

## Job satisfaction and risk of burnout in special needs nursery school teachers

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### Abstract:

Teaching in nursery schools is a demanding profession based on interaction with people. As a result, teachers are exposed to an increased risk of burnout. The main goal of the research was to find out to what extent the pedagogical staff of the mentioned nursery schools are endangered by the burnout syndrome and how satisfied they are in their profession. The research group consisted of 90 participants which included teachers from all nursery schools for children with special educational needs in the Czech Republic. To determine the empirical data, the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey, Teacher Satisfaction Inventory and One-Dimensional Assessment Scale measuring teachers' climate perception were used. The results suggest that special needs nursery school teachers are at a high risk of burnout in the dimension of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in contrast to the high level of personal satisfaction, job satisfaction and satisfaction with the working climate.

**Keywords:** burnout syndrome; job satisfaction; social climate

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## 1. Introduction

The phenomenon of occupational burnout is currently given increased attention, particularly in the area of helping professions who are at greatest risk of the burnout syndrome. Helping professions include pedagogical staff at all levels of education. Teachers who work with children with special educational needs both in nursery school and elementary schools are a high-risk group. Their work with children is demanding and requires special treatment and an individualized approach.

Long-term stressful working conditions often make teachers who care for children with special educational needs leave their profession. In order to reduce the number of teachers who leave their profession due to the great mental and physical strain, it is first important to understand the causes of their exhaustion and dissatisfaction. The objective of the research carried out for the purposes of this paper is therefore to identify the degree to which nursery school teachers are threatened by the risk of the burnout syndrome and the degree of their job satisfaction. Focus was also on the identification of the correlation between the working climate, perceived recognition and other institutional factors that affect the profession of teachers who work with preschool children with special educational needs.

### 1.1. Theoretical background

#### 1.1.1. Job satisfaction of teachers working with children with special educational needs

Job satisfaction is usually described as a complex phenomenon based on the assessment of the different components, conditions and circumstances of a particular profession as well as the global assessment of work and work-related conditions (Paulík, 1999). According to Kollárik (1986), there are two different concepts of job satisfaction. According to the narrower concept, job satisfaction is perceived as a synonym to “satisfaction with work” assessing just the content and conditions of the work performed. According to the broader concept, job satisfaction is perceived as “satisfaction in work” encompassing a broader context of the conditions typical for a specific profession.

The concept of job satisfaction can be defined on the basis of two main theoretical approaches (Paulík, 1999). The first describes job satisfaction through a single dimension which can be expressed on a scale between two opposing poles: satisfaction – dissatisfaction. The principle of this experiential dimension is that an increase in one polarity causes a decrease in the other one. At the same time, an equilibrium can be achieved in which the person is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Within the single-factor concept of job satisfaction, the same approach can be used to determine the degree of satisfaction with the different occupational aspects and conditions. According to the other approach, job satisfaction is considered as a separate dimension independent of job dissatisfaction. The two-dimensional concept assumes that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are affected by the different work aspects that can be considered either as satisfactors (aspects affecting job satisfaction) or dissatisfactors which affect job dissatisfaction. These factors are mutually independent. The absence of one or the other type of factors therefore does not affect the opposite alternative of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Paulík, 1999).

Satisfactors include primarily internal work characteristics such as work content, responsibility, performance requirements or career progression. On the other hand, dissatisfactors are external factors such as organizational and management aspects of work, salary, work safety, material

conditions and interpersonal relationships. Problems in this area increase job dissatisfaction, but eliminating them will not result in job satisfaction (Paulík, 1999).

Job satisfaction among teachers who educate children with special educational needs is influenced by many factors that differ from the work of teachers in mainstream schools. According to a research study by Strydom (2012), teachers in special schools need to cope with frequent curricular changes and administrative activities associated with the achievement of the educational needs of children with special needs. These children also require adjustments to the educational conditions and specific methods of work that impose considerable demands on their teachers. According to the results of the research, job satisfaction among teachers in special needs schools was average with significant differences in the degree of job satisfaction between men and women.

Another important aspect is the motivation of special needs teachers which can be according to Strydom et al. (2012) supported by mentoring sessions involving older and more experienced colleagues as well as younger teachers and, in this way, provide space for consulting problems and sharing tips and advice on educating children with special needs. In this respect, a helpful tool could be “parent-teacher” programmes that would involve parents in the process of education because they are the ones who know their child best.

