

# Head Teacher's Social Support, Personality Variables and Subjective Well-Being of Slovak Primary Teachers<sup>1</sup>

Anna Janovská, Olga Orosová, Jozef Janovský

Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Faculty of Arts

**Abstract:** The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between the supportive behaviour of a head teacher and selected personality traits in relation to the emotional and cognitive component of subjective well-being of primary school teachers. It has been assumed that personality traits will be significantly related to the well-being and that the dominant-cooperative supportive behaviour of the head teacher will be significantly related to satisfaction with work. We used the Scale of Emotional Habitual Well-Being (Džuka & Dalbert, 2002), Life Satisfaction Questionnaire (Rodná & Rodný, 2001), IASR-B5 (Trapnell & Wiggins, 1990) and the SAS-C (Trobst, 2000). The sample consisted of 256 (85.74% women) primary school teachers. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to analyse the data. The dominant-cooperative supportive behaviour of the head teacher was related to the cognitive component of subjective well-being, especially to satisfaction with work. The personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion and dominance were related to variables representing subjective well-being. The supportive behaviour of the head teacher, defined as their active engagement, interest, decisiveness, giving of advice, emotional support and providing relevant information, was found to be associated with teachers' well-being. Increasing the physical and psychological health of teachers, as well as their subjective well-being are key issues in improving the overall atmosphere in schools.

**Keywords:** teachers, subjective well-being, personality traits, supportive behaviour

The main function of school as an institution is not only to pass on knowledge and provide education but also to contribute to the personality development and socialization of young generations. School as a cultural institution also serves as a mediator of cultural values and can be regarded as the most successful of institutions in the history of culture (Janík & Slavík, 2009). In order to serve this important function well, an open climate is one of the essential conditions in order for schools to fulfil their purpose.

So far, most of the research addressing well-being in schools has focused on the well-being of students. Recently, much more attention has been paid to teachers and their satisfaction and well-being (Konu, Viitanen, & Lintonen, 2010; Ross, Romer, & Horner, 2012). After all, it is difficult to separate the well-being of students and the well-being of teachers because they are positively related (Bakker, 2005). The contribution of teachers to the overall atmosphere in schools is undeniably substantial.

The well-being of teachers is related to and caused by numerous factors such as quality of the physical environment, organizational conditions, social relationships, opportunities for personal growth and the opportunity to take part in and actively

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72 participate in resolving issues related to school management. It is also important to mention the financial, as well as the intangible rewards, that teachers receive for their work. Regarding social relationships and interpersonal factors, which are important for well-being, it is important to emphasize the significance of teachers' relationship with their school management and their head teacher in particular. Lastly, it is important to mention that every teacher stands as a unique individual and naturally reacts differently to all the previously mentioned conditions. Individual coping strategies for dealing with problems are determined by personal and interpersonal traits which also deserve detailed attention when exploring well-being.

## 1 Theoretical background

### 1.1 The theoretical concepts of well-being

Two main perspectives on subjective well-being can be found in the current literature. The first perspective, called the eudaimonic perspective, defines well-being in terms of self-realization of one's potential and talents. This perspective has been adopted in the work of Ryff and Keys and serves as the foundation for their concept of psychological well-being (Keyes, 2006; Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

The second perspective on subjective well-being, which constitutes the theoretical background to this study, has its roots in hedonism and is focused mainly on a subjective experience of satisfaction with life. From a psychological point of view, this perspective can be defined as a human striving to act in ways which lead to experiencing as much pleasure and as little suffering as possible. From the hedonistic point of view, subjective well-being consists of two components – cognitive and emotional. The emotional or affective component can be further divided into positive and negative affectivity and the cognitive (evaluative) component is defined by an overall satisfaction with life, as well as satisfaction with different life domains (Džuka, 2004).

One of the important domains of life satisfaction is represented by work satisfaction. Warr (2003) proposes a taxonomy of different characteristics of the work environment which, according to the findings of many researchers, are related to subjective well-being. These characteristics do not only include the conditions of a particular environment but also other aspects such as an opportunity for self-realization, participation in decision-making, autonomy, variability, income, security, occupational status and quality of social interactions, which include social support and support from a superior.

