



## PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN GREECE

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### **Abstract:**

The present study focused on investigating the professional quality of life of special education teachers of primary and secondary education in Greece. In particular, the three dimensions of the professional quality of life of special education teachers were investigated, based on participants' responses and some demographic-general characteristics. In addition, the possible relevance of the three dimensions of professional quality of life to each other was investigated. The sample of the study was 106 special education teachers of primary and secondary education. The Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)-Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue, Version 5 (Stamm, 2009) was used

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to assess professional quality of life. The statistical package SPSS version 21.0 was used for statistical analysis of the data. Statistical assumptions were tested for a default level of statistical significance  $\alpha=0.05$ . The analysis of the data showed that the level of participants' job satisfaction was high, while the level of secondary traumatic stress and burnout was low. A statistically significant relation was found between specialization in special education and job satisfaction, secondary traumatic stress and burnout of special education teachers, respectively. Age and years of service of special education teachers were found to be statistically significant in relation to their burnout. It also emerged that teachers' secondary traumatic stress was associated with job satisfaction and burnout. The findings of the present study are expected to contribute to improving the professional quality of life of special education teachers.

**Keywords:** professional quality of life, job satisfaction, secondary traumatic stress, burnout

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, scientific interest has focused on investigating the professional quality of life of relief workers. Assistance professions are occupations in which employees provide help-support-care to supported individuals (e.g. health professionals, social workers, teachers, etc.).

Professional quality of life is the employees' sense of quality about their job as a helper, a quality that is affected by the positive and negative aspects of their job. Understanding the benefits and disadvantages of providing assistance to trauma survivors can improve their ability to help and maintain their own balance (Stamm, 2009).

According to Martel & Dupuis (2006), the professional quality of life refers to the feelings a person experiences when fulfilling his or her goals in the workplace. Thus, positive feelings about professional quality of life have a positive effect on the overall quality of life of the individual and by extension on society.

However, it is important to note that the individual characteristics of the employees, their working conditions and the way they are managed by the individual, play an important role in both their overall quality of life and their professional quality of life. According to research, caregivers often experience negative feelings of exhaustion, depression and post-traumatic stress due to their exposure to traumatic and stressful situations by supporting people in crisis (Stamm, 2010).

According to Stamm (2009), professional quality of life in care workers has two aspects, one of which is positive and concerns the satisfaction that one receives through the assistance to others, which is called compassion satisfaction. From a positive perspective, employees approach their work, their relationship with their partners and the services they offer, while at the same time feeling satisfied for their contribution to society. This satisfaction relates to the individual characteristics of the employee (Stamm, 2010).

The second aspect has a negative meaning and relates to compassion fatigue, namely the negative side of helping those who experience traumatic stress and suffering. Stamm (2010) describes two consequences of compassion fatigue: burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Burnout is manifested by feelings of exhaustion, frustration, anger and depression, while secondary traumatic stress is a negative emotion related to fear and trauma to work. In particular, the appearance of compassion fatigue depends on the individual himself, the work environment, and the person receiving assistance. Negative emotions can be triggered when one of the above is vulnerable to a crisis at a given time.

Concerning job satisfaction, researchers agree that it is a multi-dimensional conceptual construct consisting of many elements. However, they also do not deny the existence of an overall job satisfaction (Perie et al., 1997). Job satisfaction is approached either as a unique and comprehensive attitude towards work (Allport, 1954), or as a concept that encompasses various aspects of work (Smith, 1969). Its approach as a concept with different facets appears more integrated, as the employee may have different levels of satisfaction in the different areas (Spector, 2000). According to Stamm (2009), job satisfaction is the feeling of pleasure a worker experiences when he is able to perform his job correctly or when contributing to his work environment and society.

In recent decades, researchers have focused on the job satisfaction of teachers. In particular, teachers' job satisfaction and their perception of the effectiveness of their work are key determinants of the quality of their educational work (Papanoum, 2003). In addition, factors such as students' performance and its influence on their behavior, positive relationships with students and peers, professional personal development and supportive environment are important predictors of teachers' job satisfaction (Dinham & Scott, 2000; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2006). In addition, peer support is one of the top factors that increase job satisfaction (Goddard et al., 2010; Rhodes et al., 2007).