The factors that influence job continuance among special needs teachers were examined by Gersten (2001) on a sample of 887 special needs teachers from schools in three American cities. The authors concluded that the most significant factor influencing job continuance among special needs teachers was perceived social support from superiors and colleagues. In this context, teachers reported that their satisfaction would be increased by having more opportunities for cooperation with their colleagues.

The research further suggested that the transition to mainstream education was a frequent solution to teachers’ frustration caused by inadequate working conditions. In particular, special needs teachers are overloaded by a number of administrative activities for which they are not paid. Other factors identified by the research (Gersten et al., 2001) as being important for job continuance among special needs teachers included the possibility for mentoring sessions and a fair system of remuneration.

Another research study (Stempien & Loeb, 2002) analysed the differences in job satisfaction between general education and special education teachers in US schools. According to the authors, the area of special education is subject to a high teacher turnover and it is very difficult to replace these professionals due to the time, financial and content demands for their training. The comparison included groups of special needs teachers who educate children with intellectual disability and behavioural disorders, mainstream teachers as well as teachers experienced in educating both groups of children mentioned above.

The lowest job satisfaction was observed among teachers of children with special educational needs, with the greatest workload reported by beginning teachers with low work experience. However, according to the results of the study (Stempien & Loeb, 2002), low job satisfaction was not reflected in special needs teachers’ life satisfaction. One of the reasons may be the fact that teachers of children with special needs receive higher salaries than teachers in mainstream education.

Another stress factor identified in the work of special needs teachers is the difficulty of working with children with severe disability which requires a specialized and individualized approach. The authors of the research (Stempien & Loeb, 2002) justify this finding by the effort of special needs teachers to achieve superhuman skills associated with their work in society. A failure to meet these high expectations results in feelings of guilt and frustration. Special needs teachers cope with this load either by losing enthusiasm and reducing personal engagement or by continuing their work with high commitment at the cost of having to address the high degree of stress and workload.

The authors (Stempien & Loeb, 2002) also state that fresh special education graduates start their jobs with a high degree of expectations and trust in their own abilities to cope with the specific demands of working with children with disability. According to the results of the research, the most demanding type of work for beginning teachers is caring for children/pupils with multiple disability, various types of disability and poor prognosis for improvement. The education of children and pupils with disability requires an individualized approach by the teacher and a high degree of support which causes increased mental and physical workload.

Another problematic area relates to inconvenient educational resources or aids which require adjustments by special needs teachers or they have to produce their own. Another type of workload for special needs teachers is consultation with parents who are often exhausted in order to help them introduce effective approaches at home aimed at communication and development of their child. However, despite all their efforts there is often no noticeable improvement which is highly frustrating and demotivating for teachers and carers (Stempien & Loeb, 2002).

Another strain factor in the work of special need teachers is also the excessive amount of time they individually spend with children. According to Stempien and Loeb (2002), group work with children with disability is often impossible. Therefore, special needs teachers are physically and emotionally exhausted at the end of a day of direct work with children. The lack of energy makes it impossible for them to prepare aids and resources or to plan further activities for a longer period of time.

The results of the study by Stempien and Loeb (2002) further suggested that compared with teachers in mainstream schools, special needs teachers more often used resources created by other professionals. An important aspect is also the greater focus of special needs teachers on the development of social and self-care skills in their pupils. In contrast, teachers in mainstream schools tend to focus on the learning content which requires more specialized home preparation.

### *1.1.2. Strain factors in the teaching profession*

The teaching profession involves a great amount of specific workload compared with other professions. In his research, Paulík (1999) argues that at least one third of teachers assess their workload as strong to extreme and that this workload is higher than non-work strain as well as workload in other helping professions. However, according to Paulík, the high workload of teachers is not fully reflected in their job satisfaction because the high demands of the teaching profession need not necessarily lead to job dissatisfaction.

According to Kebza and Šolcová (2003), the data provided by the National Institute of Public Health suggest that 80% of teachers are exposed to disproportionately high workload, while 60% of

teachers experience excessive stress. 25% of teachers show decreased resistance to stress. According to a research study by Smetáčková (2020), which involved 2,394 Czech teachers, 81% were able to prevent the full development of the burnout syndrome despite the naturally high workload in the teaching profession.

