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Thought Question: What does it look like when teacher stress goes unchecked over time? What is the impact on the teacher…on the student… on the school… on education?

Research Article: *Stress Vulnerability: Implications for Teacher Well-being and Satisfaction Martins, C., Bispo, L., Campos, S. Moreira, T., Martins, R., & Vieira M. 2016*

Abstract
This study examined stress for teachers and a teacher's vulnerability to identified stressors. Half of the teachers appeared vulnerable to stress and in need of additional resources. Some of the stressors include teachers not feeling valued, unacceptable wages, and working conditions they do not enjoy. When teacher stress goes unchecked, it can lead to burnout and leaving the profession. Among teachers surveyed, 30% think about quitting and 27% identified being satisfied with the job. Even though many teachers in the study (57%) were "delighted or inspired" by teaching, "57% showed feelings of guilt and 40% fear" related to the job.

Key elements for teacher well-being:
- Chronic exposure to stress can "trigger health problems and interfere with well-being"
- Health issues for some teachers may be related to job dissatisfaction
- Happiness and quality of life for teachers is linked to well-being

So, what are the implications for education?
- ➢ Schools can identify teacher stressors and create ways to mitigate stress
- ➢ Not being satisfied in one's teaching role is the primary reason teachers leave teaching
- ➢ Teachers can believe their job satisfaction is not important in the schools where they teach

Keywords: teacher well-being, burnout, teacher stress, job satisfaction, job dissatisfaction, teacher malaise

Enjoy the article! **And remember…** Teachers need support to navigate the stress of the profession. These include proactive strategies to offset stressors and enhance teacher well-being.

Stress Vulnerability: Implications For Teacher Well-Being And Satisfaction

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Abstract

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Background: Stress is part of the individual, both at work and in social life. Prompted by several factors, stress is also present in the life of the teacher.
Objectives: To identify the factors that have prompted stress situations for teachers in elementary school in the city of Campo Grande-AL; to determine the main stressors on well-being and satisfaction.
Methods: Quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional, descriptive and correlational research was selected. Data collection was performed by a protocol consisting of a sociodemographic characterisation questionnaire and the following: the Overall Job Satisfaction Scale; the Stress vulnerability Scale; the Positive and Negative Affect Scale; the Family Apgar and the Quality of Life Inventory. We used a non-probabilistic, convenience sample made up of 70 (seventy) elementary school teachers.
Results: 50% of participants were found to show stress vulnerability; 28.5% had a good relationship with strangers and 55% reported having support from friends. No family problems were identified and 65% of respondents reported having family help. In job satisfaction only 27% of teachers were satisfied and 30% thought about leaving their work.
Conclusions: Burnout in the classroom involves everyday situations for teachers, leading to the need to alert government agencies in order to adopt strategies for teacher well-being and satisfaction with a view to success.

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Keywords: Stress vulnerability; Teacher; Welfare; Job Satisfaction.

1. Introduction

In the last decades of the twentieth century, the most widely discussed issue by the scientific community with regard to daily life was the issue of stress. It is a common problem and is associated with increasing changes requiring society to change its behaviour and interfering with attitudes and values. The World Health Organisation and the United Nations say that stress was the disease of the twentieth century, considering it a legitimate worldwide epidemic (Ernesto, 2008, p.9).

It is clear, however, that the constant and often unsatisfactory search well-being and satisfaction has prompted an imbalance in individuals' physical, psychological and emotional characteristics. The school environment is a place where these growing demands have been particularly felt. For this reason, it seems necessary to study elementary school teachers' stress vulnerability, in the city Campo Grande-AL as well as its implications for the teachers' well-being and satisfaction. Stress is understood to be a set of factors which has affected a large number of professionals, often causing them to lose their positions. Moreover, teachers have been highlighted as particularly predisposed to stress. Scientific studies have confirmed that experiencing physical, psychological and emotional wear are related to stress in the classroom (Ernesto, 2008, p.13).