**Determinants of well-being.** Determinants influencing subjective well-being can be generally divided into external (related to the environment in which one lives) and internal (related to the personality structure of an individual). External factors are represented by life conditions, socio-economic status, social ties, work conditions etc. (Ryff & Heidrich, 1997).

**External factors.** Socio-economic and demographic factors such as gender, age, level of education, family status, state of health, employment, living conditions and religion explain approximately 5–20% of variance in well-being (Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976, as cited in Diener, Lucas, & Scollon, 2006). Ruini et al. (2003) conclude that, in general, women report lower subjective well-being (except for in the domain of positive social relationships) and a higher level of distress and personality disorders than men.

The association between age and subjective well-being is not clear. Some components of well-being are positively related to age, some are related negatively and some have not been found to be associated with age at all. Ryff and Keyes (1995) explored the relationship between well-being and age on a representative sample of US residents and found that well-being correlated with age but this correlation was rather complex. Certain aspects of well-being were found to decrease with age linearly and other aspects were found to increase in a linear or nonlinear fashion (Keyes, 1998).

Konu, Viitanen and Lintonen (2010) summarized their findings related to well-being obtained from a sample of Finnish teachers and showed that, in general, the well-being of primary school teachers was higher in comparison to teachers working in secondary schools. Furthermore, their study showed that male teachers had a higher level of well-being than female teachers. And finally, satisfaction with school management and treatment was found to be higher among teachers working at primary schools (Konu, Viitanen & Lintonen 2010).

**Internal factors.** The existence of an association between subjective well-being and personality has been shown in many studies. Similarly to personality variables, subjective well-being shows stability regardless of environmental conditions, life course or even the intensity of intervening life events (Diener & Lucas, 2003). Most of the researchers exploring the relationship between personality and subjective well-being have built their exploration on the personality factors derived from the Big Five model of personality. A research study carried out on a representative sample of twins showed that subjective well-being and the personality traits of extraversion, neuroticism and conscientiousness have a common genetic background and personality can create so-called “affective reserves”, which are important for maintaining the homeostatic state of subjective well-being in time (Weiss, Bates, & Luciano, 2008). Many research studies have shown that there is a relationship between subjective well-being and personality dimensions, especially with high extraversion and low neuroticism (Libran, 2006; Van den Berg & Pitariu, 2005).

Even in the early studies on subjective well-being conducted by Bradburn (1969, as cited in Diener & Lucas, 2003) it was found that sociability, which is a part of extraversion, was related to positive emotions and not found to be related to negative emotions. Costa and McCrae (1980) later confirmed these findings and extended them by finding that neuroticism was related only to the negative and not the positive emotional state. According to many authors (Steel, Schmidt, & Shultz, 2008; Vittersø, 2001), neuroticism is a better predictor of subjective well-being than ex-

74 traversalion. Other Big Five factors which have been found to be related to well-being as well are conscientiousness (Chung & Harding, 2009) and agreeableness (Joshanloo & Nosratabadi, 2009; Ruiz, 2005). To conclude, out of the Big Five personality factors subjective well-being has been found to correlate with all but the factor of openness to experience (Hřebíčková, Blatný, & Jelínek, 2010).

### 1.2 The interpersonal concept of personality and well-being

The social dimension and interpersonal relationships play a key role in the subjective experience of well-being and satisfaction with life (Myers, 2003). Some authors suggest that the social dimension is an inherent part of well-being itself (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) or represents its unique dimension (Keyes, 1998; Šolcová & Kebza, 2005). Therefore, it is important to study the determinants of well-being from the point of view of the interpersonal theory of behaviour.

This study is based on the theory which is defined by the interpersonal circumplex and puts a particular emphasis on the vertical line of the circumplex which represents the provision of status and love of oneself and others. It can be hypothesized that this continuum will be related to subjective well-being as interpersonal behaviour which is characterized by provision of love, positive relationships and status to others and oneself should be related to a high level of subjective well-being. Finally, self-esteem and positive self-evaluation have been generally shown to be associated with subjective well-being.