According to Poschkamp (2013), the most common sources of teachers' workload include missing peer support (hostile working climate), high number of hours of direct educational work as well as indirect activities relating to the preparation and evaluation of activities. A major strain factor also includes problems with children's or pupils' discipline and a lack of teaching resources (lack of material equipment). Teachers further report the following strain factors: insufficient pedagogical education at the beginning of the teaching career, annoying noise in the classroom, excessive number of administrative activities and no opportunities for career progression.

Over the past two decades, job satisfaction and workplace well-being among teachers has decreased. This is likely caused by the change in the general mood in society, changed working conditions and decreased respect for the teaching profession. One of the indicators of job dissatisfaction among teachers is leaving the profession. According to Smetáčková (2020, p. 98), nearly 7,000 teachers terminated their employment from January 2017 to February 2019, of whom every fourth teacher was a beginner with experience up to two years. The main reasons were low salary, finding a better profession, overload and stress.

According to Míček and Zeman (1997), the sources of teachers' stress considerably differ from the stress factors in other helping professions. The specific sources of teachers' workload include primarily the large number of requirements which often contradict or teachers are unable to fulfil. They include especially problems with children's/pupils' discipline, high responsibility for children's safety and the educational process, quick decision-making and improvisation as well as pressure on professional development although the conditions for further training are not very favourable.

Teachers' workload is reflected in the mental and physical levels (Řehulka & Řehulková, 1998). Psychical strain can further be divided into sensory, mental and emotional. Sensory strain places high demands on teachers' senses, especially vision and hearing. Mental strain includes information processing such as memory, attention, imagination, thinking and decision-making. Teachers tend to reduce their mental strain by the routinization of intellectually demanding tasks, including for example repeated use of teaching resources (Krninský, 2012). Emotional strain is the strongest aspect among teachers because it involves emotional reactions to all teachers' activities.

Unfavourable working conditions that in the long-term function as strong stressors include workplace competition or poor organization of work including unclear responsibilities of individual teachers, non-transparent management style and low teacher awareness. According to Švamberk Šauerová (2018, p. 36), institutional causes of school stress include an unclear structure of relationships, poor quality of management of teachers' activities and a failure to build corporate culture as the basis of a healthy school atmosphere. Job dissatisfaction is also caused by a lack of support, absence of supervisions and insufficient opportunities for further training (Čapek et al., 2018).

### **1.1.3. Burnout syndrome in the teaching profession**

The burnout syndrome is a phenomenon which has recently been given great attention. Inadequate working conditions put a number of people at risk of burnout, especially those who are in the so-called helping professions (Jeklová & Reitmayerová, 2006). The teaching profession is one of the most vulnerable groups in terms of the burnout syndrome, also in the context of other helping professions (Johnson et al., 2005). The burnout syndrome has a negative impact not only on teachers themselves but primarily on their students (Mareš, 2013).

Burnout in pedagogical professions is characterized by high mental strain. The main symptoms of burnout include a loss of energy and idealism leading to stagnation, frustration and apathy (Jeklová & Reitmayerová, 2006). The symptoms of burnout may manifest in the first years of the teaching profession in the form of a “practice shock”. However, according to Řehulka (Řehulka, 2016), they usually occur after 15 to 20 years of practice.

Smetáčková (2020) suggests the following symptoms of burnout in teachers: early termination of employment, avoiding unnecessary tasks, impatience in communication with children and colleagues as well as reluctance to adopt new approaches. Teachers affected by the burnout syndrome do not search for ways to improve their educational approaches and every unexpected situation derails them.

According to Smetáčková (2020), teachers’ burnout is manifested in the following three main areas – physical, cognitive and emotional. In the physical area, burnout is usually manifested by physical exhaustion, lack of energy, nausea upon arrival at work or various forms of chronic pain. In the cognitive area, the most frequent manifestations are reduced interest in new stimuli, difficulty in attention and concentration, slow thinking or memory loss. In the emotional area, the most common manifestations include a lack of interest in other people, insensitivity to their needs and irritability.

In her research, Maslach (2001) examined the burnout syndrome in response to interpersonal stressors in the workplace. In this context, burnout was manifested as feelings of separation from work as well as feelings of failure and cynicism. The condition subsequently led to feelings of incapability and low productivity.

