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SATISFACTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS FROM ROMANIAN RURAL AREAS

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Abstract

Organization's human resource is often called the "most valuable asset", although it does not appear in the organization's accounts. Organization's success depends on the way in which its members implement its objectives; therefore the satisfaction of human resources is crucial for achieving good results in the organization. In this work, we conducted an analysis of the particularities of human resource management in secondary education area and an empirical study on the satisfaction of human resources in a typical rural Romanian schools. It is imperative for Romania to adopt a strategy to improve the education system in order to include new approaches of organizational governance and human resources management so that human resources within the education system have a high degree of satisfaction from the work performed.

Keywords: Human Resources, Satisfaction, Rural Areas, Secondary Education, Romania

1. Introduction

The existence of highly motivated teachers, appropriately qualified, adequately supported through various forms and working in a stimulating environment for teaching and learning represents the core of any educational system. Public recognition of the status of teachers and the teaching profession are crucial to a quality education process. As international standards in this area (ILO and UNESCO, 1966) state, teaching is a profession that requires knowledge and specialized skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous education, maintained throughout the whole life through continuous learning and a sense of personal and collective responsibility for the education and welfare of pupils (Frolova, 2014).

An essential element to motivate and retain well qualified teachers is to provide desirable careers and some options for career development, associated with good balance between personal life and working time, including ensuring enough attractive salaries (Anghelache, 2012). A diversified and effective structure of teachers' career is essential in choosing this profession (ILO, 2012).

Attracting and retaining the best qualified individuals is imperative and requires a careful determination of appropriate policies and incentives (Bocean, 2012). In countries where education systems expand, attracting and retaining the best qualified individuals is a challenge even more acute (Benveniste *et al*, 2007; Poisson, 2009). While adequate and decent salaries are an absolute minimum, leave for professional development, including study leave, can contribute to creating opportunities that make teaching an attractive profession and helping to retain the best teachers (Hdiggui, 2006).

Satisfaction of teachers is also linked with career prospects and working time, significant proportions of teachers being attracted to the profession as a way to maintain a good balance between personal life and work (Odden and Kelly, 2008). The shortage of teachers has tended to be less acute in countries where teachers still enjoy the status of civil servant or equivalent stable status with good working conditions (OECD, 2005 and 2009).

Research has shown that continuing professional development (has a positive impact on the attitudes, beliefs and practices, the results of learning and implementation of successful educational reform (Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Bocean and Sitnikov, 2015; Buligina and Sloka, 2016). A good program of continuing professional development would enhance the quality of teaching and also is likely to make the profession more attractive and challenging for teachers (Kiran, 2014).

The work environment in which teachers operate is essential for their ability to exercise effectively their professional roles, job satisfaction and ensure the best possible outcomes for teaching and learning (Oge and Damar, 2013). The ways in which teachers are rewarded for their work send vital messages about the value of work and status (Odden and Kelly, 2008). Teachers' salaries should reflect all the responsibilities they have and the fact that some jobs require higher qualifications, experience and greater responsibilities (ILO and UNESCO, 1966).

The paper has a structure composed of five sections. The first section provides an introduction, while the second section sets out the research methodology. The third section is represented by an exploratory research on particular aspects of human resources management in secondary education in Romania. The fourth section is devoted to a quantitative study on satisfaction of human resources in a secondary school from Romanian rural area. The last section concludes the research.

2. Research Methodology

Research objectives are the analyze of particularities of human resource management in secondary education in Romania and an empirical study on satisfaction of human resources in a typical Romanian rural secondary school - Vișina Nouă. To address the first objective, we used an exploratory research to identify key specific aspects of human resources management in secondary education in Romania. In the approach of second objective we conducted a quantitative research based on questionnaires to record and interpret employee perceptions on job satisfaction in a typical Romanian rural school. In this respect, we chose Vișina Nouă Secondary School, a small school in a community with a number of students steadily declining due to aging population and emigration phenomena.

3. Human Resource Management in the Romanian Pre-university Education

In Romania, human resources in secondary education include the following staff: teachers, auxiliary teachers and administrative staff (Romanian Parliament, 2011). We performed an exploratory analysis of the ways in which are operationalized the human resource management in the Romanian pre-university education.

In pre-university education, vacant teaching jobs are occupied through competition organized at school level with legal personality (Romanian Parliament, 2011). Contests for teaching positions have open access. At contest may participate any person who fulfills the requirements of legislation. Employing teachers in schools with legal personality is made through individual employment contract signing. Organization and carrying out the contests for

auxiliary and administrative staff of a school are coordinated by the manager. Board approves school's competition commissions and validates the results of the competition.

The competition consists of practical or special inspection at classroom teaching and writing exam of specialty for hiring teachers with individual employment contract of indefinite duration, and submission of a curriculum vitae and an interview for hiring associate teachers (Romanian Parliament, 2011). Competition commissions are approved by the board of directors of the schools. There is necessarily a representative of the County School Inspectorate in the competition committee composed of teachers (Romanian Parliament, 2011).

The main professions in the education system are the educator-child caretakers, ante preschool teacher, preschool teacher, teacher for primary education; teacher in the secondary schools (Romanian Parliament, 2011). Besides these main professions, there may be found other professions in relation to the specific of educational institution. Auxiliary staff in the education system consists of librarian; computer technician; analyst; school pedagogue; instructor; social worker; accompanist; school mediator; secretary; accountant; instructor- animator.

