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Studying the Factors Related to Teachers' Work Engagement in Albanian Lower Secondary Schools

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Abstract: The quantitative assessment of work engagement, the identification of determining factors and their ranking according to the effect on work engagement among teachers of lower secondary schools in Albania are the aims of this study. Information gathered from interviewing a sample of 198 randomly selected teachers was used for this study. Work engagement of teachers is assessed at the „moderate” level (3.5 scores). Dedication is the most important component causes greater effects on work engagement (3.8 scores). Absorption ranks second (3.7 scores). Factors related to energy at work have the smallest effect (3.2 scores). Gender and marital status of the teacher affect the level of commitment to work ($p < 0.05$). It is estimated that commitment to work reaches the highest level among teachers aged 31-40 years old and teachers who have 5-10 years of work experience. The study does not identify differences in the commitment to work of teachers who work in the city and their colleagues who work in rural areas. Teachers in public schools are more engaged than their colleagues in private schools ($p < 0.05$).

Keywords: Work engagement; Determinants factors; Teachers; Lower secondary school; Albania

1. Introduction

Work engagement is a concept that reflects the employee's level of motivation to contribute to the success of the organization. It reflects the amount of efforts made by the employee, the time he devotes and his psycho-physical commitment to the achievement and goals of the organization. Commitment as a psycho-social and mental state of the employee is the result of the action and cooperation of three groups of factors - vigour, dedication and the energies that are spent to fulfill the tasks assigned to the employee by the organization. According to Kahn (1990), with the concept, „Engagement at work” should be understood the psychological state of the employee, during the process of performing the task. According to him, this psychological state is the multiplication of the action of physical, cognitive and emotional factors (Kahn, 1990).

The definition that is most often used for the concept of “Engagement at work” according to Richman, (2006); Shaw, (2005) The definition that is most often used for the concept of „Commitment to work” is based on the employee's intellectual and emotional commitment to the organization. Robinson et al.(2004) defines engagement as:

“A positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of the business context, works with colleagues to improve performance within his work for the benefit of the organization”

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Wellins & Concelman (2015) describe employee engagement as:

“... the illusory force that motivates employees toward higher levels of performance”.

Schaufeli et al., (2006) they connect and explain the concept of „employee engagement” with the action and interaction of 3 terms: vigour, dedication, absorption. Their multiplied result is the individual’s contribution to the organization’s success.

Ulrich, D. (1997) in his book: „Champions of human resources” treats commitment as a manifestation of a complex behavior in employees. He points out that:

“Employee contribution becomes a critical business issue because trying to give more output with less employee input, companies have no other choice but try to engage not only the body, but also the mind and spirit of every employee”.

According to Schaufeli et al., (2002) Work engagement is explained as a positive emotional and cognitive working status characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Based on Hakanen et al. (2006), Danhui Zhang et al. (2021) the sojone se vigour is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence in the face of difficulties. Dedication is characterized by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly, and one has difficulties detaching from work.

According to Cacciamani, et al.(2022):

“Work engagement is a multicomponent psychological state characterized by a positive attitude and an energetic connection with job tasks and activities”.

The work engagement of educational workers means a significant expression of desire, passion and will for the realization of the mission as an educator of the new generation. According to Markos & Sridevi (2010) work engagement can appear as a behavior with positive effects on the quality of the education system only when cooperation and mutual coordination of efforts is achieved between teachers and their managers. It is realized when employees are provided with „emotional, physical and social well-being.” Marko & Sridev (2010) emphasize that

“Encouraging motivational factors is important for the effective engagement of employees in educational institutions”.

According to Rapheal, (2019):

“Engagement’ in the teaching profession essentially is a synonym for teacher commitment, dedication, and involvement in their workspace. A highly engaged teacher will be curious about the ‘not so explicit side’ of student personalities (and not just in grades). Students’ preferences, interests, feelings, needs, and difficulties in the overall development will catch the attention of a highly engaged teacher and she will instinctively respond to them”.