The burnout syndrome among teachers strongly affects their pupils. As a result of the burnout syndrome, teachers’ interest in their pupils decreases, which aggravates the overall psychosocial teaching climate. This also reduces pupils’ motivation to work together and aggravates their behaviour as well as relationships between children (Mareš, 2013; by Smetáčková (2020).

In this context, deeper correlations (including for example causes) are addressed in scientific papers (Dobešová Cakirpaloglu, Čech, Jůvová, & Pavlikovská, 2021; Čech, Gillová, Dobešová Cakirpaloglu, 2020).

### **1.2. Purpose of study**

The main objective of the research was to identify the degree to which nursery school teachers who educate children with special educational needs were threatened by the burnout syndrome and the degree of their job satisfaction. Focus was also on the correlation between exposure to the burnout syndrome and job satisfaction in relation to the most frequent strain and protective factors of this

profession, satisfaction with the working climate and perceived recognition. The objective was detailed by means of 3 research hypotheses, which were subsequently tested.

**H1:** Respondents with a higher risk of the burnout syndrome show a statistically significantly lower degree of job satisfaction.

**H1a:** Respondents with a higher score in the emotional exhaustion dimension in the MBI-ES questionnaire show a statistically significantly lower degree of job satisfaction.

**H1b:** Respondents with a higher score in the depersonalization dimension in the MBI-ES questionnaire show a statistically significantly lower degree of job satisfaction

**H1c:** Respondents with a higher score in the personal accomplishment dimension in the MBI-ES questionnaire show a statistically significantly higher degree of job satisfaction.

**H2:** Respondents with higher satisfaction with the quality of the working climate achieve a statistically significantly higher degree of job satisfaction.

**H3:** Respondents who perceive recognition in the workplace show a statistically significantly higher degree of job satisfaction.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Data collection tool

To investigate the degree of susceptibility to the burnout syndrome, the Czech version of the standardized Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey was used. The inventory is based on the original Maslach Burnout Inventory proposed by Christine Maslach and Susan E. Jackson. The MBI is one of the most commonly used methods in professional examination of the burnout syndrome (Křivohlavý, 1998). The MBI-ES version was specially developed for use among teachers, where the statements contain the specific term pupil. Otherwise, the inventory matches the original version of the MBI; the scoring and evaluation is based on the same key (Švamberk Šauerová, 2018).

The inventory consists of 22 items in the form of simple statements. In each item respondents indicate the intensity and frequency of symptoms on a 0 to 7 scale. The questionnaire examines the degree of burnout in the following three dimensions: emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and personal accomplishment (PA). The existence of these three essential factors was psychometrically verified by means of a factor analysis (Křivohlavý, 1998).

Each of these three components is examined separately, so the final degree of burnout is described by three scores. The EE dimension includes 9 questions, the DP dimension includes 5 questions and the PA dimension includes 8 questions. In the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization scales, high values are pathognomonic, whereas in the personal accomplishment scale these are low scores.

Job satisfaction among teachers was measured by means of the Teacher Satisfaction Inventory by Karel Paulík (1999). This scale consists of seven items relating to the assessment of job satisfaction and some related phenomena such as workload, importance attributed to one's profession or self-assessment of one's personality traits (Čapek, 2010).

The items of the scale are formulated as specific statements and respondents are asked to react to those statements by selecting the appropriate degree on a five-point Likert scale. A part of the scale



includes questions on the degree of satisfaction with important components of the teaching profession relating to relationships with pupils, colleagues, superiors, parents, working environment, material provisions, salary and school management. Respondents indicate their degree of satisfaction on a scale from completely dissatisfied = 1 to 5 = very satisfied (Paulík, 1999).

The analysis of the working climate of pedagogical employees was performed by means of the One-Dimensional Assessment Scale measuring teachers' perception of the working climate developed by Čech (2011). The questionnaire consists of 14 items that capture teachers' perception of the quality of the working climate by means of antonyms – adjectives with the opposite meaning. In each pair, respondents indicate one of the adjectives and the degree to which it reflects the workplace climate with 8 expressing the most favourable form of the characteristic (e.g., “accepting”) and 1 expressing the worst form of the characteristic (“declining”).

The last part of the research tool consists of sociodemographic questionnaire containing data such as gender, age, length of teaching experience, level of education, length of employment in the current nursery school, occupational position.

## **2.2. Participants**

The questionnaire with a request for participation in the research was sent using the national database to all nursery schools in the Czech Republic. Nursery school teachers were addressed through school directors. In total, the research included more than 2,000 respondents. For the purposes of the research, 90 respondents were selected who work in nursery schools for children with special educational needs. These teachers formed the research sample.