Happy people are characteristically known to have a positive relationship toward themselves and have high levels of self-esteem and self-acceptance (Myers & Diener, 1997; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Lucas, Diener and Suh (1996, as cited in Diener & Lucas, 2003) have found that self-esteem and optimism correlated with components of subjective well-being, such as satisfaction with life and positive and negative affect. From the perspective of the interpersonal circumplex theory, it is the provision of love and status that are characteristic for people who manifest extraverted, dominant but also arrogant behaviour (Wiggins, 1996).

Van Petegem, Aelterman, Van Keer and Rosseel (2008) based their study on the circumplex model of interactive behaviour and explored the relationship between behaviour and the subjective well-being of teachers. The conclusions from their research show that teachers who gained a high score in the dominant-cooperative quadrant rated their own subjective well-being positively while the well-being of the teachers who gained a high score in the submissive-opposing quadrant was much lower.

### 1.3 Social support and well-being

Social support constitutes an important factor in maintaining high subjective well-being (Blatný, 2001). In addition, social support is known to be one of the first variables that has been clearly shown to act as a moderator in the context of well-

being and health (Šolcová & Kebza, 1999). Social support is also significant for subjective well-being in the work environment. The influence of superiors at work on employees' subjective well-being has been shown by Smith (2008) who found that leadership which is tolerant and open, which offers social support, motivates and provides intellectual stimulation, is positively related to the well-being of its employees.

The original model of social support was introduced by Trobst (2000). This model is based on the interpersonal circumplex theory of personality within which individual types of supportive behaviour are organized in a circumplex with a continuum represented by two dimensions. The first dimension represents the provision of love of oneself and others and the second dimension is represented by the supporting status of self and that of others. Within this model, eight different types of behaviour can be distinguished: directive, arrogant, critical, distancing, avoidant, deferential, nurturant and engaged.

#### 1.4 Subjective well-being of teachers

The subjective well-being of teachers is determined by many factors. It has been found to be related to different strengths, socio-demographic factors, competence, the subjective well-being of other teachers and social support provided by head teachers (Kinman, Wray, & Strange, 2011; Peters & Pearce, 2012). It has been suggested that head teachers represent a particularly important source of social support for teachers at school and this support could constitute an important moderator of psychological stress (Sakoda, Tanak, & Fuchigami, 2004). Dunlop and Macdonald (2004) found in their study that the role of a school's head teacher is crucial and depends on whether the head teacher acts in a certain way, e.g. applies a friendly approach, provides emotional support, collegiality, as well as a proactive and engaged approach to teachers. Other researchers such as Leithwood (2005, as cited in Konu, Viitanen, & Lintonen, 2010) emphasize that effective head teachers support and develop teachers' initiatives, creativity and ideas in their school.

## 2 Research aims

The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between the supportive behaviour of the head teacher and selected personality traits in relation to the emotional component of subjective well-being (positive and negative emotions) and its cognitive component (overall life satisfaction, satisfaction with work) of primary school teachers in Eastern Slovakia.

Conceptually, this research project was based on the hedonic perspective to subjective well-being, which was operationalized by life satisfaction and frequency of experiencing positive and negative emotions. Within this approach, high well-being

76 was defined by a higher frequency of positive emotions relative to the frequency of negative emotions. Within the context of teachers' well-being this study was mainly focused on work satisfaction but the related concepts of overall life satisfaction and emotional well-being were also analysed here.

The measurement of personality traits was based on the Five Factor Model and the Circumplex model of interpersonal behavioural traits (Trapnell & Wiggins, 1990). The selection of traits entered into the analyses as independent variables was based on the current knowledge regarding whether they had been previously shown to be related to well-being. Such evidence exists for extraversion, neuroticism and conscientiousness, as well as dominance and arrogance. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that interpersonal traits containing high levels of love and status would be positively related to well-being and life satisfaction.

