The Perspective on Work in the Case of Special Education Teachers

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Abstract: Special education presents unique challenges that can influence employees' perspectives on their work. This research analyzed the attitudes of teaching staff in special education, with 66 participants completing questionnaires, including the Perceived Organizational Support Scale (POS) and the Job Satisfaction Survey. The results indicated that educators working with children with intellectual and physical disabilities who report high levels of perceived organizational support and job satisfaction also demonstrate strong commitment to their organization. Thus, teachers in special education generally maintain a positive outlook on their work.

Keywords: special education; perceived organizational support; job satisfaction; organizational commitment

1. Special Education

Special education includes various instructional and support services for students from birth to educational completion, provided they meet eligibility criteria under

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the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These services ensure eligible students receive a "free and appropriate public education" (Brucker, 2021).

The term "special needs" refers to the specific requirements of individuals with disabilities or those at risk, emphasizing their unique challenges and the need for specialized support.

This includes tailored care, services, and accommodations to assist both individuals and their caregivers. Common areas of focus are intervention, curricula, behavior management, and transition planning, along with necessary adaptations for various disability deficits (Kellerher, 2021).

2. Special Education Teachers

Teachers who work with children with intellectual and physical disabilities are exceptional individuals. They adapt their teaching methods to meet each student's unique needs, using specialized techniques and tools to facilitate learning. A strong understanding of various disabilities and the challenges they present is vital. These educators display immense patience, empathy, and creativity, and often collaborate with therapists and parents to ensure a well-rounded educational experience. Their role encompasses both academic teaching and supporting students' social and emotional development, fostering confidence and independence. The challenges they face are significant, but the rewards of witnessing student progress and achievements are truly fulfilling (Kontu & Pirttimaa, 2016).

The specialized literature (Bangkok UNESCO, 2009; Cook & Ogden, 2021; Weiss, Markowetz & Keil, 2018; Petersson-Blomm & Holmqvist, 2022) highlights the following challenges faced by these teachers such as:

• Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs): Each student has unique needs, which requires the creation and constant updating of personalized education plans to ensure their progress.

• Communication barriers: Many children with intellectual or physical disabilities have communication difficulties, which can make understanding their needs and emotions more difficult.

• Resource limitations: There is often a lack of adequate resources, such as specialized equipment, assistive technology, and instructional materials designed for students with disabilities.

- Behavioral challenges: managing a range of behaviours, which may stem from frustration, sensory overload or the nature of the disability itself, can be difficult.

- Physical and emotional strain: The physical demands of assisting students with mobility issues, along with the emotional toll of navigating their educational and personal challenges, can be significant.

- Collaboration with Specialists: Coordinating with therapists, counselors, and medical professionals to support the comprehensive needs of each student takes significant time and effort.

The various challenges encountered within the workplace can significantly shape an employee's perception of organizational support. This perception, in turn, affects their overall job satisfaction and level of commitment to the organization. A lack of support may foster feelings of disengagement, while a robust support system can enhance morale and loyalty, ultimately influencing employee performance and retention.

3. The Perspective on the Work of Special Education Teachers

Educators engaged with students who have intellectual disabilities frequently report a distinctive level of job satisfaction. A significant factor influencing this satisfaction is a strong sense of purpose inherent to their roles. This sense of purpose may stem from the profound impact they have on their students' development and well-being, which fosters intrinsic motivation and professional fulfillment. For many educators, a deep sense of fulfillment comes from the knowledge that their work has a lasting impact on the lives of their students. They take great pride in shaping young minds, inspiring curiosity, and fostering a love of learning, ultimately believing that their efforts help to pave the way for their students' future successes. This awareness of their vital role in the educational journey instills a powerful motivation that transcends the challenges of the profession. Helping children reach milestones, no matter how small, can be incredibly rewarding. Teachers in this field experience personal growth. Working with children with intellectual disabilities often pushes teachers to develop new skills and strategies. This continuous learning process can be both challenging and rewarding. They also experience the creation of meaningful bonds formed with students and their families. Teachers often feel a sense of community and support, which increases their job satisfaction. Witnessing their students' progress and development, even if it is gradual, can be a major source of