The body's limits must be respected and numerous daily activities cannot be accumulated without becoming overloaded. An unhealthy lifestyle, reduced hours of sleep, eating irregularly and not allowing time for leisure have all contributed a great deal to stress vulnerability, requiring changes in behaviour and attitudes in order to resolve this situation (Souza, 2014, p.292).

In their daily lives teachers face stressful situations at school, such as discipline problems, drugs, parents' complaints, violence, disagreements with the administration, co-workers, paperwork, long working hours, low salaries, and so on. Thus, teachers face countless situations that constantly wear them down, and school is seen as a heavy burden, providing them no pleasure in their work (Souza, 2014, p.293).

This issue emerged effectively from our own practice as teachers, where we observed colleagues who were annoyed with students and whose voices were altered. This would lead to psycho-emotional imbalances and, consequently, to a lack of motivation to be in the classroom. Thus, the objectives and purpose of this study are as follows:

- to identify the factors prompting stress vulnerability in elementary school teachers in the city of Campo Grande-AL,

- to determine the main stressors interfering with teachers' well-being and satisfaction.

The aim of this study is to suggest an intervention project in the municipality to improve teachers' quality of life.

With all of the research on this subject, it will be difficult to obtain success and mitigate the problem, as long as public bodies do not take a careful look at the teachers in the schools. As Paulo Freire says, "It is by thinking about today's or yesterday's practice critically that we may improve future practice." (Freire, 1996, p.14).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Stress vulnerability in teachers

According to Cruz (2005), there is a stratum of people who suffer from occupational diseases. The events built into organising and developing the work are caused by noise, a rapid pace, and intense activities which lead to stress vulnerability (Carneiro, 2010, p.16).

For Cruz & Lemos (2005), studies on workers' health in a variety of spheres should focus on a multidisciplinary context in order to understand the health issues, their implications in the workplace and in individuals' everyday lives. Health, education, work and sports professionals are part of this multidisciplinary approach, as well as others who are responsible for discussing the relationship between health and work in conjunction with individuals' lives (Carneiro, 2010 p.16).

The Ministry of health (2004) states that worker health is to be understood beyond the process of labour. The impact of performing work activities on the individual's way of life should be analysed. For Sampaio & Marin (2004) situations such as the accumulation of work, functions, interpersonal problems, lack of organisation at work, job dissatisfaction, salaries which are incompatible with the respective function, lack of opportunity for growth, lack of support and others deriving from the given context reduce quality of life and cause physical and mental disease successively, since most individuals spend more time in the workplace than with family and friends (Carneiro, 2010, p.17).

2.2 Stress in teachers' well-being and job satisfaction

Even though teachers rarely experience well-being and job satisfaction, they are noteworthy among the points analysed by researchers. According to the scholars, in the last two decades this issue has received considerable attention. Known as teacher malaise, it is a factor related to distress, burnout, and dissatisfaction experienced by teachers. This is easy to understand and is seen as threatening. Teacher devaluation is a real problem, with low wages and poor working conditions, which favour job dissatisfaction (Rebolo & Bueno, 2014, p.324).

Hays, cited by Amorim & Coelho (1999), analyses that quality of life is related to individuals' day-to-day operating mood and the way they understand their well-being (Martins, Chaves & Campos, 2014 p.168). Currently, studies in various spheres show job satisfaction as primary to the teacher remaining in the classroom (Howard; Johnson, 2004; Maele; Houtte, 2012) and the success of education (Mehdinezhad, 2012). In this way, job dissatisfaction is one of the key elements for teachers leaving the classroom (Kyriacou, 1987 Hadi et. al, 2009). Today, we are living through an economic crisis which facilitates teacher malaise. Thus, we believe that educational research should be guided by analysing of teacher well-being (Rebolo & Bueno, 2014, p.324).

We understand that there has been interest and attention paid to factors related to teachers' health, well-being and job satisfaction; however, there is still negative academic discourse on dissatisfaction and the factors that trigger it, such as stress (Rebolo & Bueno, 2014, p.324).

