WORK STRESS AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG EFL TEACHERS WORKING IN KUWAIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT: *The focus of the study is to measure the stress and job satisfaction among EFL Teachers working in public schools in Kuwait. Several research questions were introduced to examine the relationships of the research variables. These questions and the hypotheses were as follow: (a) What is the average level of job satisfaction expressed by EFL teachers working in public schools in Kuwait? (b) Is there a gender difference in the average satisfaction among expressed EFL teachers working in public schools in Kuwait? and (c) What are the most predictable factors to job satisfaction among expressed EFL teachers working in public schools in Kuwait? Teachers were administered the modified Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). This study indicates that Kuwait EFL teachers were either dissatisfied with their job due to their work stress environment or exposure to their job and supervision requirements. Areas such as leadership and peers, school infrastructure, the school's relationship with its local community, workload, staff supervision, class size, school communication networks, and ability utilization were the most satisfying areas reported. Meanwhile, compensation, school policies, and supervision-human relations were least satisfied in this study. A replication study involving a larger sample of males would be useful to add to our empirical database in this area.*

KEYWORDS. stress, job satisfaction, Kuwait, teachers, EFL, school

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that teachers play a significant role in helping students determine their educational goals. In fact, they play a fundamental role in every aspect of the educational system. At the same time, high-quality education and successful reforms of educational systems are the consequence of well-trained, motivated, and satisfied teachers (Nguni, 2005; Masanja, 2013) opines that teachers' job satisfaction is a crucial factor for any educational organization to be effective in terms of performance

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and progress. Teacher motivation and job satisfaction have become essential areas of concern for many educational contexts, as teachers increasingly leave the profession after a few years in service (Karavas, 2020). According to Piechurska-Kuciel (2011), the teaching profession is highly demanding since instructors need to perform proper behavioral characteristics crucial for interaction management. Meanwhile, according to Hepburn and Brown (2001), teachers are seen as bearing the brunt of the stresses created by the everyday activities and modern schooling system.

Job satisfaction is a broad concept that describes an individual's general attitude towards their job (Robbins et al., 1998). It refers to the rewarding nature of a person's work and has been defined as a pleasurable emotional state, resulting from the appraisal on one's job or job experience (Locke, 1983). Armstrong (1996) defined job satisfaction as the attitudes and feelings people have about their job. In other words, favorable attitudes towards the job show job satisfaction, and unfavorable attitudes towards the job indicate job dissatisfaction. The study aims to measure the job satisfaction level expressed by EFL teachers working in public schools in Kuwait. Considering the fundamental importance of job satisfaction and stress among teachers, the focus of our present study is to investigate the EFL teachers' work stress, or as it may be called 'job burnout' (Maslach et al., 2001, p.398). Furthermore, Job satisfaction is associated with increased effectiveness, reduced absenteeism, and reduced staff turnover.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Azeem (2010), job satisfaction and organizational climate are two factors that significantly influence staff motivation. The relation between job performance and job satisfaction has been examined in a different educational setting (Judge, Thoresen, Bono & Patton, 2001). In general terms, the findings are inconclusive. Some studies reported no significant relationship between job satisfaction and job performance (Kohli & Deb, 2008). On the other hand, other studies on job satisfaction have found that job satisfaction and job performance are related (Mlyyuka, 2015; Ogundele & Olarewaju, 2014).

A wide range of researchers considered a strong relationship between job satisfaction of the instructors and the quality of their teaching (Landsman, 2001; Rahman et al., 2014). Furthermore, Landsman (2001) found that job satisfaction significantly influenced commitment. Another study conducted by Imran et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance on teaching staff in Pakistan. The results showed a strong positive relationship between

job satisfaction and job performance and a significant positive linkage between organizational job performance and attitude toward the work. Furthermore, Soodmand Afshar and Doosti (2016) studied Iranian English teachers and students in terms of their level of job satisfaction. The findings indicated a significant difference between the students' evaluation of their job performance and the teachers' self-evaluation of their job performance.

The level of job satisfaction contributes to how effectively an individual performs his or his job (Spector, 1997). Other studies reported that job satisfaction influences an individual's emotional and physical well-being (Ducharme & Martin, 2000; Pugliesi, 1999). Studies also demonstrated that organizational conditions play an essential role in predicting job satisfaction and intention to leave (Mor-Barak, Nissly & Levin, 2001). Other studies reported that individuals who experience significant uncertainty about their job expectations are more likely to respond negatively to their level of satisfaction. Such role ambiguity is often seen as a source of stress and job dissatisfaction (Rushton, 1987). Commitment and satisfaction are best predicted by job task characteristics such as role ambiguity and skill variety (Glisson & Durick, 1988).