joy and motivation. According to research, teachers in this field often derive satisfaction from the altruistic nature of their work and the significant impact they have on the lives of their students. Working closely with other educators, therapists, and specialists can create a supportive environment that increases job satisfaction. Teachers often develop a heightened sense of empathy and understanding, which can enrich their personal and professional lives. Despite the challenges, the rewards of seeing their students grow and succeed can make the job deeply rewarding for these dedicated educators. Also, there is an increased satisfaction related to the salary of people in special education, but also a satisfaction related to the working environment, relationships with colleagues. In general, people working in this field perceive a medium to high level of job satisfaction (Antoniou et al., 2022; Ketheeswaran, 2018; Shaukat, Vishnumolakal & Al Bustami, 2019; Yavuz, 2018; Strydom et al., 2012; Platsidou & Agaliotis, 2009).

Teachers working with children with intellectual disabilities often perceive support at work in several key areas such as professional development, collaboration and teamwork, access to resources, administrative support, psychological and emotional support, but also recognition and appreciation. Thus many schools offer continuing education and workshops to help teachers stay current on the latest teaching strategies and interventions for students with intellectual disabilities. This professional growth is crucial for teachers to feel competent and confident in their roles. Educators frequently collaborate with a diverse array of professionals, including fellow teachers, special education specialists, therapists, and various support staff members. This teamwork-oriented environment cultivates a strong sense of camaraderie and collective accountability, creating a supportive network that enhances the educational experience for both staff and students. The interplay of their distinct skills and insights encourages a holistic approach to learning, ensuring that every student's needs are met effectively. Teachers who have access to specialized assistive technology materials and adaptive equipment from the school perceive greater support from the organization. The support received from the administrative side of the organization can make a significant difference. This includes understanding from school leaders, adequate planning time and assistance with administrative tasks, allowing teachers to focus more on instruction. A multitude of schools provide a range of supportive resources designed to aid teachers in navigating the emotional challenges inherent in their profession. These offerings often include dedicated counseling services where educators can seek professional guidance, peer support groups that foster a sense of community and shared

experience, and comprehensive stress management programs that equip teachers with effective strategies to manage their emotional well-being. This support can be invaluable in maintaining the teacher's well-being. Feeling appreciated and recognized for their hard work and dedication can significantly boost teacher morale. Schools that celebrate the achievements of their staff help create a positive and motivating work environment. These forms of support can greatly increase job satisfaction and help teachers feel more effective and valued in their roles (Kontu & Pirttimaa, 2016; Bangkok UNESCO, 2009; Carrington et al., 2016).

Working with children with intellectual and physical disabilities involves a multitude of challenges, but also rewards, which is why we want this research to highlight the perception of work at the level of teachers who teach in special education in Romania.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. The Aim and Goals of the Study

The primary aim of this research is to deeply examine the connections and distinctions in job satisfaction levels experienced by teachers working within the realm of special education. We seek to provide a comprehensive analysis of how organizational commitment relates to job satisfaction, considering a wide array of influential factors such as salary, opportunities for promotions, supervisory practices, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, working conditions, relationships with colleagues, the inherent nature of the work, and the quality of communication within the organization. Furthermore, this study will also focus on understanding the relationship between organizational commitment and the perceived support from the organization, shedding light on how these elements interact and impact the overall job satisfaction of special education teachers.

4.2. Research Variables and Hypotheses

The key research variables encompass the perceived level of support employees feel they receive from their organization, their commitment and loyalty to the organization itself, and their overall satisfaction with various aspects of their employment. This includes their feelings about their salary, opportunities for promotions, quality of supervision received, and the various fringe benefits offered.

Additionally, it covers their satisfaction with contingent rewards such as bonuses, the overall working conditions, relationships with colleagues, the nature of the tasks they perform, and the effectiveness of communication within the workplace.

Hypothesis 1 - posits a positive correlation between various facets of job satisfaction—specifically, satisfaction with salary, promotion opportunities, supervisory quality, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, working conditions, interpersonal relationships, the nature of work, and communication effectiveness— and organizational commitment. This hypothesis suggests that an increase in job satisfaction levels is associated with a corresponding increase in employees' commitment to the organization.