For special education teachers, according to Stempien & Loeb (2002), job satisfaction seems to be particularly influenced by factors such as the age, years of service and frustration that teachers feel in teaching. Most of the research conducted worldwide has shown that special education teachers show moderate levels of job satisfaction (Yavuz, 2018; Abushaira, 2012; Stempien & Loeb, 2002; Bashir, 2019; Strydom et al., 2012). However, according to other research, special education teachers showed high levels of job satisfaction (Ketheeswarani, 2018), but low levels of job satisfaction, too (Shourbagi & Bakkar, 2015; Wangari & Orodho, 2014).

As noted above, compassion fatigue results in burnout and secondary traumatic stress (Stamm, 2010). Secondary traumatic stress is the secondary exposure of care professionals to traumatic-stressful events in their workplace (Figley, 1995; Stamm, 1995). The term "*compassion fatigue*" was the first concept used to describe the experience of physicians when exposed to trauma at work (Joinson, 1992). It was later generalized to describe the effects of prolonged exposure to human pain and trauma. While the main victim of a traumatic event may experience post-traumatic stress, family members, friends and caregivers who are indirectly exposed to the traumatic event are at risk of secondary traumatic stress (Crumpei & Dafinoiu, 2012).

Secondary traumatic stress is a complex state of fatigue and dysfunction in which workers assume the emotional tension and weight of the victims themselves (Figley, 1995). Figley (1995) defines secondary traumatic stress as "*the result of physical and consequential behaviors and emotions arising from the knowledge of one traumatic event experienced by one significant other or from assistance to a suffering individual*". Jenkins & Baird (2002) define secondary traumatic stress as "*the response to the emotional demands of the work of those providing humanitarian services*". Stamm (2010) reports that secondary traumatic stress is associated with indirect trauma (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995) and occurs in workers who come into contact with people who have survived a highly traumatic or stressful event.

Symptoms of secondary traumatic stress are usually rapid onset, are related to a specific event and can occur at cognitive, emotional, behavioral, mental, physical and occupational levels (Figley, 1995). They are also identical to those of post-traumatic stress disorder, namely symptoms such as recurrence of traumatic event, disturbing thoughts, avoidance of reminders of the event, stimulation, irritability, loss of hope, generalized anxiety (Figley, 1995). According to Stamm (2010), symptoms can include sleep difficulties with phobic reactions, invasive traumatic images, and avoidance of stimuli that are reminders of the event.

In international and Greek literature, research on the secondary traumatic stress of general and special education teachers has been limited. Also, the relation between demographic factors and secondary traumatic stress has not been extensively investigated. However, according to the research by Vourda (2011), the secondary traumatic stress of special education teachers is low, a finding confirmed by the study of Christodoulou et al. (2014). However, in the research of Borntrager et al. (2012), were reported high levels of secondary traumatic stress and moderate levels of burnout.

Professionals who help others need care for themselves, or they may be at risk of being exhausted and withdrawn. Burnout is a consequence of compassion fatigue and is a situation where the employee experiences physical, emotional and mental exhaustion as a result of lack of resources and prolonged workplace stress (Hakanen et al., 2017). According to Freudenberger (1974), burnout is a psychosomatic condition characterized by three main components: a) the feeling of depersonalization, b) emotional exhaustion combined with mental fatigue, and c) reduced work efficiency.

According to Maslach et al. (1996), burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal achievement that occurs in employees working with people with partial competence. It is a syndrome that affects the employee physically and mentally, leading to a loss of interest and positive feelings for the individuals he supports. In addition, the employee develops a negative self-image, feeling inadequate, dissatisfied with his productivity and work (Papastylianou et al., 2009; Salman & Platsidou, 2011) and appears cynical about the value of his work (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Stamm (2010) describes burnout as a person's difficulty managing his work effectively while feeling ineffective. There is also a gradual emergence of feelings of exhaustion, anger, frustration and depression.

Special education teachers deal with many factors associated with their burnout daily. Specifically, some factors are lack of administrative support (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009), challenges in student behavior (Brunsting et al., 2014), bureaucracy (Romano, 2016), overestimation of support by principals and general education teachers (Sindelar et al., 2014), overloading their role (Adera & Bullock, 2010), lack of resources, non-teaching tasks (Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010) and expectation-reality mismatch, which results from the imbalance between high expectations and the reality that the teacher experiences in the classroom (Andrews & Brown, 2015).

