

Job Satisfaction and Burnout among Greek Professionals Providing Services for Children with Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the perceived levels of job satisfaction (JS) and burnout (BO) among Greek professionals providing services for children with disabilities. The instruments used were the Maslach Burnout Inventory-MBI, the Employee Satisfaction Inventory-ESI and a demographic questionnaire.

The sample consisted of 150 professionals (125 female and 25 male) from various specialties (occupational therapists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, adapted physical educators, special educators), whose mean age was 32.35 years (age range from 22 to 55 years old). Participants signed the informed consent and responded online to the administered scales. The statistical package SPSS 20.0 was used and the level of significance was set to .05.

The analyses revealed that the participants, in terms of job satisfaction, were most satisfied with the 'job itself,' moderately satisfied with 'working conditions,' 'supervision' and 'organization as a whole' and less satisfied with 'promotion' and 'pay.' Furthermore, participants experienced moderate burnout symptoms in all three dimensions. Concerning gender differences, women exhibited significant lower levels of 'emotional exhaustion' ($F= 5.770, p= .018$ και $\eta^2p= .038$) and higher levels of job satisfaction with 'working conditions' ($F= 6.349, p= .013$ και $\eta^2p= .041$) than men. Moreover, the participants who were 30 years old or younger were significantly less satisfied with the 'supervision' ($F= 5.533, p= .020, \eta^2p= .036$) than those who were above 30 years old.

Future researchers may consider longitudinal studies, with representative samples, to relate the professionals' perceived levels of JS and BO in conjunction with the quality of their services, as well as the possible similarities or differences by gender, age, specialty and geographical area.

Keywords: job satisfaction, burnout, children, disability, Greece.

INTRODUCTION

According to Locke (27), job satisfaction is 'a pleasant or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences' (p.1304). Some of the factors that correlate with job satisfaction are working conditions, productivity, employee's intent to stay at his/ her job and earnings (43,47). Research has shown that job satisfaction has been linked positively to reward, contact with colleagues, supervision, opportunities for developing new skills, work challenges, etc. (41,44).

Burnout is a dynamic process in which employees gradually are becoming less effective or capable of performing their working obligations and more frustrated and cynical about their job and its value (7,37,52). According to Maslach and Jackson (29), burnout

is a syndrome with three major components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment. Burnout symptoms may include headaches, insomnia, chronic fatigue, feelings of failure or weakness, interpersonal issues, frequent absences from work, reduced quality of services, increased use of alcohol, tobacco products and drugs, as well as depression (10,29,34,48).

Previous research findings indicated that job satisfaction and burnout correlate negatively (35,36,39). Professionals in the humanitarian field have been recognized as a high-risk group for developing the burnout syndrome, due to the high emotional demands that are required when working with humans (35,36,46,51).

Job satisfaction has been studied in many countries such as in Canada (28), Sweden (8),

Australia (44) and Greece (40,49). Some of the professions that have been studied regarding job satisfaction are health professions (25), teaching (49), special education (38) and occupational therapy (40).

Koustelios (20) conducted a study to investigate job satisfaction levels and the personal characteristics of 354 Greek teachers (157 men and 197 women, mean age 38 years, mean working experience 12.5 years, mean weekly teaching time 21.2 hours) from schools in Thessaloniki/ Greece (20 primary and 20 secondary education schools). Results showed that the teachers were very satisfied with their work and the supervision, quite satisfied with the working conditions, while they were dissatisfied with the financial gains and promotional opportunities. Furthermore, a) women received more satisfaction from the working conditions than men and b) as the working experience grew, the satisfaction the women received from supervision and prospects of promotion increased as well (20). Kota, Kudo and Okita (17) studied the factors that affect job satisfaction in the first year of employment of physical therapists in Hiroshima, Japan. A total of 193 registered physical therapists (registered in Hiroshima Prefectural Physical Therapy Association) were divided into two groups depending on whether they were satisfied with their work or not (157 received high satisfaction and 36 low satisfaction). The results showed that positive working relationships, high financial gains, and altruistic incentives are associated with higher rates of job satisfaction (17).