2.3 The teacher and job satisfaction

According to scholars, job satisfaction has been highlighted as a highly interesting topic for labour organisations in understanding the factors of satisfaction/dissatisfaction in the context of work which

are relevant to productivity. These factors have affected the school environment, specifically teachers. However, insofar as the dissatisfaction of some teachers is concerned, Pedro (2011) emphasises that there are teachers who long for job satisfaction. Thus, in his definition of teacher's satisfaction, Seco (2002) understands it as a feeling that causing well-being, such as activities related to adapting to the profession and the personal characteristics of the teacher (Capelo & Pocinho, 2014, p.177).

It is understood that job satisfaction and lifestyle are factors which interfere with teacher's lives. It is also known that motivated professionals who possess a healthy lifestyle, essential factors for good health, are needed. As for teachers, it has been observed that there is a commitment, both physically and psychologically, which affects them personally, reflected in their daily activities in their classrooms and institutions. When this is excessive people have tended to leave the profession. Therefore, the lack of job satisfaction and quality of life affects the interests of the school community. Nevertheless, teachers understand that their job dissatisfaction and the search for satisfaction is often disregarded in the institutions where they work.

According to Smilanski (1984) cited by Ramos, S.I.V. (2009, p.10), "teacher satisfaction refers to teachers' own feelings about themselves in general." These statements are defined by Breuse (1988, s/p) and with that, what overpowers the positive effect is that, "A disease in education has existed for several years in most Western countries; that teachers suffer physical and mental pain would be difficult to deny....But we must see the wood for the trees. This would be giving into excessive pessimism which does not recognise the existence of teachers who say they are happy to be teachers."

This author understands that the professional teacher dedicates much of his life to school. However, do we need to know what the interfering factors are which contribute to teacher dissatisfaction? According to some scholars, changes have emerged over recent decades in industrialised societies, triggering devaluation in the teacher's duties and in the general context of the profession. Thus, Nunes (1994) questions the traditional model based on moral principles by which the teacher had a duty to convey to young people the prevailing ideas of a moral society. According to Mialaret and Debesse (1978, p.93), over time the teachers have been manipulated with the idea that it was up to them to drill techniques and programmes into students that would lead them to comply with norms and rules (Ramos, S.I.V., 2009, p.20).

In addition to motivational aspects, job satisfaction has been the subject of academic studies and research since the twentieth century. "For a long time, satisfaction and motivation in the workplace stood together in the theories that dealt with the individual characteristics responsible for work behaviours such as: motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman, 1959) the theory of needs satisfaction (Vroom, 1964) and the theory of expectations and instrumentality (Hackam and Porter, 1971) (Siqueira, 2008, p. 265).

Thus, it is understood that for job satisfaction, it is necessary to consider the idea of pleasure-pain linked to satisfaction. Therefore, the General Job Satisfaction Scale was applied, C. F. Silva, M. H. Azevedo; M.R. Dias 1994, consisting of 5 items divided into 7 factors – addressing the degree of job satisfaction of the professional "teacher."

3. Methodology

This scientific research was carried out in the Campo Grande-AL Municipal Public School System of the Education with a sample of 70 elementary school teachers, in order to identify the factors that have generated situations of stress vulnerability in elementary education in the city of Campo Grande-AL to determine the main stressors on teacher well-being and satisfaction.

This study is characterised by the need to understand teacher job satisfaction and well-being, which is being compromised because of stress vulnerability, reflected in the quality of teachers' working lives. On the other hand, if the quality of working life does not exceed teachers' needs, dissatisfaction will emerge and consequently contribute to rising stress levels, compromising their health and the quality of their services. Rather, it is necessary to diagnose the reality in which teachers operate in order to prevent or mitigate such key aspects of stress vulnerability.

4. Results

The results of this research study will enable the city of Campo Grande-AL to obtain subsidies to assist in creating administrative policies which will enable an understanding of the educational context in which teachers operate to make proposals for interventions whose aim is to improve the quality of working life – QWL.

