

Teaching in conflict contexts: dimensions of subjective wellbeing in Palestinian teachers living in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory

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Abstract

Background Subjective wellbeing can be defined in terms of good mental state, including positive and negative evaluations that people make of their affect and lives. The aim of this study was to identify specific domains of wellbeing that are salient to Palestinian teachers living in three different contexts (West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel) and to map how components of subjective wellbeing vary between the three cohorts.

Methods Data were gathered from interviews of teachers participating in 16 focus groups and from 36 key informants (including psychologists, counsellors, school principals, lawyers). Participants were divided into three groups according to their working locations. Data were analysed by using a mixed-method approach. We used thematic textual analysis, and data were cross-validated with results of statistical significance of lexical specificities (ie, domain-specific terms extracted from specific participants' lexicon) and semantic network analysis.

Findings We interviewed 104 teachers. First-order hierarchical categorisation of thematic analysis revealed four dimensions of subjective wellbeing: psychosocial, professional-related, economic issues, and contextual factors. Some second-order subcategories were quality of teaching work, personality aspects, emotional dimensions, political dimensions, and psychological dimensions. Analysis of lexical specificities and results of semantic network analysis revealed that the importance of different components of subjective wellbeing varied across geographical cohorts. Overall, the results of qualitative and quantitative data analysis showed a clear relationship between the teachers' subjective wellbeing and the places they lived.

Interpretation General themes were common in all populations, but the three cohorts differed in terms of the relative salience of each theme. The prominent themes for the Gazan group were quality of teaching, social dimensions, and religion. The key themes for the West Bank group were economic, social dimensions, and recognition. Salient themes for the Arab-Israeli group were professional, emotional, and social dimensions. Despite some differences between the diasporic Palestinian populations in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel, the categories of wellbeing are supported in all cohorts.

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Contributors

AP did the statistical analysis and wrote the Abstract. LA did the qualitative analysis. GV planned the research and wrote the Abstract. JD did the interviews. All authors have seen and approved the final version of the Abstract for publication.

Declaration of interests

GV has worked in Gaza recently as a trainer with Mercy Corps, USA, and as a teacher in the MA programme in community mental health run by the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme. Since 2009, GV has contributed to the Remedial Education Centre in Gaza as a consultant, teacher, and project coordinator. AP and LA declare no competing interests.

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