Hatton and colleagues (11) studied the factors related to general distress, job strain and job satisfaction in professionals working with people with intellectual disability. In total, 450 professionals (79% females) from different fields (e.g., therapists, nurses, and administrative staff) were enrolled (mean age 39 years). Sixty-six per cent of the variance for job satisfaction could be explained by six factors: stress associated with their low-status job position, lack of support from supervisors, having no influence on work decisions, alienative commitment, lack of support from colleagues and the old age of the staff. In addition, 50% of the variance for job strain could be explained by six factors: lack of wishful thinking, stress associated with lack of staff support, alienative commitment, role ambiguity, anxiety linked to their low-status job position and working overtime beyond the

agreed. Finally, 28% of the variance for general distress could be explained by three factors: lack of wishful thinking, anxiety associated with the conflict of roles between work and home and role ambiguity (11).

Ješinová and colleagues (13) studied the reasons for professional dissatisfaction among adapted physical education teachers in the USA. A total of 113 certified adapted physical education specialists (CAPES) (88 women with a mean age of 39.54 years, and 25 men with a mean age of 42.65 years) reported the general factors that could cause them dissatisfaction with their work. The results showed that 71% of the participants had problems related to working conditions, 68% with the school policies and administration, 61% with their interpersonal relationships with supervisors, 54% with supervision in technical, educational and planning issues, 45% with their salary, 45% with their interpersonal relations with subordinates (paraprofessionals/ aids), 33% with the job benefits (health insurance, pension plan, etc.), 32% with their interpersonal relationship with their peers, and 27% with job security. In addition, they stated that greater dissatisfaction with their work was caused by several factors such as the excessive paperwork (69%), the lack of priority of adapted physical education in school planning (67%), the lack of teaching space (62%), etc. (13).

With respect to occupational therapy, Kumar et al. (25) assessed job satisfaction of 227 professionals of the public sector primary health care in Delhi. Results showed low levels of job satisfaction. The majority of the professionals were not satisfied with their salary, the reduced opportunities for professional development, as well as with training policies and practices. Job satisfaction did not correlate with age and their educational level (25). Politis and colleagues (40) conducted the first survey on occupational therapists' job satisfaction in Greece. A total of 60 occupational therapists (68,3% women), who worked in their field from 1 to 15 years, participated in the study. Results indicated that participants had high levels of overall job satisfaction and more specific were satisfied with the kind of work, their relationship with their colleagues and the supervision of the manager. On the other hand, they were less satisfied with their salary and the prospects of promotion (40).

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In the definition of burnout, Maslach (29) included the physical, the emotional as well as the mental exhaustion that was observed in practitioners whose work requires constant contact with other people. Professionals in various occupations seem to suffer from burnout syndrome, such as occupational therapists (10,12,26), physical therapists (45), professionals in the field of mental health (6,44), educators (20), special educators (2), nurses (41), social workers (26) etc. In addition, the burnout syndrome has been extensively studied in different countries such as Australia (26,44), the USA (4,6,12,42,45,50), Sweden (8) Spain (10) and Greece (20).

Lloyd and King (26) examined the levels of burnout of occupational therapists and social workers working in the field of mental health in Australia. The researchers assessed 196 occupational therapists (178 women and 18 men) and 108 social workers (69 women and 39 men), whose mean age was 29.6 years (ranging from 22 to 67 years) and their mean working experience was 9.1 years (ranging from 22 to 67 years). Both groups showed a high level of emotional exhaustion and moderate depersonalization which was offset by high levels of personal accomplishment. Besides, they claimed that younger professionals tended to be more prone to depersonalization, and that general clinical activity was associated with higher levels of personal accomplishment (26).