Much has been discussed with regard to stress vulnerability and its implications for teacher well-being and satisfaction. To this end, objectives which may act in response to this problem in the educational environment were outlined. These include identifying the factors that have triggered stress situations for elementary school teachers in the city of Campo Grande-AL, determining the main stressors on teacher well-being and satisfaction.

The type of study best suited to developing this research is an observational, quantitative study with a correlational descriptive analysis of the results of how personal, professional, and psychological variables interfere in teacher satisfaction.

In addressing the theoretical review, the objectives, and the hypotheses, we developed a conceptual framework to simplify the type of study between the variables we intend to examine as illustrated in figure 1.
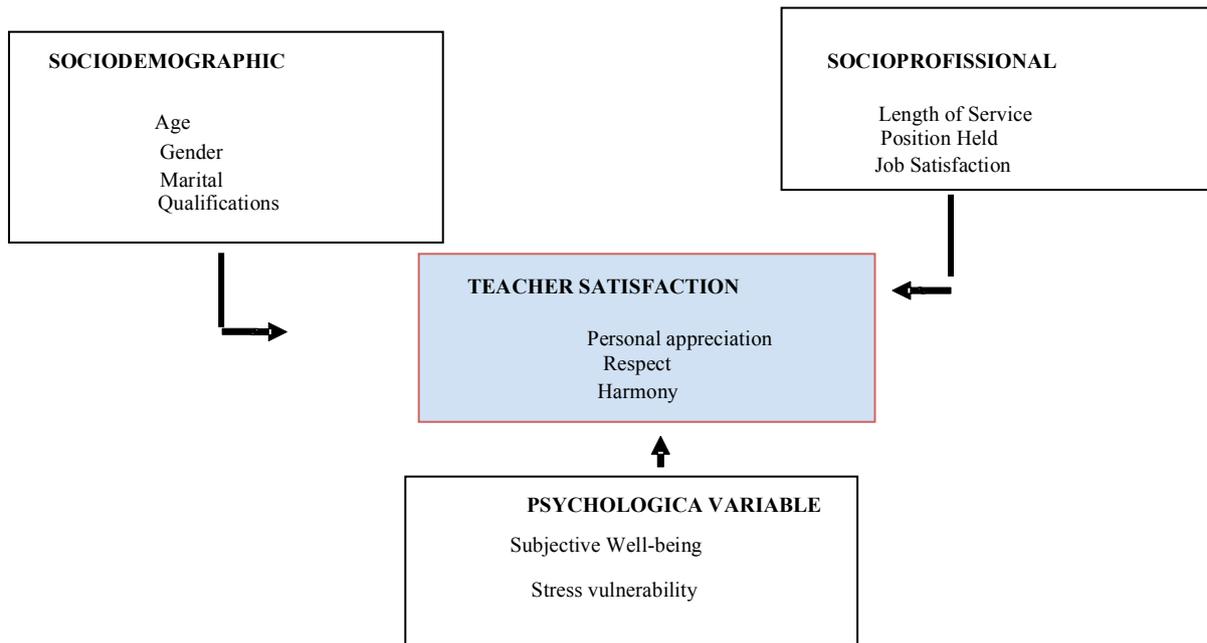
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┌─────────────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│   SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC          │              │   SOCIOPROFISSIONAL         │
│                             │              │                             │
│        Age                  │              │     Length of Service       │
│        Gender               │              │     Position Held           │
│        Marital              │              │     Job Satisfaction        │
│        Qualifications       │              │                             │
└─────────────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────────────┘
              │                                            │
              ▼           ┌──────────────────────────┐     ◄
                          │   TEACHER SATISFACTION   │
                          │                          │
                          │   Personal appreciation  │
                          │       Respect            │
                          │       Harmony            │
                          └──────────────────────────┘
                                      ▲
                          ┌──────────────────────────┐
                          │  PSYCHOLOGICA VARIABLE    │
                          │                          │
                          │   Subjective Well-being  │
                          │                          │
                          │   Stress vulnerability   │
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Fig. 1. Representation of the basic conceptual study between the variables considered in this work.