Of the total number of 90 respondents, only 1 respondent (1.1%) was man, while the remaining 89 respondents (98.9%) were women. The age distribution of the respondents was varied. The highest number of respondents (32.2%) were in the category of 46–55 years. The categories of 56–65 years (25.6%) and 36–45 years (24.4%) were similar in size, while the age group of 26–35 was represented by 15.6% of respondents. The smallest number of respondents were in the categories younger than 25 years and older than 65 years (1.1%).

In terms of educational experience, the highest number of respondents (20%) were in the category of over 35 years. 17.8% of respondents had experience of 26–35 years. The same number of persons (15.6%) were in the categories of 5 to 10 years and less than 5 years of experience. The smallest number of respondents (4.4%) were in the category “beginning teacher” with educational experience of up to 1 year.

## **2.3. Statistical processing**

A comparative analysis was carried out using the IBM SPSS Statistics 24 programme in order to examine the relationship between the variables. Regarding the normal distribution of the sample, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used and the data were graphically interpreted using the two-dimensional dot plot. The results were summarized in tables and statistically significant correlations were highlighted in bold. In the course of inductive statistical processing, the value of the Pearson correlation coefficient and the level of significance of the correlation were identified ( $\alpha=0.01$  or  $\alpha=0.05$ ).



### 3. Results

The following hypothesis was formulated to examine the correlation between exposure to the burnout syndrome and job satisfaction among teachers in nursery schools for children with special educational needs:

**H1: Respondents with a higher risk of the burnout syndrome show a statistically significantly lower degree of job satisfaction**

Regarding the fact that in the MBI-ES test the burnout syndrome is defined by means of three independent dimensions, three partial hypotheses H1a, H1b and H1c were formulated. The testing of these partial hypotheses allowed an analysis of the correlation between job satisfaction and exposure to the burnout syndrome in all of its dimensions (degree of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment).

**H1a: Respondents with a higher score in the emotional exhaustion dimension in the MBI-ES questionnaire show a statistically significantly lower degree of job satisfaction**

The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the closeness of the correlation. Table 1 shows that there is a negative correlation between the variables. The correlation is not too strong ( $r=-0.378$ ). This correlation is statistically significant at a level of significance of  $\alpha=0.01$ .

**Table 1:** *Correlation between job satisfaction and the degree of emotional exhaustion*

Variable	<i>Pearson correlation coefficient: correlation between job satisfaction and the degree of emotional exhaustion (N=90)</i>	
	Job satisfaction	p
Emotional exhaustion	<b>-0.378</b>	0.002

It can therefore be concluded that the hypothesis H1a **was confirmed**.

**H1b: Respondents with a higher score in the depersonalization dimension in the MBI-ES questionnaire show a statistically significantly lower degree of job satisfaction**

The Pearson correlation coefficient confirmed a negative correlation between the variables ( $r=-0.275$ ). The correlation is not too strong. Table 2 also shows that the correlation is statistically significant at a level of  $\alpha=0.01$ .

**Table 2:** *Correlation between job satisfaction and the degree of depersonalization*

Variable	<i>Pearson correlation coefficient: correlation between job satisfaction and the degree of depersonalization (N=90)</i>	
	Job satisfaction	p
Depersonalization	<b>-0.275</b>	0.002

The hypothesis H1b was also **confirmed**.

**H1c: Respondents with a higher score in the personal accomplishment dimension in the MBI-ES questionnaire show a statistically significantly higher degree of job satisfaction.**

The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient (Table 3) suggested a positive correlation ( $r=0.238$ ). The correlation is statistically significant at a level of  $\alpha=0.05$ . However, the correlation is not too strong.

**Table 3:** Correlation between job satisfaction and the degree of personal accomplishment

Variable	Pearson correlation coefficient: correlation between job satisfaction and the degree of personal accomplishment (N=90)	
	Job satisfaction	p
Personal accomplishment	<b>0.238</b>	0.024

The hypothesis H1c was **confirmed**.

By confirming the partial hypotheses H1a, H1b and H1c a statistically significant correlation was revealed between exposure to the burnout syndrome in all of its three dimensions and job satisfaction among teachers in nursery school for children with special needs. The results suggest that a higher degree of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization is associated with lower job satisfaction. In the personal accomplishment dimension the correlation is opposite; a higher degree of personal accomplishment is associated with higher job satisfaction.