Gutiérrez and colleagues (10) attempted to analyze the reasons why occupational therapists experienced burnout symptoms at both individual and organizational level. They assessed 110 clinical occupational therapists (89% were women) in Madrid, Spain, whose mean age was 30.3 and their mean clinical experience at the same work was 5.5 years. The researchers found that burnout had a significantly high correlation with consequences in personal and organizational level. Additionally, it was found that the highest correlation was evident in the case of emotional exhaustion, while the lowest in personal accomplishment. Some of the most critical factors that appeared to explain burnout symptoms were work context, work overload, characteristics of their tasks, lack of support and recognition from other colleagues and fear of malpractice. Researchers concluded that it is crucial to design healthy work environments and promote relationships between occupational

therapists in both working and non-working context (10).

Zarafshan et al. (53) conducted a study to determine the burnout levels of educators working with children with a) autism, b) intellectual disabilities and c) deafness. The responses of 93 women were examined (N1= 32 working with autism, mean age 36.81 years; N2= 31 working with intellectual disabilities, mean age 40.29 years; N3=30 working with deafness, mean age 38.33 years). The analyses revealed that the educators who worked with children with autism experienced higher levels of burnout and suffered from more health problems than their colleagues who worked with children of other diagnostic categories. On the other hand, there were no statistical differences between those who worked with children with intellectual disabilities and deafness (53).

Boujut and colleagues (5) examined the effect of self-efficacy on burnout in a sample of 203 teachers (86% women and 14% men, mean age 41.17 years) who worked with students with autism in France. Participants' mean working experience was 14.77 years (ranged from 1 to 42 years), and mean working experience with children with autism spectrum disorders was 3.53 years (varied from 0 to 33 years). The results showed that the perceived self-efficacy had a significant a) positive correlation with personal accomplishment and problem-solving strategies and b) negative correlation with emotional exhaustion and anxiety. They also found that the lower the teachers' level of perceived self-efficacy, the higher a stressful situation is perceived, which, in turn, increases the emotional exhaustion (5).

Regarding the study of job satisfaction and burnout combined, Platsidou and Agaliotis (39) investigated job satisfaction and burnout levels of 127 full-time special educators (78 women and 49 men, mean age 39.6 years), who worked in primary public schools or special schools in northern Greece. The researchers found that only 1/5 of the sample had a high score in emotional exhaustion, while the majority did not experience burnout symptoms. In terms of job satisfaction, they were highly satisfied with their work, the school manager and the organization as a whole, they had moderate satisfaction from the working conditions, while they were not satisfied with the prospects of promotion and their salary. The factors related to their work were: teaching in a classroom with children of

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different abilities, organizing and implementing the program, assessing pupils, and working with other special education practitioners and parents (39).

Kaegi and colleagues (14) studied job satisfaction and burnout levels of 56 speech-language pathologists who worked at schools in Canada (Rural Alberta N1=29 and mean working experience 6.58 years; Urban Alberta N2=18 and mean working experience 5.12 years; Ontario N3=9 and mean working experience 15 years). Results showed that the majority of them exhibited burnout symptoms, had a heavy workload and were negatively affected by changes in their workplace. At the same time, they declared that they were satisfied with their work, although their salary was not sufficient and they worked overtime for about 20 hours without being paid (14).

Hurt and colleagues (12) studied the characteristics of 113 Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) therapists (108 women and 5 men) who worked with children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Results showed that there was a significantly high correlation between neuroticism and the three dimensions of burnout (exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy). Job satisfaction had a significantly positive correlation with extraversion and a negative one with neuroticism. Significant predictors of exhaustion were stress, depression, and vulnerability. Cynicism was a) a negative predictor related to friendliness and obedience, but b) a positive one related to depression. Regarding professional efficiency, there was a) a positive correlation with kindness, dynamism, cheerfulness, morality, altruism, willingness, effort to achieve and self-discipline, and b) a negative correlation with depression and vulnerability. The researchers claimed that perceived personal and professional support had a partial impact on personality traits and job satisfaction (12).