Meanwhile, Job satisfaction was found to be associated with the existence of role ambiguity. Role ambiguity occurs when role-related information is lacking or not clearly communicated (Miner, 1992). Role ambiguity also predicts low organizational commitment among teachers (Glisson & Durick, 1988; Welsch & LaVan, 1981). Insufficient training, poor communication skills and inadequate management skills increase burnout (Ramirez et al.,1996). Other researchers reported other variables such as gender differences (Clark, 1997), age (Clark et al., 1996), race (Bartel, 1981), education (Tsang et al., 1991), wages (Cappelli and Sherer, 1988; Clark and Oswald, 1996). Bhat (2018) researched the role of gender differences (male and female teachers) and various types of schools (public and private) on teachers' job satisfaction. Results revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers and public and private teachers regarding their job satisfaction.

Though the relationship between gender and job satisfaction has received a great attention, studies that examined gender differences and job satisfaction have somewhat contradictory results. For example, gender has not been highly supported in the literature as a significant determinant of secondary traumatic stress (Meldrum, King, King & Spooner, 2002; Nelson- Gardell & Harris, 2003). Black and Holden (1998) found a group of female teachers to be less satisfied than were their male counterparts regarding salary, promotion opportunities, and overall respect accorded to them as

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professionals. While other studies, such as Kramen-Kahn and Hansen (1998), reported that females had had significantly more rewards from their work than male EFL teachers. In fact, the more educated one obtained, the better satisfied he or she has than individuals with lower qualified actions, and the age-satisfaction profile is upward-sloping or U-shaped. At the same time, some studies indicate that types of leadership and work motivation constitute the highest factors predicting job satisfaction of school teachers (Pool, 1997).

Other factors reported by studies that protect mental health staff from dissatisfaction and burnout include age over 55 years (Ramirez et al.,1996), doing academic work (Deckard, 1994), having supervision and support (Poulin & Walter, 1993), autonomy, and job variety (Cooper et, al, 1989). While variables such as age, monthly salary, length of service, number of years doing the same job, education, and number of dependents were examined in relation to job satisfaction.

For example, age differences were affecting employees' job satisfaction more than those associated with other personal factors such as education and gender (Weaver, 1980). Many studies reported a positive relationship between age and job satisfaction (e.g., Rhodes, 1983; Doering et al, 1983).

Heskett et al. (1997) found that length of service correlates positively with employees' loyalty and satisfaction, indirectly leading to customer satisfaction. Shokry (1991) reported that more time spent working in the same job leads to more job satisfaction. Despite that, the relationship between education and work motivation is quite problematic (Hall 1986) and inconsistent in that some studies have failed to record a strong positive relationship between the two variables (Glenn & Waver 1982). Hodson (1985) reported that employees with high education levels always express dissatisfaction with their jobs, while the findings of Al-Helelah (1993) and Al-Saddi (1996) failed to confirm any correlation between education and job satisfaction. It could be concluded from the previous studies that there is no seemingly reciprocal relationship between educational level and job satisfaction.

People who dislike their jobs are expected to avoid coming to work by getting medical leaves to avoid their responsibilities at their work. Correlations between job satisfaction and absence have been inconsistent across studies. Shaw and Gupta (2001) found that job satisfaction significantly predicts job search intention and absenteeism. Payment is arguably one of the most critical outcomes for employees, if not the most critical outcome of organizational membership (Gupta & Shaw, 1998). This factor has attracted several researchers who have tried to explore its effect on job satisfaction. Inequity in pay was found to be associated with low pay satisfaction (Carr et al., 1996; Perry, 1993;

Summers & DeNisi, 1990; Sweeny, 1990). Employees could have internal or external referent when judging pay fairness. Leavitt (1996) emphasized the importance of pay but said that high pay will not alleviate problems of low employee job satisfaction. A survey of 403 Israeli school staff (Raviv et al.,1988) examining job satisfaction from different angles of the job found that overall job satisfaction was rated as 4.36 on a 6-point scale. Specifically, the results showed that the highest level of job satisfaction was related to colleague relations, perceived independence on the job, responsibility, and level of interest in what the school EFL teachers were doing as well as possibilities for a job promotion. Smith (1992) stated that job satisfaction can lead to cost reduction by reducing their absences, errors, and turnover.