The sociodemographic questionnaire allowed significant data pertaining to the variables to be collected: Personal and Family Situation (gender, age, marital status, number of children and qualifications) and Professional Status (years of service, level taught, other positions held in the school and employment status).

According to Sampieri et al. (2006), cited by Rodrigues & Nunes (2011, p.31), the data collection process to be used is indicated by the essence of the research problem, the variables involved and the statistical procedures to be performed. Thus, we chose a protocol consisting of a sociodemographic questionnaire (Personal and Family Situation and Professional Status) to collect the data. Its organisation was based on the literature and various scales which allow us to operationalise the data related to family, job satisfaction and stress vulnerability among other issues.

The sociodemographic questionnaire consists of five questions on their Personal and Family Situation to determine the respondent's gender, age, marital status, number of children and qualifications as well as their professional status to determine the respondent's years of service, levels taught, what other positions they may hold in the school, weekly working hours and employment status.

The following instruments were used: the General Satisfaction Scale, C.F. Silva, M.H. Azevedo; M.R. Dias 1994; the Stress vulnerability Scale Adriano Vaz Serra, 2000; the Positive Affect Scale (Panas, Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988) Portuguese version by Iolanda Galinha, 2005; the Family Apgar Scale (Smilkstein, 1978) Portuguese version by Agostinho and Rebelo, 1988 and the Quality of Life Inventory (QLI) by Lipp and Rocha (1994). All of the above have been adapted for this scientific work and authorised in accordance with the ethical procedures required.

5. Discussion of the results

In recent decades several changes have occurred in society, including within the education system, resulting in an escalation in teacher activities, adding to their level of stress vulnerability and consequently jeopardising their well-being and job satisfaction. Thus, Galti (2013), cited by Capelo & Pocinho (2014, p. 180) question the role of teachers in basic education confronting socio-cultural demands imposed on them and leading to discussions about these professionals' initial training. However, a number of researchers have found that, despite problems in the teaching profession, there are professionals who are satisfied (Pedro, 2007, 2011, Seco, 2002). Moreover, according to studies by Pedro (2011), some psychological variables of the utmost importance to teacher satisfaction have been identified as well as dimensions which are inseparable to beliefs regarding self-efficacy in the profession. Table 1 shows the distribution of socio-demographic data pertaining to Personal and Family Situation variables.

Table 1. Distribution of sociodemographic variables pertaining to Personal and Family Situation.

VARIABLES – PERSONAL AND FAMILY SITUATION	No.	%
1- GENDER		
Male	14	20
Female	56	80
2- AGE		
20-29	03	4.2
30-39	19	27.1
40-49	39	55.7
>50	09	12.8
3- MARITAL STATUS		
Single	19	27.1
Married	20	28.5
Divorced/Separated	28	40
Widow(er)	03	4.2
4- NUMBER OF CHILDREN		
0	10	14.2
1	11	15.7
2	38	54.2
3	07	10
4	04	5.7
5- QUALIFICATIONS		
Magisterium	05	7.1
Graduate	31	44.2
Specialisation	34	48.5
Master's Degree	0	-

From the results obtained, the sample is mainly female (80%), aged between 40 and 49 (55.7%), divorced/separated (40%) and have two children (54.2%). Most have significant professional experience with specialised training (48.5%).

Table 2 shows the distribution of sociodemographic data pertaining to the variable Professional Status.

Table 2. Distribution of sociodemographic variables pertaining to Professional Status.