Head teachers' interpersonal behaviour regarding the provision of social support was explored within the interpersonal concept of social support (Trobst, 2000). This study focused mainly on those aspects of head teachers' behaviour which can be characterized by affiliation to and cooperation with their teachers. Supportive behaviour of head teachers was used as an independent variable in the analyses.

It was hypothesized that *personality variables* represented by extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, dominance and arrogance would be *related to the components of well-being*. It was further hypothesized that the *dominant-cooperative supportive behaviour of head teachers* would be *related to work satisfaction*, which is considered to be a part of the cognitive component of subjective well-being.

The control variables entered in the analysis consisted of socio-demographic variables: gender, age and the grade in which the teachers taught.

## 3 Method

### 3.1 Participants

The research sample consisted of primary school teachers from Eastern Slovakia. The questionnaires were administered in two ways. Firstly, they were distributed to teachers taking part in continuous professional development courses. Secondly, questionnaires were also administered directly in schools. In total, 551 questionnaires were distributed and 287 (52.98%) completed questionnaires were returned. Twenty-two questionnaires were excluded due to the data on the key dependent variables being missing. Participation was anonymous, the respondents were given information about the objective of the study and were informed that they could end their participation in the study at any time. All participants signed a consent form for their participation.

The total number of respondents included in the analysed sample was 265 (89.6% women). The length of teaching experience varied from half a year to 50 years with a mean duration of 17.92 years. Almost 80% of the teachers had not had working ex-

perience other than in the field of education and only 1% of the respondents reported that they had held a non-educational position for longer than 10 years.

It is worth noting that although the construction of the sample was not strictly random, its composition in terms of the main observable characteristics is similar to the composition in the whole population of primary teachers in Eastern Slovakia. Firstly, 39.7% of teachers in the sample taught year 1–4 students and 63.3% taught year 5–9 students. The respective statistical figures for the whole population were 42% (year 1–4) and 58% (year 5–9). Secondly, the gender split of 10.4% male also fit reasonably closely with the 14% found in the population (Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information). Lastly, the mean age of the respondents was 42.14 years ( $SD = 9.65$ ) with a range of 24 to 68 years. The age distribution of all Slovak primary teachers was not very different, the mean age was 43 years (TALIS – Teaching and Learning International Study).

Even though the sample seems to be reasonably representative of the population in the few main characteristics where comparisons are possible, we cannot know whether it is also representative in other respects. Based on the knowledge of the data collection and the context of the teachers and schools involved, the authors are not aware of any apparent data biases. Nevertheless, to stay on the safe side in the analysis we focus on the substantive significance of relationships (or its absence) rather than their statistical significance. The results of the statistical tests are reported for completeness only and in light of the limitations outlined above they should be interpreted with caution.

### 3.2 Measures

The cognitive component of subjective well-being was measured by the Life Satisfaction Questionnaire from the authors J. Fahrenberga, M. Myrteka, J. Schumachera and E. Brahlera, (Rodná & Rodný, 2001) which was developed to assess overall life satisfaction, as well as life satisfaction in important life domains. Each domain was represented by 7 items. The respondents used a seven-point scale (1 – *very dissatisfied*, 2 – *dissatisfied*, 3 – *rather dissatisfied*, 4 – *neutral*, 5 – *rather satisfied*, 6 – *satisfied*, 7 – *very satisfied*). The total life satisfaction score was calculated as a summary score for individual domains of health, work and employment, financial situation, attitude toward oneself, friends and family and living conditions. Regression analyses included overall life satisfaction regarding the work and employment domain. Cronbach's alpha for overall score of life satisfaction was .936 and for work and occupation it was .962.

The affective component of subjective well-being was measured by the Scale of Emotional Habitual Subjective Well-being (Džuka & Dalbert, 2002). This scale consist of two subscales (positive and negative emotions) measuring the emotional component of subjective well-being. Positive emotions were assessed with four items representing pleasure, physical vitality, joy and happiness and negative emotions were represented by six items of anger, guilt, shame, fear, pain and sadness. Respondents

78 provided information about the frequency of experiencing these emotions on a six-point scale (*almost never, seldom, sometimes, often, very often and almost always*). The indicator of emotional well-being was defined as the difference between the standardized summary scores of positive and negative emotions.