It can therefore be concluded that the hypothesis H1 **was confirmed**.

Another objective of the research was to analyse the correlation between job satisfaction and the working climate among teachers from nursery schools for children with special needs. This correlation was analysed by means of the overall job satisfaction measured by the HSU inventory and the scores of the One-Dimensional Assessment Scale measuring teachers' perception of the working climate. The following hypothesis was formulated for the purposes of the analysis of the correlation:

**H2: Respondents with higher satisfaction with the quality of the working climate achieve a statistically significantly higher degree of job satisfaction**

The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to calculate the closeness of the correlation with respect to the normal distribution of the sample. **Error! Reference source not found.** shows that there is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and the quality of the working climate. The correlation is not too strong ( $r=0.317$ ). The correlation is significant at a level of significance of  $\alpha=0.01$ .

**Table 4:** Correlation between job satisfaction and the working climate

Variable	Pearson correlation coefficient: correlation between job satisfaction and the working climate among teachers (N=90)	
	Job satisfaction	p
Climate	<b>0.317</b>	0.002

The hypothesis H2 was **confirmed**.

The last part of the research focused on the correlation between job satisfaction and perceived recognition of teachers' educational work in nursery schools for children with special needs. The

comparison was based on the score of overall job satisfaction measured by the HSU inventory and the responses to the following questionnaire item: “*In my profession I perceive recognition from:*” In the questionnaire, the respondents were provided with the following responses: from pupils, pupils’ parents, colleagues, school management, society (public opinion) and family. The respondents were allowed to tick multiple items. To test the correlations between the variables the following hypothesis was determined:

**H3: Respondents who perceive recognition in the workplace show a statistically significantly higher degree of job**

Table 5 describes the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient between job satisfaction and the different types of perceived recognition. The data suggest that only in two cases (items in bold) the correlation was statistically significant at a level of significance of  $\alpha=0.05$ . This was the correlation between job satisfaction and perceived recognition from pupils’ parents ( $r=0.244$ ) and family ( $r=0.248$ ). In both cases the correlation was positive and not too strong. In the remaining cases, the correlation between the variables was negligible and statistically insignificant.

**Table 5: Correlation between job satisfaction and perceived recognition**

<i>Pearson correlation coefficient: correlation between job satisfaction and perceived recognition (N=90)</i>		
Perceived recognition from:	Job satisfaction	p
Pupils	-0.001	0.989
Pupils’ parents	<b>0.244</b>	0.021
Colleagues	0.137	0.199
School management	0.162	0.128
Society	0.162	0.126
Family	<b>0.248</b>	0.019

On the basis of the data the hypothesis H3 **was not confirmed**.

#### 4. Discussion

The research analysed job satisfaction and exposure to the burnout syndrome among teachers in nursery schools for children with special educational needs in the Czech Republic. The survey included a total of 90 respondents. The aim of the research was, among other things, to analyze whether there was a statistically significant correlation between exposure to the burnout syndrome and job satisfaction. Based on existing research studies, for example by Paulík (1999), Rentzou (2012), Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2009), De Stasio (2017), Robinson (2019) or Křivohlavý (2012), a statistically significant correlation was expected between exposure to the burnout syndrome and job satisfaction which should act as a protective factor and counter-pole to the burnout syndrome on the imaginary scale of occupational exhaustion (Boháčová et al., 2019; Smetáčková et al., 2020, p. 61).

A statistically significant correlation between exposure to the burnout syndrome and job satisfaction in the monitored research sample was also confirmed in the present research. The correlations between the variables in all of the dimensions of the burnout syndrome were tested by the Pearson correlation coefficient. However, the closeness of the correlations was rather low: in the EE dimension: ( $r = -0.378$ ;  $p<0.01$ ), DP: ( $r = -0.275$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) and PA: ( $r = 0.238$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). It can therefore be confirmed that job satisfaction acts as a protective factor that reduces exposure to the burnout

syndrome among teachers in nursery schools for children with special needs, which is consistent with a similar study by De Stasio (2017).

