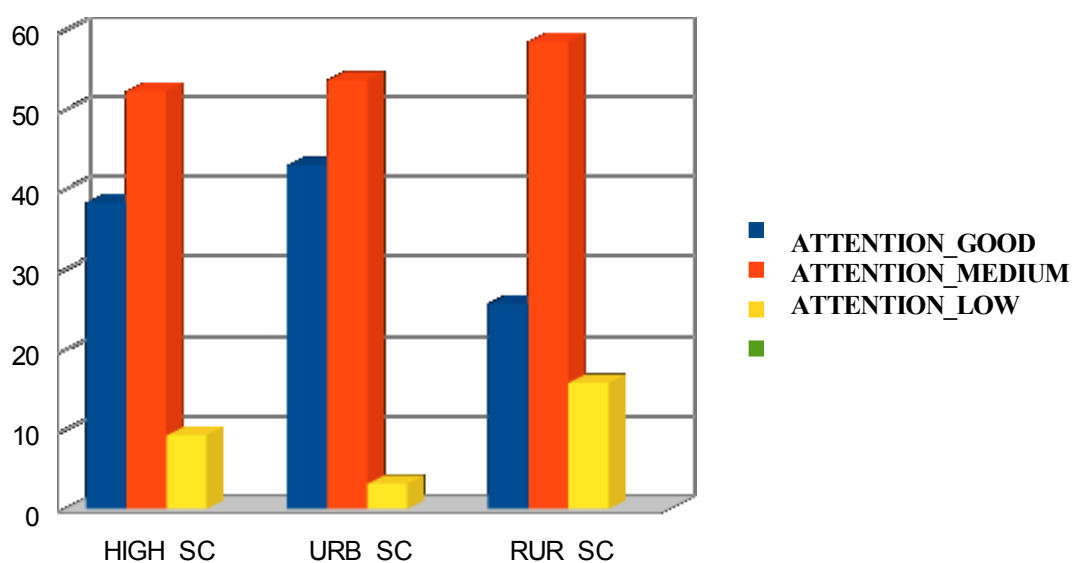


Figure 2. Results for attentional processes evaluation

Distributed attention records low levels in schools from rural areas, followed by schools from urban areas.

At urban schools we have good levels of distributive attention for 81,14 % of the teachers and at high schools the percentage for good results was of 69,44 %.

Results for auditory memory evaluation showed low results in high schools at 1,88 % of the teachers, 4,86 % in urban schools and 5,60 % at the teachers in schools from rural areas.

We record good results for memory processes at teachers in schools from urban areas – the percentage was 65,65 %, almost the same with those from schools in rural areas (65,3 2%); in high schools the results were good for 74,39 % of the teachers.

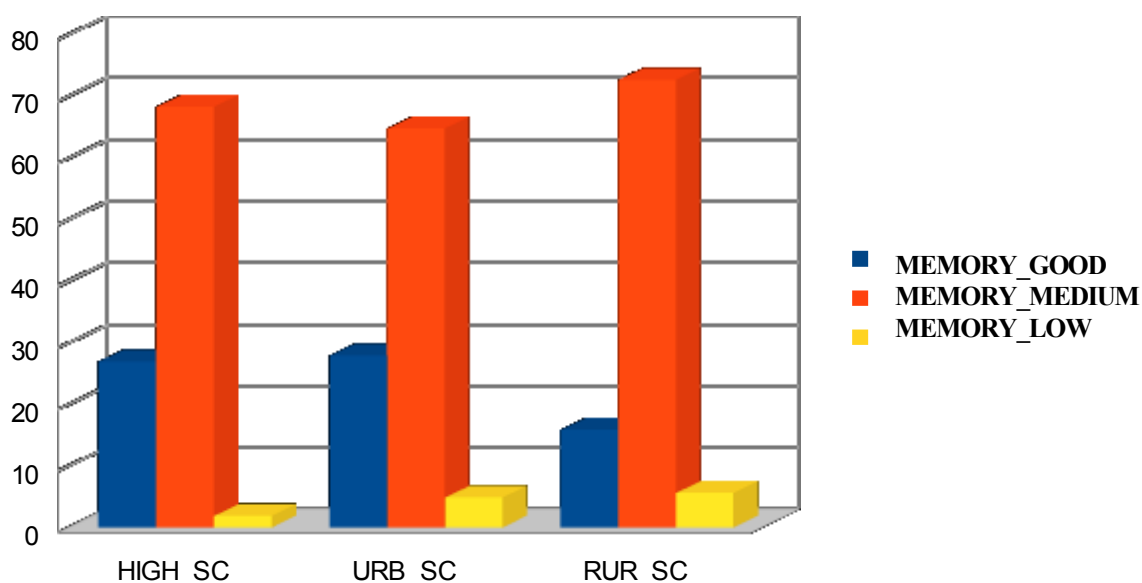


Figure 3. Results for memory evaluation

Regarded as a domain, the results for cognitive evaluation showed consistent good results for all the evaluated teachers.

There are also strong correlations ($r > 0.8$) significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) between:

- depression and emotional lability and low levels of memory;
- hypermotivity and low levels of memory functioning.

Conclusions

The results of our study show that there are no significant differences between different types of schools, with only one remark regarding low levels of hypermotivity for high school teachers. Generally speaking, the recorded high levels of hypermotivity could have the sources in high levels of stress generated by psychological examination, with seems to be quite unfamiliar for some of the teachers.

High levels of abnormal psychological features appears also in emotional lability and may be with the same explanation – stress and reluctance towards psychological evaluation, but also high levels of stress can be generated by the instability of workplaces and the low level of salary in primary schools.

Limits of the study

One of the limits of the study was the length of the evaluation processes which impairs concentration. Further improvements need to be done in order to elaborate a brief method for psychological evaluation of teachers, but with the same consistency and accuracy.

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