Scanlan and Still (44) studied the factors related to job satisfaction, burnout and the intention to change their profession in 34 Australian occupational therapists working in the field of mental health. According to their study, burnout was associated with low job satisfaction and with the willingness to change profession. Higher levels of job satisfaction were associated with good remuneration, recognition and cognitive challenges. Feelings of anxiety or fatigue of the therapist correlated significantly

with low levels of well being. Likewise, contact with patients or their families was considered to be demanding and also correlated significantly with low levels of well being. Researchers concluded that intervention strategies such as supervision, feedback, participation in decision making and enhancing occupational therapists' personal strengths should necessarily be used in order to minimize burnout symptoms (44).

In Greece, our literature review suggested that there is no published research study examining the job satisfaction and burnout of professionals working with children with disabilities. This study was designed to cover the abovementioned research gap, by studying professionals such as occupational therapists, speech therapists, and language pathologists, physical therapists, psychologists, special educators and adapted physical educators.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in the present study were professionals providing services for children with disabilities (e.g. psychologists) in Athens, Greece. A convenience sample of 150 professionals (25 males and 125 females) in the public and private sector who met the inclusive criteria was selected. Their mean age was 32.35 (their age ranged from 22 to 55 years), while their mean working experience was 7.69 years (range 0.5 to 31 years). The inclusion criteria were: a) their speaking fluency of Greek, and b) working and pursuing their career (as occupational therapists, etc.) in Greece, for more than six months.

Procedure

The recruitment of the sample and the collection of the data were conducted online, between May and July of 2016, through a social networking tool (linked-in) with the abovementioned specialties. In that period, the primary researcher informed 190 professionals and encouraged their participation in the study. The participants received an accompanying letter and a consent form, as well as assurance of their anonymity and of the use of the results exclusively for research purposes. Accordingly, the participants were asked to follow a link to complete the three self-report questionnaires: a demographic questionnaire, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; 30) and the Employee Satisfaction Inventory (ESI; 21).

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Instruments

Demographic Scale

The participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire which included information concerning gender, age, specialty, working years as professionals for individuals with disabilities, educational level, etc.

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; 30)

The MBI scale has been widely used in the past in Greece (1). The questionnaire consists of 22 items in a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from 0: it never happens to me, to 6: it occurs to me on a daily basis), grouped into three subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. An example of 'personal accomplishment' is: 'I can easily understand how my students or patients feel about what's happening to them.' Higher scores in depersonalization and emotional exhaustion correspond to more severe burnout symptoms. By contrast, a higher score in personal accomplishment corresponds to lower burnout symptoms. The MBI scale has been used in Greece regarding the onset of the burnout syndrome (1,20,33,49), with acceptable validity and reliability evidence.

Employee Satisfaction Inventory (ESI; 21)

The ESI includes 24 self-referral items and answers are provided in a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1: totally disagree to 5: totally agree). The items are grouped into six subscales:

a) working conditions (5 items, e.g., ventilation is not sufficient in my job); b) pay (4 items, e.g., I feel insecure with such a salary); c) promotion (3 items, e.g., my prospects of promotion are minimal, d) the job itself (4 items, e.g., my job is boring), e) immediate supervisor (4 items, e.g., my supervisor is annoying), and f) organization as a whole (4 items, e.g., the service discriminates between its employees). The ESI scale has been used in several professions in Greece (43-45) with sufficient validity and reliability evidence (21,22).

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The SPSS (SPSS for Windows – Version 20.0) was used for statistical analysis. Cronbach alpha evaluated the internal consistency of the MBI and ESI scales. Pearson intercorrelation coefficients examined the relationship between the MBI and ESI subscales. Multivariate and univariate post hoc analyses examined the differences within gender and working experience, with respect to the MBI and ESI responses. The .05 was selected as the appropriate significant level.