Brunsting et al. (2014) conducted a comprehensive review of stress and burnout surveys of special education teachers from 1969 to 1996. The results indicated a high risk of burnout in special education teachers. Ramasamy (2019) in his research found that the prevalence of burnout in special education teachers was 100%. Stringari et al. (2019) found that their research participants showed moderate levels of burnout. Kamtsios and Lolis (2016) in their research found that Greek teachers, in times of financial crisis and evaluation of educational work, experience burnout and that there were differences in burnout in relation to their demographic characteristics. However, the findings of Kouli et al. (2015) showed that Greek special education teachers in secondary education did not exhibit burnout, a finding consistent with other research in special education teachers in primary education (Platsidou & Agaliotis, 2008).

## **2. Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of professional quality of life of special education teachers, in primary and secondary education, and its dimensions: job satisfaction, secondary traumatic stress, burnout. It also aimed to investigate the possible association of professional quality of life with some demographic-general characteristics of the participants, as well as the possible association of its three dimensions between them.

The specific objectives of this research are defined and recorded as follows:

- To investigate the professional quality of life of primary and secondary education special education teachers, as well as the possible relation between dependent variables of job satisfaction, secondary traumatic stress and burnout, and independent variables of gender, age, working grade, specialization in special education, years of service, marital status.
- In addition, it aimed to explore the relation between the three dimensions of professional quality of life.

## **3. Significance of the study**

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the scientific knowledge about the professional quality of life of special education teachers in Primary and Secondary education, with data usable at both theoretical and practical levels. On the one hand, it will help to raise awareness of the family, school and social environment, with the

primary aim of identifying early symptoms of burnout and secondary traumatic stress in the target population and thus to timely coping with them. On the other hand, through the proposed coping strategies it will help to optimize teachers' mental health and quality of professional and personal life. This will ensure that teachers are supported and that their educational work is carried out smoothly.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Participants**

This study involved 106 special education teachers, in primary and secondary education, who resided in large urban centers of the country. The sample is representative of the research population in order to ensure the external validity of the research. Regarding the characteristics of the participants, 45 (42.5%) of the participants were male and 61 (57.5%) were female. In terms of age, 44 of them belonged to the age group of 20-30 years (41.5%), 28 belonged to the age group of 31-40 years (26.4%), 28 belonged to the age group of 41-50 years (26.4%) and 6 belonged to the age group of 51 years and over (5.7%). Regarding marital status, 54 (50.9%) of the participants were married and 52 (49.1%) were unmarried. Regarding the variable specialization in special education, it was found that 88 (83%) teachers had specialization in special education, while 18 (17%) had no specialization. Regarding years of service, 60 (56.6%) of the participants had 1-5 years, 25 (23.6%) had 6-10 years, 8 (7.6%) had 11-15 years, 3 (2.8%) had 16-20 years, 7 (6.6%) had 21-25 years and 3 (2.8%) had 25 years of service or more. Finally, regarding the working grade, 67 (63.2%) of the participants served in Primary education and 39 (36.8%) in Secondary education.

### **4.2. Material**

Participants were given an anonymous questionnaire to collect some demographic information needed for the survey. The Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL) - Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue, Version 5 (Stamm, 2009) was adapted and translated into Greek by Vourda (2011). This scale was designed to measure the professional quality of life of professionals related to helping other people and includes three sub-scales that assess: a) Compassion Satisfaction-CS, b) Secondary Traumatic Stress-STS and c) Burnout-BO of the help professional. It consists of 30 items and each sub-scale consists of 10 items. This is a five-grade Likert scale ranging from never (1) to very often (5).

### **4.3. Procedure**

The scale of measurement of the various parameters was anonymous (coded) in order to ensure the anonymity and protection of the participants in this research. Questionnaires were administered individually, and teacher participation was optional. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and the researcher provided them with a questionnaire file, which they returned to the researcher completed.

## 5. Results

SPSS version 21.0 statistical package was used for data processing and statistical analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics methods were used. The data were coded and entered into a data file to allow statistical analysis using SPSS. After checking the accuracy of the data and checking the prerequisites, the analysis of the data followed. Parametric criteria were used (T-test, One-Way ANOVA and Pearson correlation coefficient). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test was used to determine if the sample follows a normal distribution, as the number of participants was  $> 50$ . It was found that the sample follows a normal distribution.