VARIABLES- PROFESSIONAL STATUS	No.	%
1-YEARS OF SERVICE	-	-
1		
1-4	-	-
5-9	04	5.7
10-14	05	7.1
15-19	18	25.7
20-24	40	57.1
25-30	03	4.2
2- LEVEL TAUGHT		
Nursery School	03	4.2
Elementary Education- Early years	47	67.1
Elementary Education- Final years	20	28.5
3-OTHER POSITIONS HELD IN THE SCHOOL		
Management Body	03	4.2
Educational coordinator	04	5.7
Other	28	40
Not applicable	35	50
4- WEEKLY WORKLOAD		
12-16	15	21.4
25	50	71.4
40	05	7.1
5- EMPLOYMENT STATUS		
Permanent	66	94.2
Under contract	04	5.7
Temporary	0	0

The majority of respondents have been teaching between 20 and 24 years (57.1%) and teach in the early years of elementary education (67.1%) with a workload of 25 hours (71.4%). They hold other positions at school (40%) and almost all are permanent workers (94.2%). These data demonstrate that they are professionals with some experience in their field, with good academic training, which is essential for the proper exercise of the profession. However, according to Sikes (1995) cited in Nascimento, Sonno, Lemos & Borgatto (2014), the phase where teacher is 40-50 years old is called critical phase. It is the phase in which there is a professional maturity. The teacher often has many functions in the educational institution. Many times, they cannot easily adapt to new educational and administrative changes and are limited with regard to innovative methodologies. Thus, they become bitter and remain opposed to situations related to the educational process.

According to Kyriacou (1987) and Hadi et.al. (2009), cited by Rebolo & Bueno (2014, p. 324), professional dissatisfaction is one of the determinants for leaving the classroom. This must be considered when addressing the issue of teacher job satisfaction in the city of Campo Grande-AL. The General Satisfaction Scale, C.F. Silva, M.H. Azevedo; M.R. Dias 1994, was used and 28.5% were found to be neutral on this issue, but 37.1% said they were not considering abandoning their activities. In the overall result, only 27% felt satisfied with their work and 30% have thought about quitting.

As for stress vulnerability, for which the Stress Vulnerability Scale by Adriano Vaz Serra (2000) was used, 50% were shown to have the determination to solve their problems; 28.5% relate reasonably well with people they don't know, and report that in difficult times they can count on friends (55%). As for the financial aspect, having enough money to meet their needs is reasonable (42.8%). 37.1% are not

troubled by day-to-day setbacks, and 40% can get help when they need someone to solve a given problem. We know, however, that in addition to their activities teachers provide interpersonal care and affection to students and thus, become submissive to organisations and working conditions, consequently leading to an excessive workload (Schmidt, 2004 cited by Carneiro, R.M., 2010, p.15), and becoming vulnerable to stress.

Lester (1987, p. 244) cited by Ramos (2009, p. 10) attempted to conceptualise teacher satisfaction based on what Hoppock defined in 1935: "job satisfaction is any combination of psychological and environmental conditions that lead the worker to say frankly, 'I am happy with my job.'" In this context the physiological and environmental aspects intertwine with the psychological aspects at the expense of emotional reaction. To deal with the aspect of affectivity, we use the Positive Affect Scale (Panas, Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988) Portuguese version by Iolanda Galinha (2005). Our research showed that exchange of affection on a regular basis is reasonable (33%) and teachers rarely succumb to unpleasant events (32.8%). 32.8% have day-to-day difficulties in solving a given problem, and 34.2% easily become upset. In understanding that the solution to most problems does not depend on themselves, 27.1% totally agree. 38.5% complain about a tendency to feel guilty; 34.2% believe that people only pay attention to them when they need something in return. In this aspect 34.2% are dedicated to meeting demands that arise. At given times, 27.1% prefer to remain silent than to have to oppose someone else, even when they are right. It is known that "teaching" is one of the professions which involve conflict situations the most and with the highest rates of payback at work (Araújo et al. (2003) cited by Carneiro, R.M. (2010, p. 13).

There is a certain tension which causes edginess and aggravation when performing tasks does not provide a positive result (34.2%). 27.1% consider that unpleasant issues, in and of themselves, lead to people to leaving the profession. Only 30% can express what they feel at certain times, getting upset and annoyed when they cannot get immediate responses, 47.1%.