Hypothesis 2 - suggests a positive correlation between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment. This implies that elevated levels of perceived organizational support are associated with increased commitment to the organization among employees.

4.3. Description of the Group of Participants

66 teachers from special education participated in the research, analyzed from the perspective of gender, age, environment of origin, marital status and experience in special education. Thus there were 63 female persons and 3 male persons. Regarding age, there were the following categories: 20-25 years (6 people), 31-40 years (9 people), 41-50 years (30 people), over 50 years (21 people). Of the total number, 54 come from the urban environment and 12 from the rural environment. Marital status was divided as follows: single (12 people), cohabiting relationship (12 people), married (30 people), divorced (12 people). And the last feature of the group of participants is given by the number of years of experience in special education, thus there is the category 0-1 years of experience (9 people), 1-5 years of experience (6 people), 5-10 years of experience (12 people) , 10-20 years of experience (12 people), over 20 years of experience (27 people).

4.4. Description of the Tools Used

The following psychological questionnaires were used in the research: Perceived Organizational Support Scale (POS), The Job Satisfaction Survey and Affective, Normative, and Continuance Commitment.

The Perceived Organizational Support Scale was developed by Eisenberger et al. in 1986 and measures the employee's perceived organizational support. The scale contains 17 items, 7 of which are reverse scored, with response options in the form of a 7-point Likert scale starting from 1 = strongly disagree and reaching 7 = strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha for this scale is between .80 and .93 (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

The Job Satisfaction Survey is an instrument created by Spector in 1985 and refers to the analysis of job satisfaction from several perspectives (Satisfaction with Pay, Satisfaction with Promotion, Satisfaction with Supervision, Satisfaction with Fringe Benefits, Satisfaction with Contingent Rewards, Satisfaction with Operating Conditions, Satisfaction with Coworkers, Satisfaction with Nature of Work, Satisfaction with Communication). The questionnaire contains 36 items, 19 of which are scored in winter, with response options in the form of a 6-point Likert scale starting from 1 – strongly disagree and reaching 6 – strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha for this instrument is between .71 and .91 (Spector, 1997).

And the last tool used is the Affective, Normative, and Continuance Commitment, which was created by Meyer and Allen in 1997. It contains 24 items, 8 scored inverns, with response options in the form of a 7-step Likert scale starting from 1 – strongly disagree and up to 7 – strongly agree. The scale measures the employee's commitment to the organization. Cronbach's alpha is between .73 and .85 (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

4.5. Description of the Research Procedure

In order to carry out the research, the questionnaires were translated into Google Forms format and distributed using the online environment. The form was distributed to special education teachers associated with a special school. After the form was completed, the data were scored and statistically interpreted in order to confirm or refute the proposed hypotheses.

4.6. Descriptive and Normality Statistics

The data collected from the participants were analyzed from the point of view of descriptive statistics and normality, the results being presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive and normality statistics at the level of research variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Skewness	Kurtosis	Kolmogorv Smirnov	Shapiro Wilk
Perceived Organizational Support	66	96,05	20,378	57	119	-,506	-1,371	,221	,847
Satisfaction with Pay	66	17,86	4,581	5	24	-,839	1,006	,107	,922
Satisfaction with Promotion	66	16,50	4,665	4	23	-,699	,593	,113	,932
Satisfaction with Supervision	66	21,32	3,848	11	24	-1,348	,611	,260	,724
Satisfaction with Fringe Benefits	66	17,55	3,840	8	24	-,639	,234	,171	,946
Satisfaction with Contingent Rewards	66	17,41	4,140	9	24	-,289	-,848	,104	,952
Satisfaction with Operating Conditions	66	11,64	3,322	6	19	,283	-,566	,143	,958
Satisfaction with Coworkers	66	17,82	3,875	9	23	-,565	-,702	,213	,916
Satisfaction with Nature of Work	66	21,05	3,222	15	24	-,776	-,897	,253	,810
Satisfaction with Communication	66	19,18	4,195	11	24	-,576	-,977	,168	,887
Commitment to the organization	66	117,59	16,983	85	141	-,704	-,823	,213	,875

As can be seen in the table above, the results of the descriptive and normality analysis indicate an asymmetric and abnormally distributed distribution (p<0.05). The analysis reveals that the mean scores for the research variables fall within a medium to high range, suggesting a favorable perception among participants. This indicates

that, in general, individuals experience a significant level of perceived organizational support, a strong sense of job satisfaction, and a high degree of commitment to their organization. These elevated scores reflect a positive workplace environment that likely contributes to overall employee well-being and loyalty.