Personality traits were measured by the IASR-B5 questionnaire which contains factors of the Big Five personality model, as well as interpersonal traits based on the Circumplex model (Trapnell & Wiggins, 1990). The respondents were given a list of adjectives and indicated how accurately each adjective describes them on an eight-point scale (1 – *completely inaccurately* to 8 – *completely accurately*). For the purposes of this research, the following personality traits were measured: extraversion (Cronbach's alpha = .686), neuroticism (Cronbach's alpha = .892), conscientiousness (Cronbach's alpha = .839), dominance (Cronbach's alpha = .679) and arrogance (Cronbach's alpha = .763). The scales for extraversion, dominance and arrogance contained 8 items and the scales for neuroticism and conscientiousness contained 20 items.

The supportive behaviour of head teachers was measured by the Support Actions Scale Circumplex (SAS-C) (Trobst, 2000). The author created this scale based on the Circumplex model of social support. The questionnaire consists of 64 items and each type of supportive behaviour (directive, deferential, critical, distancing, avoiding, nurturant, arrogant and engaged) is measured by eight items. Respondents evaluated head teachers' reactions in situations where they or their colleague needed help or were confronted with problems. This was rated on a seven-point scale (from 1 – *he/she would certainly not do it* to 7 – *he/she would certainly do it*). For the purposes of this study, a summary score was calculated for items measuring directive, engaged and nurturant behaviours (Cronbach's alpha = .920), which served as the indicators of dominant-cooperative supportive behaviour of a head teacher towards teachers.

All the above psychometric information (Cronbach's alphas) was calculated for the Slovak version of the questionnaires.

### 3.3 Analysis

In order to estimate the effects of the explanatory variables, a multiple linear regression was used. After checking that the requirements of the linear model had been met, linear regression was carried out. The dependent variables of the analyses were: subjective well-being, operationalized as overall life satisfaction and satisfaction with work and employment, and emotional well-being which was measured by the difference in frequency in experiencing positive versus negative emotions.

The independent variables which were entered into the multiple regression analysis consisted of the personality traits of teachers (dominance, arrogance, extraversion, neuroticism and conscientiousness) and their perceived level of dominant-cooperative supportive behaviour of their head teacher. The analyses were controlled



for gender, age and the grade taught by the teacher. A listwise missing data handling approach was used in regression analysis. All results were obtained in the IBM SPSS Statistics 21 statistical programme.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Descriptive analyses

Firstly, the level of subjective well-being in the sample of teachers was calculated and it is shown in Table 1. The maximum possible score in overall life satisfaction was 350, 49 in individual domains, 24 in positive emotions and 36 in negative emotions. Out of the measured domains, the respondents were most satisfied with the domain of close relationships, as well as the domain representing the relationship towards oneself. Satisfaction in the area of occupation was rated lowest. Regarding the affective component of subjective well-being, it was shown that positive emotions were experienced with a higher frequency than negative emotions.

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics regarding satisfaction with life, work and employment, oneself and frequency of positive and negative emotions

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Life satisfaction	262	235.76	36.11
Satisfaction with work and employment	265	34.60	7.00
Satisfaction with oneself	264	36.39	5.45
Positive emotions	264	15.91	2.92
Negative emotions	263	16.90	3.38

Bivariate Pearson correlations for variables used in analysis are shown in Table 2. As can be seen in the table, there is a strong positive relationship between the personality traits of extraversion and dominance. Neuroticism was negatively associated with all components of well-being, especially emotional well-being ( $r = -.515$ ). Moderate positive relationships can be seen between extraversion and emotional well-being, as well as dominance and emotional well-being. Supportive behaviour of the head teacher is moderately positively associated to satisfaction with work and there are positive relationships between all the components of well-being, particularly between job and life satisfaction ( $r = .670$ ).

### 4.2 Multiple regression analysis

In the next step, the results of the multiple regression analysis are described – the final models for overall life satisfaction, job satisfaction and emotional well-being, as well as additional separate models for positive and negative emotions.