Significant of the Study
Based on the researcher's knowledge, few previous studies have been conducted on samples of Kuwaiti EFL teachers working in public schools in Kuwait; most of the previous work was done on employees from public and private sectors or hospitals. Others focused on group behavior in the public bureaucracy, workforce selection, and training. None dealt with job satisfaction on EFL teachers working in public schools in Kuwait.

In a study conducted by Lately, Yu-Hsia, and Mei-Hsiang (2019), the relationship between job satisfaction and burnout was investigated. The findings indicated that personal burnout and external satisfaction had the highest mean sub-scale score; there was a statistically significant relationship between job satisfaction and burnout; personal burnout, work-related burnout, and the over commitment to work were related to inner satisfaction. These results provided guidance and evidence for the requirement to increase job satisfaction in order to decrease burnout. In the same year, Wisnu (2019) intended to study the statistical relationship between job satisfaction and burnout.

This study is essential because it expands on work-related satisfaction or burnout for teachers who teach English as a foreign language in public schools. This study will help identify areas that reflect a continuing need for progress in identifying job satisfaction or job burnout factors. In addition, the researchers seek to discover whether the demographics of EFL teachers play roles in the level of satisfaction or burnout.

The aim of the study
This study investigates the relationships between some socio-demographic variables and the EFL teachers' job satisfactions who work at public schools in Kuwait. There are several important reasons

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why organizations should be concerned with job satisfaction, which can be classified according to the focus on the employee or the organization. First, the humanitarian perspective is that people deserve to be treated with respect. Job satisfaction is, to some extent, a complete reflection of good treatment. It also can be considered an indicator of emotional well-being or psychological health (Haccoun and Jeanrie 1995). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore factors that affect job satisfaction and burnout among teachers who teach EFL in public schools in Kuwait. In addition, it aims to measure the level of satisfaction with these factors and the overall job satisfaction among EFL teachers in Kuwait public schools.

Research questions
Several research questions were presented to investigate and answer the relationships of the study's variables. These questions and the hypotheses were as follow:
1. What is the level of job satisfaction expressed by EFL Teachers working in public schools in Kuwait?
2. Is there a gender difference in the average satisfaction among EFL Teachers working in public schools in Kuwait (males and females)?
3. In the hierarchy rank, what are the sources of job satisfaction among EFL Teachers working in public schools in Kuwait?
4. What are the most predictable factors to the overall level of job satisfaction among EFL Teachers working in public schools in Kuwait?

METHOD

Participants
The sample of this study consisted of 175 EFL teachers who work at the six governate educational districts. Teachers were asked to complete a self-report questionnaire for Job satisfaction. The questionnaire was anonymous. The mean for years of experience in the teaching field was 5 years. The number of females in the study was 95 (60%), and the number of male participants was 80 (40 %). In termss of the participant's educational level, most of the sample holds a university degree (150), and only 25 hold a higher education degree. (See table. 1).

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Table 1. Sample Socio-demographic Background

VARIABLE	TYPE	FREQUENCIES	%
Gender	Male	80	40
	Female	95	60
	University	150	85.8
	Higher Education	25	14.2
Income	Less than 1200	55	31.4
	1201 to 1350	85	48.5
	1351 and more	35	20.0
Duration at Work	Less than 2 yrs	35	20.0
	More than 2 yrs less than 4 yrs	45	25.7
	More than 4 Year & less than 7 yrs	75	42.8
	More than 7 yrs	20	11.4

Measures

The modified Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. The modified Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Kirk., 1988; Murry, 1995) was administered to measure job satisfaction. It is one of the most popular (Spector, 1997) and widely used research instruments available (Scarpello & Campbell, 1983). The MSQ consists of 100 items that sample job satisfaction on a 20- scale questionnaire. The MSQ yields a total of 20 scores with an overall satisfaction score. Each scale has a total of 5 questions with 5 possible responses that range from (Very Dissatisfied) to (Very Satisfied). The MSQ is self-administered and requires approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. The 20 scale items include the following: Ability Utilization; Achievement; Activity, Advancement; Authority; System Policies and Practices; Compensation; Co-teacher's; Creativity; Independence; Moral Values; Recognitions; Responsibility; Security; Social Service; Social Status; Supervision- Human Relations; Supervision- Technical; Variety; and Working Conditions. This scale consists of 18 global evaluative adjectives concerning the feelings about one's work (for example, "pleasant," "bad"). The Cronbach's alpha obtained in this study ranged from 0.89 to 0.94 and the overall score was 0.95. Other variables included in the current study questionnaire were teachers' age, gender, job experience (in years), educational level, caseload size, opportunities for professional development, and satisfaction with the salary.