Work engagement is a factor with a considerable effect on the success of the efforts made to realize the objectives of an organization. Study of work engagement with the aim of evaluating its level and identifying its determinant factors it is one of the arguments that is given special attention (Kristiana, et al. 2018).

In this paper, the results of the study of the work engagement of teachers in the lower secondary cycle in Albania, its quantitative evaluation, the identification of its determinant factors and the evaluation of the measure of their influence are given. The study is based on the definitions given above, Hakanen et

al. (2006), Danhui Zhang et al. (2021), according to which the work engagement of teachers is the result of three components - vigor, dedication and absorption.

2. Methodology and Data

Research questions

What is the level of work engagement among Albanian teachers in the cycle of lower secondary education?

What are the factors that influence the level of work engagement among Albanian teachers in the cycle of lower secondary education?

Research hypothes

Ho: Work engagement of teachers in the cycle of lower secondary education is the result of the action and interaction of factors related to vigor, dedication, absorption and demographic features of teachers.

2.1. Data

The data for this study are the answers received from 198 teachers in lower secondary schools, in the region of central Albania, where about 69% of the entire population lives. The questionnaire used contains 16 questions (6 questions that correspond to the vigor factors, 6 to the dedication and 4 absorption factors), the answers of which generate the values of the Likert variables, with 5 scales 1 (I do not agree at all), 2 (I do not agree agree), 3(I am uncertain), 4(I agree), 5(I strongly agree). When the average value of the Likert variable is ≤ 2 , the corresponding indicator is evaluated at the low level, 2.1-3.5 moderate level, 3.6 - 4.0 high level and ≥ 4.1 high level.

Work engagement was evaluated as the sum of the ratings obtained for its three components, vigour, dedication, and absorption.

The information collected through the interviews was tested to assess the its reliability level (Table 1)

Table 1 Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients

	Componeets	Numri i pyetjeve	Cronbach's Alpha
Work engagement		16	0.80
	Vigour	6	0.76
	Dedication	6	0.83
	Absorption	4	0.77

The calculated values of the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient show that the collected information is valid.

Sample characteristics

In the sample, about 18% of teachers are male. In Albania, male teachers in lower secondary education schools make up about 16%. About 12.6% are teachers who work in private schools. At the national level, private schools of lower secondary education make up about 11% of the total number of schools in this cycle. The sample is also representative regarding the distribution of schools in urban and peri-urban/rural areas (71.8%/28.8% vs 67.3%/32.7%; $p < 0.05$)

Table 2. Sample Characteristics

Feature	Number	%
Gender		
Female	162	81.8
Mal	36	18.2
Age		
20-30 years old	49	24.7
31-40 years old	80	40.4
>40 years old	69	34.8
Work experience		
< 5 years	55	27.8
5-10 years	67	33.8
>10 years	76	38.4
Civil status		
Single	31	15.7
Married	126	63.6
Divorced	29	14.6
Widowed	12	6.1
Ownership of the school		
Private school	25	12.6
Public school	173	87.4
Residential area		
Urban area	141	71.8
Rural area	57	28.8

2.2. Data Analysis Methods

To evaluate the level of work engagement of teachers in the cycle of lower secondary education, the average value was calculated for each of the factors reflected in the questionnaire. These values were used to estimate the average of the three constituent components of work engagement and the overall average. To evaluate the relationships between the constituent components of work engagement, Pearson's correlation coefficients were evaluated. Relationships between work engagement and vigour, dedication and absorption were evaluated through linear regression analysis, according to the following linear model:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} + \varepsilon_i$$

when:

Y_i – work engagement

X_1 - vigour

X_2 - dedication

X_3 - absorption

ε - random error

α , - constan

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ – partial regression coefficients

Logistic regression analysis was used to evaluate the effect of the influence of demographic features on the work engagement of teachers:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} X_{1ij} + \beta_{2j} X_{2ij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \text{ (Modeli 1)}$$

when:

Y - dependent variable, whose value are:

Engaged in work (1), not engaged in work (0).