Overall, most teachers have a sense of humour and can reverse situations (54%), and 35.7% say that their salary is insufficient for essential expenses. This is explained by Rebolo & Bueno, 2014, regarding dissatisfaction experienced as a threat, the devaluation of the low-wage teacher and poor work conditions, all of which favour job dissatisfaction. As for problems that arise in their daily lives, 34.2% say they are more ready to flee than to fight, and 38.5% feel bad when they fail to achieve perfection.

As for positive emotions at the time of the survey, 57.1% were found to be interested and simultaneously disturbed, but pleasantly surprised (64.2%). The majority felt delighted and inspired, 57.1%. However, 57.1% showed feelings of guilt and 40% fear. For Serra (2000; 2005) in Costa (2011) cited by Arruda (2014, p.18), the increase in stress vulnerability is due to a dangerous situation, and often the individual does not have the physical, psychological and social wherewithal to deal with a conflict situation.

With regard to family issues, we used the Family Apgar Scale (Smilkstein, 1978) Portuguese version by Agostinho and Rebelo (1988); the research presented no problems. The vast majority are satisfied with the help received from their families when some concern arises (65%). 51.4% say that their family agrees with their desire for a lifestyle change, and, therefore, there is reciprocity between

them. According to Simões (2014, p.42), well-being is linked to understanding happiness, or understanding of quality of life. Nevertheless, each individual has a unique way of evaluating their happiness or their well-being as they face their surroundings within the family and in their social lives.

Finally, we used the Quality of life Inventory (QLI) Lipp and Rocha (1994), and the result was satisfactory in analysing the affective domain; the teachers did not show problems related to affection. In the professional domain, teachers were found to be dissatisfied professionally and this may be related to their health, which was considered unsatisfactory. For Capelo & Pocinho (2014) job satisfaction and lifestyle are factors which interfere with teachers' lives. It is also known that it is necessary to have motivated professionals with healthy behaviours, which is essential for good health. We found that teachers' health, both physically and mentally, has been compromised, which influences their daily activities and work environment, which may lead to leaving the profession.

Thus, it is understood that the dissatisfaction shown may be related to the issue of teachers' compromised health. Therefore, habits must be changed in order to improve quality of life.

6. Conclusions

The findings in this study indicate some situations that enable stress vulnerability in 50% of the sample studied. Consequently, exposure to stressful situations triggers health problems by interfering with individuals' well-being, resulting emotional and behavioural changes. Thus, personal and social factors, among others, enable the relationship between individuals and their environment to be mediated as explained by Barbosa (2009) cited by Arruda (2014, p. 17).

Given the base conceptual study represented by Figure 2, we studied a number of independent and dependent variables, such as socio-demographic, socio-professional and psychological variables. These variables were relevant to understanding the extent to which they interfere with teachers' satisfaction. We understand that the sociodemographic variable related to age enables teachers to be vulnerable to stress as 55.7% are in the 40-49 age range, which de Sikes (1995) cited by Nascimento, Sonno, Lemos & Borgatto (2014) identified as the critical phase.

The aims of this work have been achieved as we found the need for understanding teacher satisfaction and well-being, factors which have been compromised due to stress vulnerability reflected in quality of work life. This work shows that only 27% of teachers are satisfied. Thus, we believe that the rate of dissatisfaction is considerable which consequently raises stress levels, affecting both teacher health and well-being.

As such, the quality of life related to health is not the only concern for teachers, but also the working environment and their surroundings. We know that burnout in the classroom involves everyday situations, leading to the need to alert public authorities in order to adopt strategies for teacher well-being and satisfaction with a view to success. As such, urgent measures are needed to mitigate this stress vulnerability, which compromises teachers' lives.

We therefore suggest that government agencies create an intervention project to ensure a specific multidisciplinary team (social workers, nurses, psychologists, doctors and other experts) to accompany teachers, to improve their quality of life and consequently, their daily activities. With this, those

involved in the process will perform their work well and, of course, society also stands to gain, a great deal.

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