In the context of job satisfaction and the burnout syndrome, the research also focused on satisfaction with the working climate among teachers, which is according to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2009), Poschkamp (2013), Wong (2010), Pešek and Praško (2016) and Johnson (2012) one of the main factors that increases job satisfaction and decreases exposure to the burnout syndrome. The results were quite optimistic, with the majority of respondents (78.8%) satisfied among their colleagues. The majority of respondents (34.4%) were completely satisfied with the quality of their relationships, 30% were very satisfied and 14.4% were rather satisfied. 12.2% of respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and only 8.9% of respondents were not satisfied with the quality of relationships with their colleagues.

These results are consistent with a research study by Smetáčková (2020) suggesting that 92% of teachers are very satisfied or rather satisfied with professional relationships among teachers, while 81% of teachers are satisfied with school management. For some teachers, good relationships in school are even the main factor determining their level of job satisfaction, offsetting the adverse aspects of teaching and enabling teachers to better cope with their workload (Lazarová & Jůva, 2010). Teachers satisfied with the working climate also showed a statistically significantly lower exposure to the burnout syndrome (Smetáčková et al., 2020; Rentzou, 2012).

Consistently with the studies above, the present research confirmed a positive albeit not too strong correlation ( $r=0.317$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). A statistically significant negative correlation was observed in the depersonalization dimension between satisfaction with the working climate and exposure to the burnout syndrome ( $r=-0.347$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). In the emotional exhaustion dimension ( $r=-0.205$ ;  $p=0.053$ ) and personal accomplishment dimension ( $r=0.142$ ;  $p=0.181$ ) the correlation was not statistically significant. The protective effect of a positive working climate on exposure to the burnout syndrome, as suggested for example by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2009), Křivohlavý (2012) or Johnson (2012), was not completely confirmed which may have been caused by the low number of respondents in the research sample.

One of the other factors examined in the research was perceived recognition in the profession of teachers in nursery schools for children with special needs. According to Mareš (2013), perceived recognition and appreciation is a significant factor that increases job satisfaction and decreases exposure to the burnout syndrome. This research focused on the degree of perceived recognition of educational work in nursery schools for children with special needs as shown by pupils, pupils' parents, colleagues, school management and family. According to the results, the majority of respondents (83.2%) perceive recognition from their pupils' parents, followed by colleagues (69.5%), school management (64.2%) and family (52.6%). Only 28.4% of teachers perceive recognition from their pupils. The smallest number of teachers (22.1%) perceive recognition from society as a public opinion concerning the profession. None of the respondents suggested no recognition at all.

The Pearson correlation coefficient was also used to examine whether there was a statistically significant correlation between perceived recognition and job satisfaction among teachers in nursery schools for children with special needs. A statistically significant positive correlation was observed in the case of recognition from pupils' parents ( $r=0.244$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and family ( $r=0.2487$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). This is consistent with the research by Martanová and Konůpková (2019) who consider the relationship with pupils' parents as a significant factor affecting job satisfaction. If there are conflicts between teachers

and pupils' parents and their cooperation is insufficient, teachers' job satisfaction decreases which may result in premature termination of employment.

The research also examined the correlation between perceived recognition and exposure to the burnout syndrome in all of its three dimensions. The Pearson correlation coefficient revealed a statistically significant negative correlation ( $r=-0.259$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) between the degree of emotional exhaustion and perceived recognition from pupils' parents. In the depersonalization dimension, a statistically significant negative correlation was identified with perceived recognition from parents ( $r=-0.263$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and recognition by school management ( $r=-0.257$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). In the personal accomplishment dimension a statistically significant positive correlation was observed ( $r=0.305$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) with perceived recognition from pupils' parents.

## 5. Conclusion

The results described above suggest that perceived recognition from pupils' parents had a statistically significant correlation with the burnout syndrome in all of its three dimensions which makes it a protective factor with respect to exposure to the burnout syndrome. This is consistent with the previous research and confirms the importance of cooperation between schools and children's parents. In nursery schools for children with special educational needs, cooperation between teachers and pupils' parents is absolutely essential.

The negative correlation found between the degree of depersonalization and perceived recognition from school management is consistent with previous researchers who believe that a lack of recognition by the director is the major predictor of the degree of depersonalization among teachers. The research is very beneficial in terms of identifying the correlations between the burnout syndrome and job satisfaction (including the school climate and recognition). It emphasises the need for more efficient strategies of coping with workload through activities that lead to increased job satisfaction and mental hygiene techniques that decrease exposure to the burnout syndrome.

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