The T-test was used to investigate the relation between independent variables: gender, marital status, working grade and specialization in special education and dependent variables: job satisfaction, secondary traumatic stress, burnout. Whereas, One-Way ANOVA test was used to investigate the relation between independent variables: participants' age and years of service and dependent variables: job satisfaction, secondary traumatic stress, burnout. Finally, a Bivariate Correlation was used to investigate the relation between the three dimensions of professional quality of life.

When examining the level of job satisfaction of special education teachers, based on the central tendency and dispersion indices, it was found that the participants had an average of  $M = 43.67$ , with  $SD = 6.050$ . According to the manufacturer's instructions on the ProQOL-Version 5 scale (Stamm, 2010), the level of the participants' job satisfaction in this study is high (score higher than 42). Regarding secondary traumatic stress, the mean of special education teachers was  $M = 20.55$ , with  $SD = 5.324$ . And in this case, according to the manufacturer's instructions, the level of secondary traumatic stress is characterized as low (score less than 22). Regarding burnout of special education teachers, their mean was  $M = 21.89$ , with  $SD = 5.013$ . Their level of burnout appears to be low (scoring less than 22).

When exploring the relation between sex and job satisfaction were not found statistically significant differences [Sig. (2-tailed) =  $0.057 > 0.05$ ,  $df = 106$ ]. Also, marital status and job satisfaction revealed no statistically significant relation [Sig. (2-tailed) =  $0.819 > 0.05$ ,  $df = 106$ ]. Regarding the investigation of the relation between the variables specialization in special education and job satisfaction of special education teachers, from the data analysis it was found that the above variables have a statistically significant relation [Sig. (2-tailed) =  $0.00 < 0.05$ ,  $df = 106$ ] (Table 1). It was found that the average of teachers with specialization in special education was  $M = 45.28$  and the average of teachers without specialization was  $M = 35.78$ . It was, also, found that those with specialization had a higher level of job satisfaction.

**Table 1:** Relation of specialization and job satisfaction

Group Statistics					
	Specialization	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Job satisfaction	With specialization	88	45,28	4,515	,481
	Without specialization	18	35,78	6,504	1,533

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
				F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
		Lower	Upper							
Job satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	5,037	,027	7,506	104	,000	9,506	1,267	6,995	12,018
	Equal variances not assumed			5,916	20,479	,000	9,506	1,607	6,160	12,853

When investigating the relation between the variables working grade (Primary, Secondary education) and job satisfaction, it was found that they did not have a statistically significant relation [Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.245 > 0.05, df = 106]. To investigate the relation between the variables age and job satisfaction (F (3, 102) = 0.426, p > 0.05), as well as years of service with job satisfaction (F (5, 100) = 0.379, p > 0.05), was used One-Way ANOVA parametric criterion, and was not found statistically significant relation between the above mentioned variables.

The analysis of the data showed that sex and secondary traumatic stress of special education teachers were not statistically significant [Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.953 > 0.05, df = 106]. Also, marital status and secondary traumatic stress were found to have no statistically significant relation [Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.573 > 0.05, df = 106]. Concerning the investigation of the relation between the variables specialization in special education and secondary traumatic stress, there was a statistically significant relation [Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.025 < 0.05] (Table 2). Specifically, it was found that the average of teachers with specialization was M = 19.77 and the average of teachers without specialization was M = 24.33, with teachers without specialization having more secondary traumatic stress.

**Table 2:** Relation of specialization and secondary traumatic stress

Group Statistics					
	Specialization	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Secondary traumatic stress	With specialization	88	19,77	4,357	,464
	Without specialization	18	24,33	7,723	1,820



Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Secondary traumatic stress	Equal variances assumed	9,337	,003	-3,482	104	,001	-4,561	1,310	-7,158	-1,964
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,428	19,269	,025	-4,561	1,879	-8,489	-,632

Concerning the working grade and its relation to secondary traumatic stress of special education teachers, the results showed that there is no statistically significant relation [Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.334 > 0.05, df = 106]. The same finding emerged for the variables age and secondary traumatic stress (F (3, 102) = 2.499, p > 0.05), as well as for the variable years of service and secondary traumatic stress (F (5, 100) = 1.007, p > 0.05).