RESULTS

The majority of the participants were speech therapists and occupational therapists. Sixty one participants had a monthly income ranging from 501 to 1000€ and forty participants had an income ranging from 1001 to 1500€. Their demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table1. Demographic characteristics of the sample

Variable	Mean	SD	Min-Max	N
Gender				
Men				25
Women				150
Age	32.35	7.2	22-55	
Specialty				
Occupational Therapist				45
Speech-Language Pathologist				64
Special Educator				11
Psychologist				11
Adapted Physical Educator				7
Physical Therapist				8
Special Educator & Psychologist				3
Philologist				1
Marital Status				
Married				47
Single				76
Separated				3
Divorced				4
Widowed				2
Free cohabitation				18

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Children				
Yes				41
No				109
Working Experience				
In general	7.69	5.73	0.5-31	150
At the current work	5.47	4.62	0-21	150
Number of children/ week	23.04	14.34	2-100	150
Working hours/ week	37.25	12.46	7-65	150
Income				
0-500 €				14
501-1000 €				61
1001-1500 €				40
1501-2000€				17
Above 2000 €				18

With respect to the responses in the MBI, the participants reported moderate emotional exhaustion ($M = 24.24$, $SD = 9.82$), depersonalization ($M = 6.70$, $SD = 5.16$) and personal accomplishment ($M = 37.31$, $SD = 5.46$). Concerning the responses in the ESI, the participants were satisfied with the nature of the work ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .64$), quite satisfied with

the working conditions ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .75$), the immediate supervisor ($M = 3.82$, $SD = .99$) and the organization as a whole ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.04$), but were not so satisfied with the promotion opportunities ($M = 2.58$, $SD = .96$) and pay ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.07$). The responses in the MBI and ESI are presented in Table 2.

Table2. Responses in the MBI and ESI

Factors	M	SD	N
Employee Satisfaction Inventory			
Working Conditions	3.83	.75	150
Pay	2.68	1.07	150
Promotion	2.58	.96	150
Job Itself	4.17	.64	150
Immediate Supervisor	3.82	.99	150
Organization as a whole	3.41	1.04	150
Maslach Burnout Inventory			
Emotional exhaustion	24.24	9.82	150
Depersonalization	6.70	5.16	150
Personal Accomplishment	37.31	5.46	150

Internal consistency of the MBI and ESI subscales was assessed with Cronbach alpha. The results yielded coefficients ranging from

0.663 to 0.860 for the MBI and from 0.711 to 0.901 for the ESI. These findings are presented in Table 3.

Table3. Internal Consistency (Cronbach Alpha)

Factors	Cronbach Alpha (Present study)	Cronbach Alpha
Employee Satisfaction Inventory		(Koustelios & Bagiatis, 1997)
Working Conditions	.711	.80
Pay	.876	.79
Promotion	.791	.62
Job Itself	.762	.77
Immediate Supervisor	.901	.82
Organization as a whole	.822	.76
Maslach Burnout Inventory		(Anagnostopoulos & Papadatou, 1992)
Emotional exhaustion	.860	.84
Depersonalization	.663	.75
Personal Accomplishment	.766	.71

The Pearson coefficients revealed that the MBI 'emotional exhaustion' had a significant negative correlation with all ESI subscales. The MBI 'depersonalization' had a significant negative correlation with the ESI satisfaction

with the 'job itself'. On the other hand, the MBI 'personal accomplishment' correlated positively with the ESI satisfaction with the 'job itself' and the 'immediate supervisor.' The overall intercorrelations may be found in table 4.