FINDINGS

Research question 1

Overall weights across all 100 items on the modified MSQ were summed to obtain an overall job satisfaction score for each respondent's level of satisfaction. The largest number of participants reported (*n*=107; 61.1 %) fell within the dissatisfied and dissatisfied range. While a few participants

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fell within the very satisfied range (n= 43; 24.5 %). Indeed, only (n=20, 11.4%) fell within the very satisfied range. Table 2 shows the overall job satisfaction level of EFL teachers in Kuwait public schools.

Table. 2. Level of Overall Job Satisfaction:

Score Category	No	%
Very Dissatisfied	52	29.7
Dissatisfied	55	31.4
No Difference	25	14.2
Satisfied	23	13.1
Very satisfied	20	11.4

Research question 2

When job satisfaction level was examined relative to gender and age, the analysis of variance report reported significant differences between males and females on their average job satisfaction. Female teachers .reported less satisfaction in their job satisfaction (M= 3.44) compared with male teachers with a significant level less than .05 (M= 4.32) (F.83; P=36*). On the other hand, the analysis of variance report indicated no significant differences between EFL job satisfaction based on their ages (F=1.57; P=20). Indeed, there were no significant differences between young and older teachers in their job satisfaction levels (See table 3).

Table (3) Demographic Scores for MSQ Dimensions and (Gender & Age):

Variable		N	M	SD	F	p
Gender						
	Male	80	4.32	.80		
	Female	95	3.44	.73		
	Total	175	3.38	.77	.83	.036*
Age						
	Younger than 30	70	3	.94	.60	
	31 - 40	82	3.53	.79		
	41 & Older	23	3.28	.74		
	Total	75	3.37	.76	1.57	.20

* Sig = 0.05

Research question 3

In terms of the source of job satisfaction, table 4 presents the hierarchy of the modified MSQ scales among EFL teachers. It should be noticed that Mean scale scores of 12.51 or greater mean that the EFL teachers have a general feeling of satisfaction in that area. The five areas representing the most satisfaction of the findings in this study were social status, social service, ability utilization,

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achievement, and variety. While compensation, office policies, and supervision-human relations were the areas in which teachers were least satisfied in this study (Table 4).

Table. 4. Hierarchy of MSQ Scale:

Scale	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Service	18.12	2.34
Moral Values	14.11	2.24
Creativity	13.88	3.65
Variety	17.09	2.14
Ability Utilization	17.08	2.89
Achievement	16.86	2.39
Responsibility	16.68	2.15
Co-workers	15.99	2.86
Independence	13.97	2.43
Working Conditions	16.52	4.17
Authority	11.41	1.93
Recognition	11.90	3.92
Supervision-Human Relations	11.05	3.38
Social Status	18.88	2.32
Supervision-Technical	11.70	3.05
Security	15.45	3.77
Advancement	13.09	3.69
Office Policies	11.01	3.08
Compensation	10.78	3.44

Research question 4

Multiple regressions were used to answer and determine the most predictable variables in the overall job satisfaction for teachers working in public schools. The following demographic variables were selected as predictable variables: age, gender and educational degree status. All demographic variables were dropped out of the stepwise regression except office policies and supervision-human relations. These two variables were found to be significant sources of variance in overall satisfaction were school policies (5.2%, t= -2.226, p= 0.027), and supervision-human relations (t=2.09, p=.0.38). These two variables contributed to the regression equation. See table 5 for the findings of the regression analysis.

Table 5 Multiple Regression Summary:

Source	Sum of Sq	df	Mean Sq	F	
Regression	3.60	2	1.80	4.81	
Residual	64	177	.38		
Variable	**B**	**Beta**	**Std. Error**	**t**	**Sig.**
Office Policies	3.24	.149	.28	11.4	000**
Supervision-					
Human Relations	.216	.154	.103	2.09	.038

** Sig = 0.001

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the job satisfaction level of EFL teachers. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire was used for the current study. Considering this purpose, the findings revealed that overall, EFL teachers were dissatisfied with their positions as EFL teachers. Indeed, the largest number of teachers reported fell within the dissatisfied and dissatisfied range. On the other hand, they also indicated that teaching was the highest contributor to their satisfaction. Still, it made them feel unrecognized and treated unequally compared with some critical types of jobs like army officers or firefighters.