Also, the data analysis showed that gender and burnout of special education teachers were not statistically significant [Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.294 > 0.05, df = 106]. The same finding was found for the variables marital status and burnout [Sig. (2-tailed) = 0, 282 > 0.05, df = 106]. Regarding the variables specialization in special education and burnout, it appeared that they have a statistically significant relation [Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.006 < 0.05, df = 106] (Table 3). It was found that the average of teachers with specialization in special education was M = 20.98 and the average of teachers without specialization was M = 26.33, with teachers without specialization having more burnout.

**Table 3:** Relation of specialization and burnout

Group Statistics					
	Specialization	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Burnout	With specialization	88	<b>20,98</b>	3,957	,422
	Without specialization	18	<b>26,33</b>	7,063	1,665

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper

Burnout	Equal variances assumed	5,418	,022	-4,492	104	,000	-5,356	1,192	-7,721	-2,991
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,119	19,237	,006	-5,356	1,717	-8,947	-1,765

Investigating the relation between the variables working grade and burnout of special education teachers revealed that there was no statistically significant relation [Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.181 > 0.05, df = 106]. Regarding the investigation of the relation between the variables age and burnout of special education teachers, it was found that there was a statistically significant relation ( $F(3, 102) = 6.387, p < 0.05$ ). To determine which groups are different between them, was performed the Post hoc Multiple Comparison Criterion, Tukey HSD test. Multiple comparisons showed that age group 20-30 was statistically significant different from age group 51 and older (Sig. = 0.016 < 0.05). Age group 31-40 showed a statistically significant difference with age group 41-50 (Sig. = 0.011 < 0.05). Age group 41-50 showed a statistically significant difference with age groups 31-40 (Sig. = 0.001 < 0.05) and 51 years and older (Sig. = 0.003 < 0.05).

When investigating the relation between the variables years of service and burnout of special education teachers was found a statistically significant relation ( $F(5, 100) = 2.453, p < 0.05$ ). Tukey HSD test was performed to identify the groups that differed from each other and it was found that group 1-5 years of service showed a statistically significant difference with group 21-25 years of service (Sig = 0.009 < 0.05). Consequently, it was found that younger teachers with few years of service experience more burnout than older teachers with more years of service.

In order to investigate the relation between the dimensions of professional quality of life, a linear bivariate correlation was performed, and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated. In particular, job satisfaction and burnout of special education teachers showed no statistically significant relation ( $r = -0.187$ ). Job satisfaction and secondary traumatic stress of special education teachers showed a statistically significant relation, at a statistically significant level  $p < 0.05$ . The bivariate analysis of cross-correlation resulted in a moderate linear cross-correlation with a negative direction between job satisfaction and secondary traumatic stress ( $r = -0.236$ ). Specifically, when job satisfaction increases, secondary traumatic stress decreases and vice versa. Secondary traumatic stress and burnout revealed a statistically significant relation, at a statistically significant level  $p < 0.01$  [Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000 < 0.01]. The bivariate analysis of cross-correlation resulted in a powerful linear cross-correlation with a positive direction between secondary traumatic stress and burnout ( $r = 0.711$ ). Otherwise, when secondary traumatic stress increases, burnout increases and vice versa.

## 6. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the professional quality of life of special education teachers in primary and secondary education in Greece. The results of the

present study showed that the level of teachers' job satisfaction was high, secondary traumatic stress was low and burnout was low. These findings are corroborated by the research of Christodoulou et al. (2014) in special education teachers in primary education. According to Stamm (2009), this is the ideal combination between the three dimensions of professional quality of life. Similar were the findings of Vourda (2011), where the level of job satisfaction was moderate, secondary traumatic stress was low and burnout was low. Also, Platsidou & Agaliotis's (2008) survey of special education teachers in primary education showed low levels of burnout and moderate levels of job satisfaction.

Investigating teachers' burnout Kalyva (2013) found that teachers reported low levels of burnout. However, Stringari et al. (2019) in their research found that participants showed moderate levels of burnout. Abushaira (2012) and Yavuz (2018) investigated job satisfaction of special education teachers and found that the level of teachers' job satisfaction was moderate, confirming the findings of other research (Stempien & Loeb, 2002; Strydom et al., 2012).