-Teachers for whom the average value of overall work engagement is ≤ 2.9 are classified in the group of teachers not engaged in work $y=0$

-Teachers for whom the average value of overall engagement at work is ≥ 3.0 are classified in the group of engaged teachers, $y=1$

X_{1ij} - independent variable that reflects the demographic characteristics of the educator: age, seniority at work, marital status, family status, marital status

X_{2ij} - independent variable that reflects socio-economic characteristics: ownership of the garden, area of residence

SSSP was used for data analysis.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Analyse

The results of the descriptive analysis are given in Figure 1. The presented values are the averages that correspond to the factors that are accepted *a priori* as being responsible for the work engagement of teachers in the lower secondary cycle.

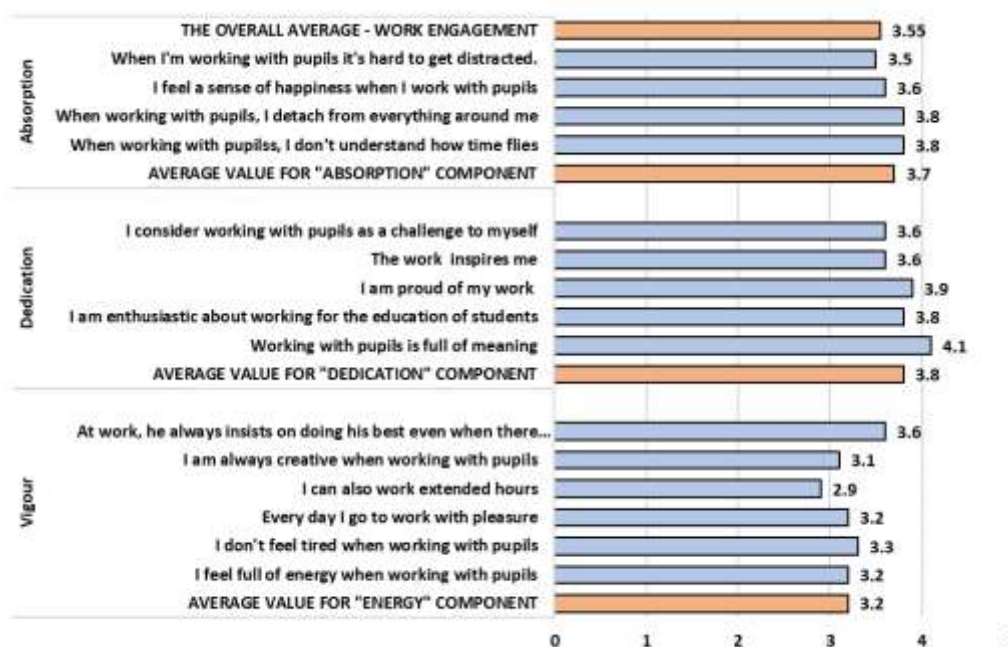


Figure 1. The Average Points for the Factors Responsible for the Work Engagement of Teachers in the Cycle of Lower Secondary Education

As can be seen, the average level of work engagement of teachers in the cycle of lower secondary education is (3.55 ± 0.47) , which means that their work engagement is assessed at the „Moderate” level. In the values of this commitment, the factors that correspond to „Dedication” (3.80 ± 0.43) bring the

greatest positive contribution, followed by the factors that correspond to „Absorption” (3.70±0.51). The factors that have a smaller effect are “Vigour” (3.20±0.42)

Among the factors that are estimated to have a most important effect in work engagement of teachers, is the feeling that teachers have towards the work they do, which they express by agreeing to the statement that: „Working with pupils is full of meaning” (4.1±0.34), and „I am proud of my work „ (3.9±0.36).

An interesting result is the statement made by the majority of teachers regarding the fact that they devote themselves to the teaching process in such a way and such form that they become detached from the environment, not realizing how time flies. Such mental concentration at work is a factor with an important effect on the quality of teaching.