Because of the nature of preparing the EFL classes, which make the teachers repeatedly exposed to stressful situations and situations, this can cause or lead to some burnout or what is called recently in Stamm's (2005) study as "secondary burnout". This high preparation and demand may potentially make them disengaged from their professional work. The findings of the current study consist with other findings which reported that when working with students and affecting their lives, it becomes the most central and potent source of satisfaction for teachers; however, when dealing with challenging and demotivated students, this may have negative repercussions for teacher satisfaction and could be the source of emotionally draining and discouraging experiences (Houtte, 2006).

On the other hand, the study found significant differences between males and females on their average job satisfaction. Females reported less level of job satisfaction compared to males. This finding consisted of Gruneberg (1979) findings which concluded that female teachers were less concerned with career aspects and more concerned with social aspects of the job.

However, our findings did not show consistency with the study done by Bhat (2018), who studies the role of gender differences (male and female teachers); his findings revealed that there is no significant

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difference between male and female teachers as well as public and private teachers regarding their job satisfaction.

Moreover, the study reported no significant differences between young EFL teachers and older EFL teachers in their job satisfaction level. The finding consisted of other studies that reported that age differences affect employees' job satisfaction more than other variables (Weaver, 1980). In fact, Black and Holden (1998) found female EFL teachers less satisfied than their male counterparts regarding salary, promotion opportunities, and overall respect accorded to them as professionals. Still, our findings are uncontested with other findings. For example, researchers (*e.g.,* Kroupis, Kouli, and Kourtessis, 2019; Grundy and Blandford, 1999; Vedder and Hall, 2000; Vousiopoulos et al., 2019) reported that salary, as well as promotion, have a positive influence on the levels of burnout and, therefore, the state should improve job satisfaction

In addition, the study found that the five areas representing the most satisfaction in this study were teaching, social status, achievement, variety, and ability utilization. While compensation, office policies, and supervision-human relations were the areas in which EFL teachers were least satisfied in this study. Commitment and satisfaction are best predicted by job task characteristics such as role ambiguity and skill variety (Glisson & Durick, 1988). Job satisfaction was found to be associated with the existence of role ambiguity. Role ambiguity occurs when role-related information is lacking or not clearly communicated (Miner, 1992). Role ambiguity also predicts low organizational commitment among human service teachers (Glisson & Durick, 1988; Welsch & LaVan, 1981).

Finally, the most predictable variables in having a reasonable level of job satisfaction were school policies, and supervision-human relations. The findings consist of Kalliath and Beck's (2001) findings, who found a significant negative effect of low supervisory support on the intention to quit the job. In fact, Koeske and Rauktis (1994) found that teachers who experience supportive supervision have more job satisfaction.

This study was inconsistent with previous research on the beneficial effects of social support (Miller, Cohen, & Ritchey, 2002; Wethington & Kessler, 1986) on having higher job satisfaction and less burnout. Results also support the findings of other studies that found that the administration style plays an important role in predicting job satisfaction and intention to leave (Mor-Barak, Nissly & Levin, 2001). Furthermore, these findings are consistent with other studies that demonstrate that organizational conditions play an important role in predicting job satisfaction and intention to leave

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(Mor-Barak, Nissly & Levin, 2001). In other words, school climate, school leadership, and participation in decision making, support from peers and leadership, school infrastructure, the school's relation with the local community, workload, staff supervision, class size, school communication networks (Dinham and Scott, 1998)

CONCLUSION

The school climate factor and its relationship to job satisfaction in our study should be interpreted in terms of cultural perspective, which may contribute to the low level of satisfaction among EFL teachers working in public schools in Kuwait. As a matter of fact, public schools are run by the government, in which not only teachers but also most of Kuwaiti rely on the government to provide them with well-paid administrative jobs, for menial jobs are not considered suitable for Kuwaiti teachers. Most Kuwaitis (92.7 %) are employed in the government sector (Minister of Planning and Minister of State for Administrative Development 2020). Governmental organizations in Kuwait suffer from just policies, negative supervision-human relations, and teachers do not feel appreciated for their excellent job. As reported by, Al-Otaibi (2018), conducted a study on 378 employees of eight different public-sector organizations and investigated the factors that mean the most to Kuwaiti employees in the public sector were promotions and advancement, stability of employment, and feeling appreciated. Such factors may not find in governmental due to the spread of what is called *wasta*, which was discussed by Al-Naqeeb (2000) who found that, because of the negative practices of the government system which represents loyalty to tribe, religious denomination, and/or district.

Finally, I hope that these findings and recommendations will be used by policymakers and administrators in the educational fields in general and in the Gulf countries in specific to enhance job satisfaction among EFL teachers in specific and teachers in other areas in general.

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