The results of the present study showed that gender and job satisfaction were not statistically significant, confirming other research (Liu & Ramsey, 2008; Yavuz, 2018; Strydom et al., 2012; Abushaira, 2012; Nutsuklo, 2015; Otanga & Mange, 2014). Regarding gender and secondary traumatic stress, it was found that they have no statistically significant relation, a finding which contradicts the finding of Lerias & Byrne (2003). Also, gender and burnout appeared to have no statistically significant relation, a finding that is confirmed by many studies (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009; Chang, 2009; Billingsley & Cross, 1992), but is not confirmed by others (Saricam & Sakiz, 2014; Mearns & Cain, 2003).

The present study showed that age has no statistically significant relation with job satisfaction, a finding that is contradicted by other research (Craig & Sprang, 2009; Lavian, 2012). Concerning age and secondary traumatic stress, it was found that they had no statistically significant relation, a finding that contradicts the findings of Lerias & Byrne (2003) and Vourda (2011). However, age has been found to have a statistically significant relation with burnout of special education teachers, a finding that is confirmed by many studies (Craig & Sprang, 2009, Lavian, 2012, Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009), but is not confirmed by others (Vourda, 2011, Stringari et al., 2019, Chris, 1989).

From the results of the present study, marital status did not appear to have a statistically significant relation with job satisfaction. Also, there was no statistically significant relation between marital status and secondary traumatic stress. Regarding the marital status and burnout of special education teachers, they did not appear to have a statistically significant relation, a finding that contradicts those of other studies (Pullis, 1992, Carton & Fruchart, 2013, Sarris et al., 2018).

The results of the present study showed that specialization in special education has a statistically significant relation with job satisfaction, secondary traumatic stress and burnout of special education teachers, respectively. In particular, it was found that those with specialization had a higher degree of occupational satisfaction, whereas those without specialization exhibited more secondary traumatic stress (was confirmed by the finding of Lerias and Byrne, 2003) and greater burnout (was confirmed by Embich, 2001, Platsidou & Agaliotis, 2008).

Regarding years of service, this study showed that they did not have a statistically significant relation with job satisfaction. This finding is confirmed by Vourda's survey (2011). The secondary traumatic stress of special education teachers was revealed that it had no statistically significant relation with years of service. This finding is confirmed by some research (Boscarino et al., 2004). However, it was found that years of service have a statistically significant relation with burnout of special education teachers, that is confirmed by research (Craig & Sprang, 2009), but contradicts others (Kalyva, 2013, Stringari et al., 2019, Chris, 1989).

Concerning the working grade of special education teachers, the results of the present study showed that it has no statistically significant relation with job satisfaction. This finding contradicts others (Kouli et al., 2015, Platsidou and Agaliotis, 2008). It was also found that secondary traumatic stress had no statistically significant relation with working grade. Working grade and burnout were found to have no statistically significant relation, a finding that contradicts other findings (Kamtsios & Lolis, 2016, Martin et al., 2012).

In addition to the effect of demographic factors on the three dimensions of professional quality of life, was investigated the possible association of the three dimensions with each other. The findings of the present study showed that job satisfaction is not associated with burnout, a finding that contradicts other research (Craig & Sprang, 2009, Robinson et al., 2019). However, the results showed that job satisfaction is negatively correlated with secondary traumatic stress, namely, when job satisfaction increases, secondary traumatic stress decreases and vice versa (was confirmed by Vourda, 2011). Finally, the results of the present study showed that secondary traumatic stress is positively correlated with burnout, that is, as secondary traumatic stress increases, burnout increases and vice versa (was confirmed by Vourda, 2011).

The education of special education teachers, already at university, should focus on the difficulties and requirements of their profession, aiming to mitigate the often overlooked gap between the expectations of new teachers and their professional reality. In addition, the Ministry of Education can significantly contribute to improving teachers' professional quality of life, but also to raising public awareness by designing interventions, programs and information seminars on job satisfaction, secondary traumatic stress and burnout. It is also important to try to improve some of the factors that dissatisfy teachers, such as low salary and reduced opportunities for personal development, as well as to create new legislation to improve working conditions and quality of work life.

In addition, teacher counseling and participation in experiential group discussions in the Teachers' Clubs in schools, with the presence of a dedicated counselor, are important factors in enhancing teachers. Organizational prevention programs help to maximize compassion satisfaction by recognizing formally and practically that work may affect the employee (Stamm, 2009). Finally, changes in thinking and cognitive appraisals of the conditions by the individuals themselves, introspection and self-awareness can

significantly contribute to changing the way work is handled and its stressors (Fontana, 1996).

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