4.7. Statistical Interpretation of the Results

Following a thorough descriptive analysis of the collected data, the research team reached a collective understanding regarding the appropriate statistical tests to employ. To investigate the research hypotheses in detail, the non-parametric Spearman Correlation test was selected as the most fitting method. This analysis aimed to explore the intricate relationships between employees' commitment to their organization and their levels of job satisfaction, while also considering how these factors are influenced by perceived organizational support. This approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the dynamics at play within the workplace environment.

4.7.1. Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis of this research explores the connection between organizational commitment and job satisfaction specifically among special education teachers. It suggests that educators who experience a high degree of job satisfaction—characterized by their fulfillment in their roles, positive feelings about their work environment, and overall contentment—are likely to exhibit a strong commitment to their organization. This commitment may manifest in their dedication to the school's mission, loyalty to their colleagues, and a willingness to go above and beyond in their professional responsibilities.

Table 2. Spearman Correlation between Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction

Variable	M/SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.Commitment to the organization	117,59(16,983)	1	,307*	,360**	,314*	,394**	,364**	,233	,346**	,234	,493**
2.Satisfaction with Pay	17,86(4,581)		1	,711**	,640**	,601**	,673**	,533**	,659**	,502**	,626**

3.Satisfaction with Promotion	16,50(4,665)	1	,704 **	,420 **	,622 **	,302 *	,495 **	,400 **	,735 **
4.Satisfaction with Supervision	21,32(3,848)		1	,434 **	,714 **	,548 **	,811 **	,632 **	,699 **
5.Satisfaction with Fringe Benefits	17,55(3,840)			1	,657 **	,339 **	,432 **	,479 **	,626 **
6.Satisfaction with Contingent Rewards	17,41(4,140)				1	,641 **	,750 **	,609 **	,573 **
7.Satisfaction with Operating Conditions	11,64(3,322)					1	,802 **	,381 **	,333 **
8.Satisfaction with Coworkers	17,82(3,875)						1	,569 **	,533 **
9.Satisfaction with Nature of Work	21,05(3,222)							1	,564 **
10.Satisfaction with Communication	19,18(4,195)								1

**Significant correlation p<0,01

* Significant correlation p<0,05

After analyzing the statistical results, the following conclusions related to hypothesis 1 can be drawn:

The analysis reveals several correlations between organizational commitment and various facets of employee satisfaction, highlighting the interdependencies that may influence employee retention and engagement:

- Satisfaction with Pay: There is a moderate positive correlation ($\rho = 0.307$, $p < 0.05$) between commitment to the organization and satisfaction with pay. This suggests that higher satisfaction with monetary compensation is associated with increased organizational commitment.

- Satisfaction with Promotion: A stronger moderate positive correlation ($\rho = 0.360$, $p < 0.05$) exists here as well, indicating that as employees experience greater satisfaction with promotional opportunities, their commitment to the organization also tends to rise.

- Satisfaction with Supervision: A moderate positive correlation ($\rho = 0.314$, $p < 0.05$) was found, demonstrating that enhanced satisfaction with supervisory relationships corresponds to higher levels of organizational commitment.

- Satisfaction with Fringe Benefits: This dimension shows the highest correlation ($\rho = 0.394$, $p < 0.05$) among the factors evaluated, implying that satisfaction with fringe benefits significantly impacts an employee's commitment to the organization.

- Satisfaction with Contingent Rewards: Another moderately positive correlation ($\rho = 0.364$, $p < 0.05$) indicates that higher satisfaction with contingent rewards correlates with increased commitment to the organization.