Table 2 Bivariate correlations among variables used in analysis

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Extraversion	1	-.181**	.314**	.453**	0.068	.126*	0.027	-0.013	-0.001	.147	.200**	.351**
2 Neuroticism		1	-.185**	-.305**	0.058	-.139*	-.158*	-0.016	-0.026	-.353**	-.370**	-.515**
3 Conscientiousness			1	.269**	-.311**	0.106	-0.056	.127*	.136*	.254**	.155*	.216**
4 Dominance				1	.190**	-0.077	.158*	0.109	0.095	.192**	.278**	.350**
5 Arrogance					1	-.133*	.151*	-.247**	-0.037	-0.052	0.048	0.05
6 Supportive behaviour of head teacher						1	0.05	-0.008	-0.051	.343**	.275**	0.102
7 Gender							1	.211**	.193**	.155*	0.091	0.117
8 Age								1	.138*	0.116	-0.015	-0.113
9 School year (1-4, 5-9)									1	-0.002	-0.041	-0.001
10 Satisfaction with work										1	.670**	.306**
11 Life satisfaction											1	.443**
12 Emotional well-being												1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Model for satisfaction with work.** The behaviour of the head teacher, characterized by a dominant and cooperative approach toward teachers, was found to be positively related to satisfaction with work and employment. The standardised Beta coefficients suggest that this was the strongest relationship of all in the model. The estimates also suggest that conscientiousness was positively associated with satisfaction with work and neuroticism was negatively associated with it. The regression model explained the 24.5% variance in job satisfaction (Table 3).

**Table 3** Regression model for satisfaction with work and employment

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Extraversion	.002	.070	.002	.025	.980
Neuroticism	-.099	.026	-.230	-3.769	< .001
Conscientiousness	.077	.028	.184	2.762	.006
Dominance	.059	.072	.058	.819	.414
Arrogance	.038	.059	.042	.638	.524
Supportive behaviour of head teacher	.084	.018	.279	4.797	< .001
Gender	2.024	1.349	.091	1.500	.135
Age	.050	.043	.069	1.148	.252
School year (1-4/5-9)	-.812	.820	-.057	-.990	.323
<i>Constant</i>	19.283	5.654		3.410	.001

( $F_{\text{total}}(9;265) = 8.717$ ;  $p < .0005$ ).  $R = .495$ ;  $R^2 = .243$ . Please treat the  $p$ -values in the last column with caution due to the limitations related to the construction of the research sample (see section 3.1 for more detail).

**Model for overall life satisfaction.** Table 4 shows the estimates of the regression model for overall life satisfaction. The model explains 27.1% of variance in overall life satisfaction. The relatively strongest relationships were identified for the personality variables of neuroticism, dominance, as well as dominant-cooperative behaviour of the head teacher. The more dominant and more emotionally stable the teachers were, the more satisfied with life they were.

**Model for emotional well-being.** The values for the regression model which explain the variance in emotional well-being are shown in Table 5. The model explains 37.4% of variance in the emotional component of subjective well-being. The effect of neuroticism was found to be relatively strongest on the collected data ( $Beta = -.431$ ) and extraversion ( $Beta = .209$ ). There are indications that the age of the teacher was also important, with older teachers showing lower emotional satisfaction than younger teachers.

**82** Table 4 Regression model for overall life satisfaction

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Extraversion	.104	.358	.019	.290	.772
Neuroticism	-.630	.134	-.283	-4.713	< .001
Conscientiousness	.156	.143	.071	1.091	.276
Dominance	1.036	.365	.197	2.840	0.005
Arrogance	.262	.302	.057	.869	.386
Supportive behaviour of head teacher	.401	.089	.257	4.482	< .001
Gender	5.885	7.001	.050	0.840	.401
Age	-.205	.222	-.055	-.926	.356
School year (1-4/5-9)	-3.961	4.175	-.054	-.949	.344
<i>Constant</i>	186.626	28.769		6.487	< .001

( $F_{\text{total}}(9;265) = 9.971$ ;  $p < .0005$ ).  $R = .521$ ;  $R^2 = .271$ . Please treat the  $p$ -values in the last column with caution due to the limitations related to the construction of the research sample (see section 3.1 for more detail).