Table 4. Pearson intercorrelations between the MBI and ESI subscales

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Working Conditions-ESI	1	.381**	.215**	.317**	.411**	.601**	-.333**	-.135	.115
2. Pay-ESI		1	.330**	.118	.172*	.453**	-.286**	-.144	.022
3. Promotion-ESI			1	.232**	.184*	.304**	-.195*	-.074	.104
4. Job Itself-ESI				1	.089	.164*	-.343**	-.313**	.461**
5. Immediate Supervisor-ESI					1	.641**	-.250**	-.113	.203*
6. Organization as a whole-ESI						1	-.330**	-.039	.048
7. Emotional exhaustion-MBI							1	.354**	-.187*
8. Depersonalization-MBI								1	-.331**
9. Personal Accomplishment-MBI									1

*: < .05, ** < .01

Accordingly, the MBI and ESI differences according to gender, working experience and age were examined. With respect to gender, the MBI multivariate findings approached significance ($\Lambda = .953$, $F = 2.394$, $p = .071$, $\eta^2p = .047$). The post-hoc univariate results were significant for emotional exhaustion ($F = 5.770$, $p = .018$ and $\eta^2p = .038$). In contrast, no significant gender differences were evident in depersonalization ($F = 2.698$, $p = .103$ and $\eta^2p = .038$) and personal accomplishment ($F = .008$, $p = .931$ and $\eta^2p = .000$). The mean scores confirmed that women ($M = 23.39$, $SD = 9.77$) were less emotionally exhausted compared to men ($M = 28.48$, $T.A. = 9.12$). The responses of both men and women on the MBI subscales are presented in Figure 1.

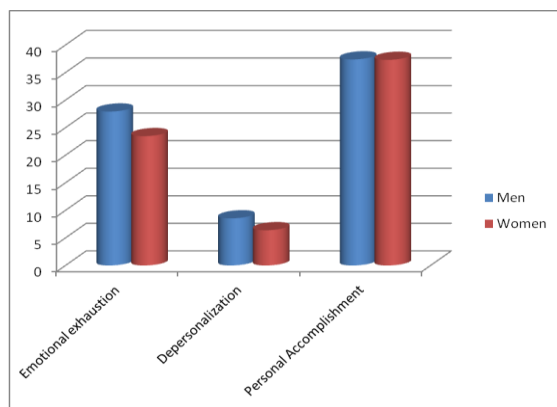


Figure 1. Gender Differences in the MBI

Concerning the ESI, multivariate analysis was significant with respect to gender ($\Lambda = .912$, $F = 2.313$, $p = .037$, $\eta^2p = .88$). The univariate post hoc analysis was significant for ‘working conditions’ ($F = 6.349$, $p = .013$ and $\eta^2p = .041$), and approached significance for the ‘immediate supervisor’ ($F = 3.392$, $p = .068$, $\eta^2p = .022$) and ‘organization as a whole’ ($F = 3.748$, $p = .055$, $\eta^2p = .025$). The mean ESI scores revealed that women ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .72$) were more satisfied due to the working conditions compared to men ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .80$). Higher female scores

were also evident in the satisfaction with the ‘immediate supervisor’ and the ‘organization as a whole’ ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .98$ and $M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.03$ respectively) than male scores ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.04$ and $M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.07$ respectively). No significant gender differences were found in ‘pay’ ($F = .299$, $p = .585$ and $\eta^2p = .002$) and ‘the job itself’ ($F = 1.443$, $p = .232$ and $\eta^2p = .010$). The overall results are shown in Figure 2.