The average for the general work engagement for teachers in the lower secondary cycle and its values, calculated for male and female teachers as well as for teachers working in public and private schools, are given in Table 2

Table 2. Work Engagement - Averages

	Numri	Min	Max	Average±Dev.st.	Sign (p).
Overall work engagement	198	15	75	53.25 ± 2.42	
Gender					
-Mal	36	24	120	45.13 ± 1.41	0.03
-Female	162	24	120	55.01 ± 2.51	
Propriety status of school					
-Public school	173	24	120	54.09 ± 1.86	0.04
-Private school	25	24	120	47.43 ± 2.03	

As can be seen, the overall work engagement is about 18.3% higher than the average level (45.0 scores). The differences in the level of engagement of female teachers compared to their male colleagues (+8.88 points) is statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). The level of work engagement of teachers in public and private schools is also statistically different ($p < 0.05$). Teachers in public schools are declared to be about 14.0% more engaged in work than their colleagues who work in private schools.

In order to understand the mechanism according to which teachers' work engagement is realized and to judge the quantitative relationships that exist between the different factors that influence the level of this engagement, the data were analyzed using methods of multivariate analysis, correlation and regression analysis.

3.2. Quantitative Relationships Analyze

To assess the level of multicollinearity, Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated (Table 3).

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Coefficients

	Vigour	Dedication	Absorption
Vigour	1	0.23*	0.20*
Dedication		1	0.14 ^{NS}
Absorption			1

^{NS} $p > 0.05$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Estimates for Pearson's correlation coefficient show that the level of multicollinearity in the data is negligible¹. As a result, it can be affirmed that the data analysis according to the requirements of the linear regression model is not contradicted by the quality of these data.

The linear regression model that reflects, quantitatively, the relationship between work engagement, vigour, dedication and absorption among teachers of lower secondary education, resulted:

$$Y = 0.069 + 0.326 X_1 + 0.401 X_2 + 0.247 X_3$$

This model explains about 49.5% of the total variance of the dependent variable (work engagement) (Table 4). The model is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) (Table 5)

Referring to the standardized partial regression coefficients, it can be affirmed that Dedication is the biggest contributor to the value of work engagement of teachers in the cycle of lower secondary education. Its effect is estimated to be about 33% greater than the effect of Vigour and about 53% higher than the effect of Absorption (Table 6). These results are similar to those published by Schaufeli et. al. (2002) Ljubetić et al (2022).

Table 4. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.719 ^a	.512	.495	0.012

a. Predictors:(Constant), Vigor, Dedication, Absorption

Table 5. ANOVA^a

Model ^b		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.124	3	3.041	20.141	.00 ^b
	Residual	29.209	194	0.151		
	Total	38.333	197			

a. Dependent Variable: Work engagement
b. Predictors:(Constant), Vigor, Dedication, Absorption

Table 6. Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sign.
		β	Std. Error	β			
1	Constant	0.069	0.106			3.36	0.05
	Vigor	0.326	0.098	0.309		8.22	0.00
	Dedication	0.401	0.124	0.412		10.15	0.00
	Absorption	0.351	0.132	0.269		7.36	0.00

a. Dependent Variable: Work engagement

Referring to the list of factors that a priori are considered to be responsible for fostering the sense of dedication among lower secondary education teachers, based on the above results, it can be affirmed that their work engagement is affected to a large extent significantly from the appreciation that teachers have for their work, work that, according to their assertion, made them feel proud and filled them with enthusiasm. Such a finding draws attention to the need for the drafting of supportive policies for teachers in this cycle of the pre-university education system in Albania. The administration of the educational institution is another important factor for the engagement or not of teachers at work. Both of these exogenous factors are among the factors with the most sensitive effects in the formation of the

¹ The level of collinearity is not considered problematic if the Pearson correlation coefficients are < 0.7 (Hair et al. 2009)

psychological state and in the behavior of teachers towards the task. According to Rapheal, et al (2019) “a school leader can create a conducive environment that will inspire teachers to attend the highest level of engagement”

Their action in oppozit to the teachers’ expectations, understatement of teachers’ emotional feelings related to the profession and its exercise can become an important obstacle to the realization of the school’s objectives.