- Satisfaction with Operating Conditions: In contrast, the correlation between commitment to the organization and satisfaction with operating conditions is statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$). This suggests no reliable association between the two variables.

- Satisfaction with Coworkers: A moderate positive correlation ($\rho = 0.346$, $p < 0.05$) reflects that higher satisfaction with coworker relationships is linked to greater commitment to the organization.

- Satisfaction with Nature of Work: Similar to operating conditions, the correlation with the nature of work is statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$), indicating a lack of association with organizational commitment.

- Satisfaction with Communication: The strongest correlation in this study is found here ($\rho = 0.493$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that greater satisfaction with communication practices is closely tied to elevated levels of commitment to the organization.

These findings underscore the importance of satisfaction across multiple dimensions in fostering commitment, while also indicating areas like operating conditions and nature of work that may not have a direct effect.

Hypothesis 1 is partially validated, as statistically significant correlations were identified between specific dimensions of job satisfaction and organizational commitment among special education employees. This suggests that these employees perceive a relationship between particular facets of their job satisfaction and their commitment to the organization.

4.7.2. Hypothesis 2

Table 3. Spearman correlation between organizational commitment and perceived organizational support

Variable	M/SD	1	2
Perceived Organizational Support	96,05(20,378)	1	,477**
Commitment to the organization	117,59(16,983)	1	

** Significant correlation p<0,01

In the case of the second hypothesis, the results were statistically significant, which means that there is a moderate positive correlation at a correlation coefficient of $\rho=.477$ and at a significance threshold of $p<0.05$. Therefore, this hypothesis is confirmed, which means that when employees perceive high organizational support, so is the case of commitment to the organization.

In summary, the analysis of the recorded statistical results reveals that special education teachers generally report medium to high levels of job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, and commitment to their respective organizations. This finding suggests that the work environment is positively perceived by these educators, contributing to their overall job fulfillment and loyalty. Furthermore, the data indicates a clear correlation between perceived organizational support and commitment levels. Teachers who feel supported by their educational institution—whether through resources, emotional support, or recognition—tend to exhibit significantly higher levels of commitment to their organization. This relationship highlights the importance of a supportive work culture in fostering dedication among educators. In terms of job satisfaction, the findings emphasize that teachers who express high levels of satisfaction across several specific facets—such as compensation, opportunities for promotion, quality of supervision, availability of fringe benefits, receipt of contingent rewards, relationships with coworkers, and effectiveness of communication—demonstrate a pronounced commitment to their

educational institutions. Each of these factors plays a critical role in shaping their overall satisfaction and engagement, ultimately influencing their dedication to the mission and goals of the organization.

5. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research Directions

The objective of the research was to examine the interrelationships among perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment within the context of special education teachers. This study aimed to provide insights into how these factors influence one another and contribute to the overall work experience of educators in this specialized field.

By consulting specialized literature, it has become evident that professionals in the field of special education face significant challenges stemming from the diverse intellectual and physical disabilities of their students. Additionally, findings indicate that teachers in this domain experience a moderate level of satisfaction with their organizations. Given this context, an analysis was conducted to assess the situation of special education teachers in Romania, focusing on the levels of perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, and commitment to their organizations. Statistical results showed that, at the group level, perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment all ranged from medium to high levels. The findings suggest that teachers who feel supported by their organizations tend to experience greater job satisfaction across various domains, including financial compensation, opportunities for advancement, quality of supervision, benefits beyond salary, recognition through contingent rewards, collegial relationships, and effective workplace communication. These elements of satisfaction often coincide with a strong commitment to their organizations, indicating that perceived organizational support is integral to fostering both employee contentment and loyalty.

The limitations identified at the research level boil down to the small number of participants and the difficulty of researching several aspects related to the perspective on the work of special education teachers. Thus, it is recommended to expand research in order to determine the concrete perspective on the work of people who work with children with intellectual and physical disabilities.

Finally, this research represents a starting point in expanding the findings in this field and highlights the fact that despite the challenges encountered by special education

teachers, they receive support from the organization, help and understanding in order to carry out their teaching work as efficiently as possible for children with intellectual and physical disabilities.

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