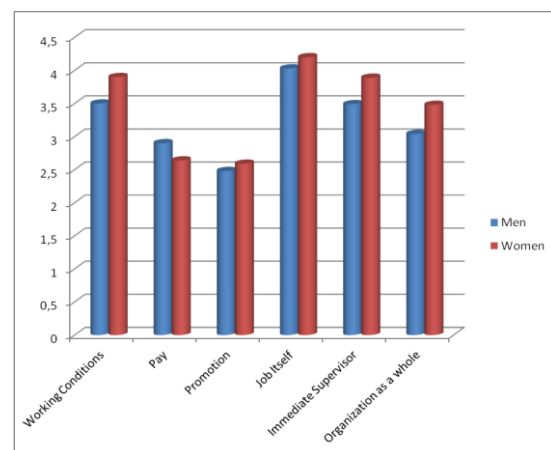


Figure 2. Gender Differences in the ESI

With respect to the differences in the ESI and MBI scores of the professionals with different working experience, the data were put into two groups using the split-half method. The participants, therefore, were classified as those with: a) more than six years of working experience and those with b) six years of working experience and less. The multivariate findings revealed no significant differences in the ESI ($\Lambda = .981$, $F = .473$, $p = .828$, $\eta^2p = .019$) and the MBI ($\Lambda = .980$, $F = .993$, $p = .398$, $\eta^2p = .020$) scores and no post hoc univariate analyses were conducted therefore.

With respect to age, the participants were put in two groups using the split-half method: a) those up to 30 years old and b) those above 30 years old. With respect to the MBI responses, the

multivariate differences were not significant ($\Lambda = .994$, $F = .282$, $p = .838$, $\eta^2 p = .006$) and no post hoc comparisons were conducted therefore. With respect to the ESI, the multivariate analysis approached statistical significance ($\Lambda = .941$, $F = 1.506$, $p = .080$, $\eta^2 p = .059$). The post-hoc univariate analysis was significant for the ‘immediate supervisor’ ($F = 5.533$, $p = .020$, $\eta^2 p = .036$), whereas it approached significance for the ‘working conditions’ ($F = 3.415$, $p = .067$, $\eta^2 p = .023$) and ‘organization as a whole’ ($F = 3.164$, $p = .077$, $\eta^2 p = .021$). Examination of the mean scores for the ‘immediate supervisor’ confirmed that the professionals up to 30 years old ($M = 3.62$, $SD = .96$) had lower scores than those above 30 years old ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .99$). On the other hand, the univariate post hoc analysis was not significant for the subscales ‘pay’ ($F = 2.211$, $p = .139$, $\eta^2 p = .015$), ‘promotion’ ($F = .187$, $p = .666$, $\eta^2 p = .001$) and ‘job itself’ ($F = 2.642$, $p = .106$, $\eta^2 p = .018$). The overall results may be found in Figure 3.

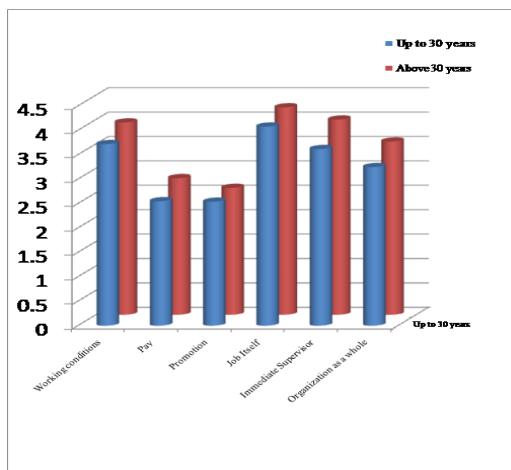


Figure 3. Age Differences in the ESI

DISCUSSION

The present study was designed to examine the job satisfaction and burnout of professionals working with children with disabilities in Greece. Furthermore, the differences across gender, age, and working experience were also recorded. The statistical analysis revealed that, in terms of job satisfaction, the participants were highly satisfied with their job itself, moderately satisfied with the working conditions, the immediate supervisor and the organization as a whole, but were not quite satisfied with the opportunities for promotion and pay. Concerning burnout, they presented moderate symptoms of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Finally, significant associations between the job

satisfaction and burnout subscales were recorded.