**Table 5** Regression model for emotional well-being

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Extraversion	.053	.015	.209	3.499	.001
Neuroticism	-.044	.006	-.431	-7.758	< .001
Conscientiousness	.003	.006	.031	.516	.606
Dominance	.024	.015	.101	1.574	.117
Arrogance	-.011	.013	-.050	-.830	.407
Supportive behaviour of head teacher	.003	.004	.047	.883	.378
Gender	.477	.292	.090	1.633	.104
Age	-.026	.009	-.154	-2.811	.005
School years (1-4/5-9)	-.192	.178	-.057	-1.084	.279
<i>Constant</i>	.855	1.223		.699	.485

( $F_{\text{total}}(9;2/65) = 16.046$ ;  $p < .0005$ ).  $R = .611$ ;  $R^2 = .374$ . Please treat the  $p$ -values in the last column with caution due to the limitations related to the construction of the research sample (see section 3.1 for more detail).

In order to gain a better understanding of the studied variables, separate models were also built for positive and negative emotions. The frequency of experiencing positive emotions by teachers was most strongly related to extraversion ( $Beta = .313$ ), neuroticism ( $Beta = -.234$ ) and age ( $Beta = -.158$ ). For negative emotions, neuroticism seemed to be the most predictive personality trait ( $Beta = .474$ ).

## 5 Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between the subjective well-being of teachers and social support provided by their head teacher with emphasis put on dominant-cooperative supportive behaviour. The models also included personality traits of the teachers as they have previously been shown to be important internal factors closely related to well-being in general. External factors included in the models were represented by gender, age and the level at which the teachers taught. It is important to remember that the results need to be interpreted with caution due to the limitations related to the construction of the research sample as outlined in section 3.1.

Teachers' work satisfaction was related to the personality traits of neuroticism and conscientiousness. Neuroticism was negatively associated with work satisfaction and conscientiousness was positively associated with work satisfaction. This could mean that those teachers who were emotionally stable, resilient and had strong will-power were able to control their impulsive behaviour and act responsibly and as a result were more satisfied with their work. This corresponds with the notion that conscientiousness is related to work satisfaction indirectly by experiencing situations that influence well-being (McCrae & Costa, 1991). A positive relationship between work satisfaction and conscientiousness was also demonstrated in the study by Van den Berg and Pitariu (2005). The strongest predictor of satisfaction with work and employment was supportive behaviour of the head teacher. This result is consistent with the findings of other studies, which reported a positive relationship with supportive managerial style and job satisfaction (Smith, 2008; Yildirim, 2014). The importance of social support in the work environment especially with respect to its role in buffering negative consequences of emotional stress on work satisfaction has also been suggested by Kinman, Wray and Strange (2011).

The variance in overall life satisfaction of the teachers was explained by their head teacher's behaviour characterized by showing respect, active (patient) listening, emotional support, giving advice and being decisive. This corresponds with teachers' reports on the types of behaviour of head teachers which contribute to their well-being (Dunlop & Macdonald, 2004). Satisfaction with work seems to be an important part of overall satisfaction with life in general (Judge & Locke, 1993). This was also supported by the model explaining satisfaction with work, where the strongest association was found for the head teacher's behaviour characterized by decisiveness, taking responsibility and giving advice as well as providing social support, encouragement and care. The influence of superiors at work on employees' subjective well-being has been shown by Smith (2008) who found that leadership that is tolerant and open, that offers social support, motivates and provides intellectual stimulation, is positively related to the well-being of its employees.