The results of the binary logistic regression analysis are given in Table7. The data in this table show that the demographic factors included in the logistic regression model have small and not always statistically significant effects on the variance of the dependent variable, teachers’ work engagement. The results of this analysis are similar to those published by Stamatios et al. (2022). The value of the coefficient of determination for the log linear model results $R^2=0.22$. The quality of this model as a reflection of the relationships between work engagement and demographic factors is moderate.

Referring to the values of *odds ratio* coefficients, it can be affirmed that:

- The teacher’s gender statistically affects the level of his commitment to work ($p<0.05$). Female teachers (f) are about 1.64 times more likely than males to be engaged in work.
- With increasing age, the level of their work engagement also increases proportionally. Teachers in the age group of 31-40 years have, about 1.87 times more opportunities, to feel engaged at work, compared to teachers in the age group of 20-30 years. Teachers in the age group over 40 are declared to be more engaged in work. The chances of them being engaged in work are estimated to be about 1.95 times greater than that of teachers in the age group of 20-30 years

Table 7. Results of the Analysis Performed According to the Logistic Regression Model

Factor	Dependet variable: Work engagement (1 engaged, 0 not engaged)	
	β	odds ratios
Gender Reference: Mal		
Femal	0.494*	1.641
Age Reference: 20-30 ys old		
31-40 ys old	0.671*	1.956
>40 ys old	0.627*	1.872
Seniority Reference: < 5 years		
5-10 years	0.846**	2.331
>10 years	0.749**	2.116
Civile status Reference: Single		
Married	0.501*	1.650
Divorced	0.351 ^{NS}	1.421
Widowed	0.159 ^{NS}	1.173
Ownership of the school Referenc: Private school		
Public school	0.585*	1.795
Residential area Reference: Rurale area		
Urban area	0.108 ^{NS}	1.114

- Seniority at work affects the level of work engagement of teachers. Teachers who have 5-10 years of experience in this work, turn out to have about 2.3 times more opportunities to be engaged in work, compared to their colleagues who have less than 5 years of work experience. Meanwhile, teachers with over 10 years of work experience are 2.1 times more likely to be engaged in work compared to teachers with less than 5 years of work experience. This reduction in opportunities for more work engagement among teachers who have 10 years of work experience, compared to teachers who have 5-10 years of work experience, may be a consequence of the lack of policies for the development of pre-university education through which could be influenced in increasing the interest of teachers in this profession.

- The teacher's civil status is a factor that does not play a significant role in the work engagement of teachers. Differences in the opportunities to be engaged in work, between teachers with a civil status of single, married, divorced or widowed, are confirmed only for married teachers. They are about 1.65 times more likely to be engaged at work than their single colleagues ($p < 0.05$).

- The work engagement of teachers in the lower secondary cycle is influenced by the fact where they work, in public or private schools and is not statistically influenced by the location of the school, in the urban or peri-urban/rural area.

The above results support the statement made above as an interpretation of the results of the regression analysis for the relationship between work engagement and vigour, dedication and absorption. These results confirm the fact that Albanian teachers in the cycle of lower secondary education consider their work as a mission.

4. Conclusions

The work engagement of Albanian teachers in lower secondary school is evaluated at the „moderate” level.

The Dedication component have a multiplied effect about 33% greater than the Vigor component and about 53% higher than the Absorption component.

Work engagement varies depending on the teacher's gender, marital status, age and length of service. Female teachers are more engaged in work than males. The relationship between the teacher's age, work experience and the level of work engagement is curved, with a peak at the age of 31-40 years old and 5-10 years of work experience.

Among the factors that influence the work engagement of teachers in lower secondary schools, endogenous factors related to their psycho-social condition stand out.

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