The results above are similar to those of other surveys in the educational field (18,20,24,39), as well as in other work settings (e.g.40) using the same assessments. The present findings, with respect to job satisfaction, are consistent with those of earlier studies (e.g.,20,30,40). More specifically, special education teachers in Greece were highly satisfied with the ‘job itself,’ the ‘school principal,’ and the ‘organization as a whole.’ Furthermore, they received moderate satisfaction from their ‘working conditions,’ whereas they did not receive satisfaction from the ‘opportunities for promotion’ and their salary (39). Similarly, occupational therapists in Greece were highly satisfied with their work as a whole. Moreover, they received high satisfaction from their colleagues’ support, moderate satisfaction from the supervision and the job itself, but little satisfaction from their salary and the opportunities for promotion (40). On the other hand, Koustelios and Kousteliou (22) found that Greek teachers were more satisfied with their wages, the opportunities for promotion and organization as a whole, moderate satisfied with their working conditions, while they were not satisfied with the job itself and the school principal.

Regarding burnout, results of the present study were similar to those of previous findings, where nurses working in public hospitals reported moderate levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (1,31). On the contrary, in the study of Platsidou and Agalioitis (39), Greek special education teachers experienced low levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and high levels of personal accomplishment. Occupational therapists and physical therapists working in the field of rehabilitation in the USA had moderate symptoms of emotional exhaustion, low levels of depersonalization, and high levels of personal accomplishment (45). According to other studies, general and special education teachers in Greece did not experience any burnout symptoms (18,19,39).

With respect to gender differences, females exhibited lower emotional exhaustion and more satisfaction with the working conditions compared to males. These findings are similar to those reported by Koustelios (20). Similarly,

Platsidou and Agaliotis (39) reported that men were considerably less satisfied with their income than women, while Panagopoulos et al. (32) found that gender had a significant effect on emotional exhaustion. On the other hand, it was found that gender did not have a significant impact on any of the three dimensions of burnout (9,39), while Kokkinos and Davazoglou (15) reported that men had a higher sense of personal accomplishment than women.

Regarding working experience, the results revealed no differences in job satisfaction and burnout among those who were working for less than six years and those who were working for six years or more. Results of the present study are similar to those of earlier surveys claiming that there were no significant differences in the job satisfaction and burnout based on previous working experience (9,15,39). The only conflicting findings were reported by Koustelios (20) who stated that satisfaction with supervision and prospects of promotion increase as the work experience grow.

Concerning age, younger professionals (under 30 years old) were less satisfied with their immediate supervisor than older professionals (above 30 years old). Furthermore, no burnout differences were recorded with respect to age. These findings are in conflict with other ones reported in the literature (3,39). In the study of Platsidou and Agaliotis (39), the teachers in the middle-age group (38-43 years) were less satisfied with their salary compared to the other age groups (44-56 years and 23-37 years). In addition, a) the older teachers (44-56 years) had higher levels of personal accomplishment than their younger colleagues (23-37 years), while b) the younger professionals had higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization compared to their older colleagues (3).

The current study has certain limitations, and the results may not be generalized without caution. First, the participants were recruited through a convenience sampling method and do not constitute a representative sample. A second limitation is that the data was collected online, with no personal contact and supervision during the assessments. The online respondents, however, may constitute a subsample of sensitive professionals strongly supporting survey research efforts. Third, self-referral questionnaires were used to record burnout and job satisfaction. The self-referral questionnaires, however, show the participants' attitudes and

feelings, and the responses may be subjected to methodological errors. Prospective qualitative research studies, with alternative ways of collecting data, may provide a more in-depth view of the factors affecting job satisfaction and burnout among professionals working with children with disabilities in Greece. Furthermore, longitudinal studies with wider; more representative and random samples may provide a more accurate understanding of the working conditions of professionals working with children with disabilities in Greece.

CONCLUSION

In summary, professionals exhibited high satisfaction with their job, moderate satisfaction with the working conditions, their immediate supervisor, and the organization as a whole, low satisfaction with the prospects of promotion and their pay, and moderate levels of burnout in all three dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Given that professionals in the field have responsibilities towards the children with disabilities and their families, interventions for lowering the burnout symptoms and increasing their job satisfaction seem essential.

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