Consistent with other research studies (Van den Berg & Pitariu, 2005), this paper suggests that personality factors have a role in explaining the differences in the subjective well-being of teachers. Overall life satisfaction seems to be linked to the personality factors of emotional stability and dominance. Extraversion was not shown to be a strong factor in relation to the overall life satisfaction of teachers. Similar findings have been observed by other authors and it has been suggested that neuroticism is a better predictor of subjective well-being than extraversion (Libran, 2006). According to Vittersø (2001) extraversion only explains 1% of variance in subjective well-being, while 34% can be attributed to neuroticism. Dominance is characterised in the interpersonal circumplex theory by self-esteem, as well as providing love and status to oneself and these features have been found to be associated to well-being (Lucas, Diener, & Suh, 1996, as cited in Diener & Lucas, 2003; Myers & Diener, 1997; Ryff & Singer, 1998).

Neuroticism and extraversion also appeared to be important in the emotional component of subjective well-being. Extraversion was relatively strongly related to the frequency of experiencing positive emotions and neuroticism appeared to be related to the frequency of negative emotions. Similar findings were reported by Steel, Schmidt and Shultz (2008). There is no evidence of to show that head teachers' behaviour has a strong effect on the emotional component of teachers' well-being.

Of the socio-demographic variables it was only age that was found to be related to emotional well-being and it showed a decreasing tendency as age and working years increased. No strong relationship was identified between gender and grade with the measured components of well-being. Other published research studies regarding gender and age have provided inconsistent results. Some studies found a significant relationship between age and well-being and some did not (Rodná & Rodný, 2001; Keyes, 1998). Konu, Viitanen and Lintonen (2010) showed, in contradiction to the findings of this study, that teachers teaching at a lower level in primary schools had a higher level of well-being.

Extraversion was surprisingly not strongly related to the cognitive component of subjective well-being (overall life satisfaction and satisfaction with work). Nevertheless, a low predictive power of extraversion in this context has been reported by other authors (Libran, 2006; Vittersø, 2001).

### 5.1 Limitations

The findings presented in this study are in many respects logical and in line with expectations. The research assumptions were mostly supported by empirical findings. While there are numerous studies addressing subjective well-being and its determinants, this study has focused on the well-being of teachers in primary schools. The main aim was to explore the interconnections and explanatory power of the determinants in explaining variance in teachers' well-being. However, despite its strength this study has certain limitations which are related to the characteristics of the sample. The convenience sample was based on the availability of the respondents

and so it may not generally be representative of the population of all primary school teachers from the Eastern Slovak region. There are further limitations with regard to the measurement instruments that were adopted into the Slovak language and may require further modifications as some indicators of reliability were relatively low.

In terms of future research, it would be beneficial to create a brief version of the questionnaires as the original versions were long and the whole battery of questionnaires was time-consuming and demanding on the attention and patience of the respondents. Finally, a comprehensive approach to subjective well-being would require supplementing the battery of questionnaires with a measure assessing psychological well-being based on the theory of Ryff and Keyes (1995).

## 5.2 Conclusions

The regression models indicate that social support, defined as supportive behaviour of school head teachers, contributes to the explained variance in the cognitive component of subjective well-being and, particularly, in the domain of satisfaction with work and employment. The supporting behaviour of head teachers, defined as their active engagement, interest, decisiveness, giving advice, emotional support and providing relevant information, seems to be related to teachers' well-being. The personality factors of neuroticism, extraversion and dominance were relatively most important in explaining subjective well-being. It can be said that increasing teachers' physical and psychological health, as well as their subjective well-being, are the key issues in improving the overall atmosphere in schools. The research findings of this study show a way which could be helpful in achieving this goal.

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PhDr. Anna Janovská, PhD. (corresponding author)

Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Faculty of Arts  
Department of Educational Psychology and Health Psychology  
Šrobárova 2, 040 01 Košice, Slovak Republic  
anna.janovska@upjs.sk  
tel.: +421911 127 358

Prof. PhDr. Olga Orosová, CSc.

Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Faculty of Arts,  
Department of Educational Psychology and Health Psychology  
Šrobárova 2, 040 01 Košice, Slovak Republic  
olga.orosova@upjs.sk;

MSc. et Mgr. Jozef Janovský

Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Faculty of Arts  
Department of Educational Psychology and Health Psychology  
Šrobárova 2, 040 01 Košice, Slovak Republic  
jozef.janovsky@mail.muni.cz