

# Psychosocial Working Conditions and Wellbeing of Irish Primary School Teachers

Health Promotion Annual Conference  
NUI, Galway June 13th 2019

Dorothy Scarry BA PGCE HDipED MSc

Member SOM AHPI INTO Teaching Council



**Workplace Health &  
Wellbeing Ltd.**

# Research



Lack of existing quantitative data on stressors and wellbeing experienced by primary school teachers in Ireland. Need to identify the current situation of wellbeing in Irish primary teachers.



Need to establish clearly the relationship between psychosocial working conditions (demands, control, support, relationships, role and change) and the wellbeing of Irish primary school teachers.



HSA designed survey distributed electronically via INTO ezine in March 2018



International measures used WHO-5, UWES-9, PHQ4, ROI-MSIT

# Instruments ROI-MSIT

## ROI Management Standard Indicator Tools-

- ▶ demands (workload, working patterns and the occupational setting),
- ▶ control (how much say individuals have over the way they do their work)
- ▶ support (managerial support and colleague support)
- ▶ relationships (functional positive working relations in the workplace),
- ▶ role (clarity of worker's role in the work setting) and
- ▶ change (management and communication of modification of typical work practices in the workplace).

# Instruments- ROI MSIT contd

- ▶ 5-point Likert scale with a score of 5 indicating the most positive mark for each item.
- ▶ For the purpose of this study the scoring of the ROI-MSIT was altered in that positively worded statements such as

Example question

“I am given supportive feedback on the work I do by my Principal” is scored as 1=never and 5=always and then for negatively worded statements such as “I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much work to do” 1=always and 5=never.

- ▶ In summation high scores in the study were an indicator of good psychosocial organisational health and vice versa.

# Instruments- WHO-5 Well-being Index

- ▶ WHO-5 consists of 5 statements that are designed to indicate how respondents have felt in the previous fortnight.
- ▶ It is scored on a 6-point Likert scale on a range from 0-25 marks with 0 representing the poorest quality of life and 25 representing the greatest quality of life.
- ▶ Sample Question

**I have felt calm and relaxed**

All of the time

Most of the time

More than half of the time

Less than half of the time

Some of the time

At no time

# Instruments-Utrecht Work Engagement Scale9

- ▶ Work engagement was assessed with the 9 item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) on the 7 point likert scale (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006).
- ▶ UWES-9 is negatively related to burnout, albeit that instead of loading on burnout, professional effectiveness loads on engagement.

- ▶ Sample question

I am immersed in my work

Never

A few times a year or less

Once a month or less

A few times a month or less

Once a week

A few times a week

Every Day

# Instruments -Patient Health Questionnaire 4 (PHQ-4)

- ▶ Anxiety and depression were examined through the ultra-brief 4 item Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-4) (Löwe et al., 2010).
- ▶ PHQ-4 is scored on a 4-point Likert scale with scores rated as normal (0-2), mild (3-5), moderate (6-8), and severe (9-12) risk of anxiety and depression.
- ▶ Example question:

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge

- ▶ Not at all
- ▶ Several days
- ▶ More than half the days
- ▶ Nearly every day

# Analyses

Bivariate correlations were undertaken to determine the relationships between the study variables. Differences in psychosocial working conditions, wellbeing, work engagement and risk of anxiety and depression were examined using *t*-tests and One Way ANOVA across the teacher participants. Missing data was addressed prior to the data analysis. Statistical analyses were undertaken using SPSS Statistics 24.

Bivariate analyses carried out in the study demonstrated that Irish primary school teachers' psychosocial occupational conditions had a significant positive relationship with both wellbeing ( $p < 0.01$ ) and work engagement ( $p < 0.01$ ) and a significant negative relationship with anxiety and depression ( $p < 0.01$ ). The correlation of the psychosocial working conditions (ROI-MSIT) and wellbeing (WHO-5) at .61 were remarkable.



## More results:

► **Work Intensification:**



-Workload - Some primary teachers were working up to 13 additional hours per week outside teaching time and the Croke Park hour.

► **High Emotional Demands:**



-Urban teachers were more affected by their psychosocial working conditions than rural teachers.

-Special Education Class Teachers

► **Work-Life Balance:**



-Female teachers

► **Job Insecurity:**

-Fixed term part-time teachers



# Limitations

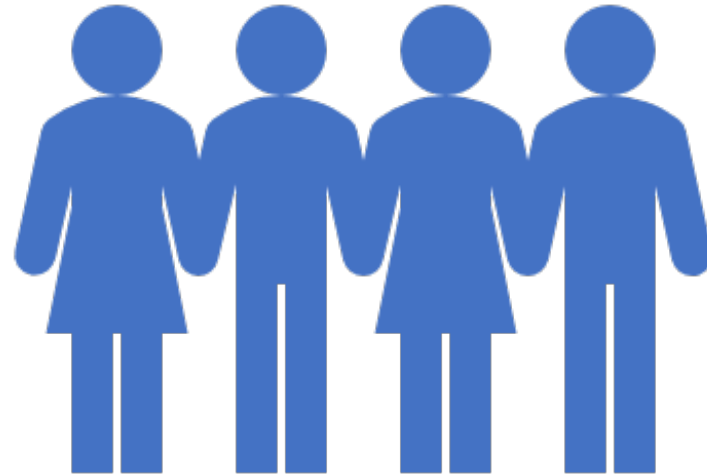
- ▶ The low response rate of the questionnaire was disappointing from a study sample perspective.
- ▶ The results are based on cross-sectional self-reports, resulting in possible contamination from common method variance (CMV).

# Possible Future Directions

- ▶ Longitudinal research would enable a great acuity into cause and effect of Irish primary teacher wellbeing and the association with their psychosocial working conditions.
- ▶ Further analyse the ROI-MSIT into its 6 domains and correlate each domain to the study's constructs of wellbeing, engagement and risk of anxiety and depression and also the study's occupational and socio- demographic variables.

# Summary Research Results

The Irish primary teachers who experienced positive psychosocial working conditions in their schools in turn had greater well-being and greater work engagement and had a lower risk of developing anxiety and depression.



*“When a flower doesn’t bloom,  
you fix the environment in which  
it grows, not the flower”.*

Alexander Den Heijer



Workplace Health &  
Wellbeing Ltd.



This photo by Unknown Author is licensed under  
[CC BY-NC-ND](#)