In schools, teachers can be employed with an individual employment contract of indefinite duration or for a period of one school year, with the possibility of extending the contract, according to the law (Romanian Parliament, 2011). Setting up teaching positions at the school level is based on current regulations concerning study formations. Assessment of the staff is annually achieved at school level. The assessment methodology is established by the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports (Romanian Parliament, 2011). The evaluation results underpin the Board's decision on granting annual qualifier and the gradation of merit.

The salaries of teachers and staff from state schools are based on job performance, according to the law (Romanian Parliament, 2011). Remuneration of managers and teachers from private schools are established through negotiation between management and employee, and are endorsed by the board of school unit.

4. Satisfaction Survey of Human Resources across Secondary School Vișina Nouă

To assess satisfaction of human resources in rural Romanian education we choose as example a typical school: Vișina Nouă Secondary School. Organizational culture can be described by a series of features which are based on the dominant values of team spirit, cooperation, affection for the children and respect for profession. The human resources of the school are composed of teachers, auxiliary staff and non-teaching staff. The school has 18 teachers, three auxiliary staff members; namely, secretary, librarian, and accountant. Non-teaching activity is provided by a caretaker. In school are trained and educated 111 students, divided into 4 classes at primary level and 4 classes at secondary level.

To assess satisfaction of human resources in Vișina Nouă Secondary School, we have conducted a study based on a questionnaire. The population studied is the organization's employees (22). They answered 21 of the total 22 which provides a confidence level of 95% with a maximum error of 4%. The gender structure of the sample indicates a high preponderance of female teachers and non-teaching staff (Figure 1).

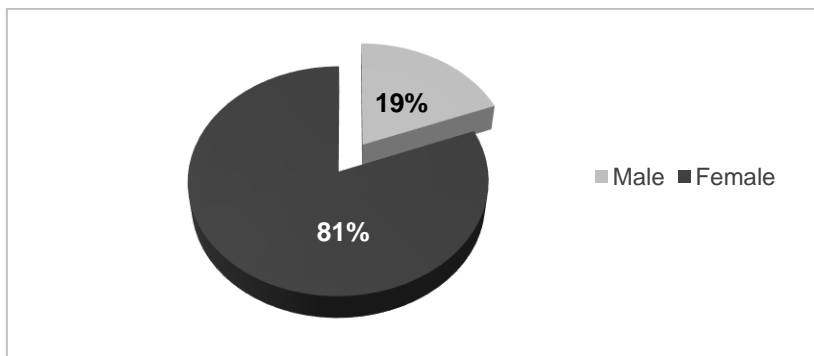


Figure 1. Structure of human resources by gender (percentage)

If we analyze only the teachers, we observed that the proportion is maintained (80% of teachers are women). Making a comparison with the national average, we can say that Vișina Nouă Secondary School is situated in proximity of that average. According to a study by Apostu *et al.* (2015) female teachers in 2014 represented more than three quarters of teachers (78.8%), with a slight increase from year to year. Besides for the preschool, primary and secondary level proportion of teaching female is higher. After processing statistical data collected from the database of INS (TEMPO-online), we found that the proportion of female in education sector is 83.9% of the total teaching staff at national level (INS, 2016).

Concerning the structure by age (Figure 2), it can be seen a relatively balanced distribution with a slight inclination to the right, indicating a mature human resource with slight aging tendencies. The vast majority of teachers and non-teaching staff are in the range 31-50 years (71.43%) and only one person (representing 4.76% of total respondents) is aged under 30 years.

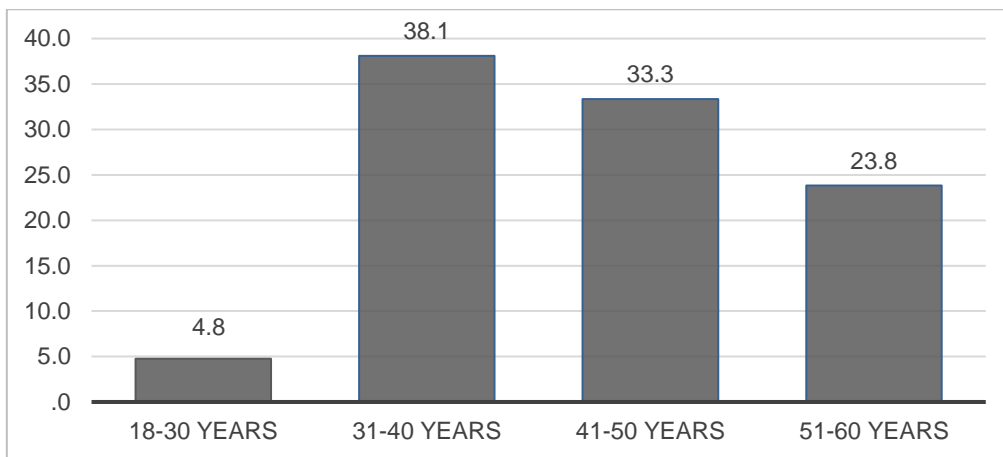


Figure 2. Structure of human resources by age (percent)

Analysis of the structure by seniority categories (Figure 3) shows also a relatively balanced distribution with a slight inclination towards people with greater seniority, indicating an experienced human resources in the workplace.

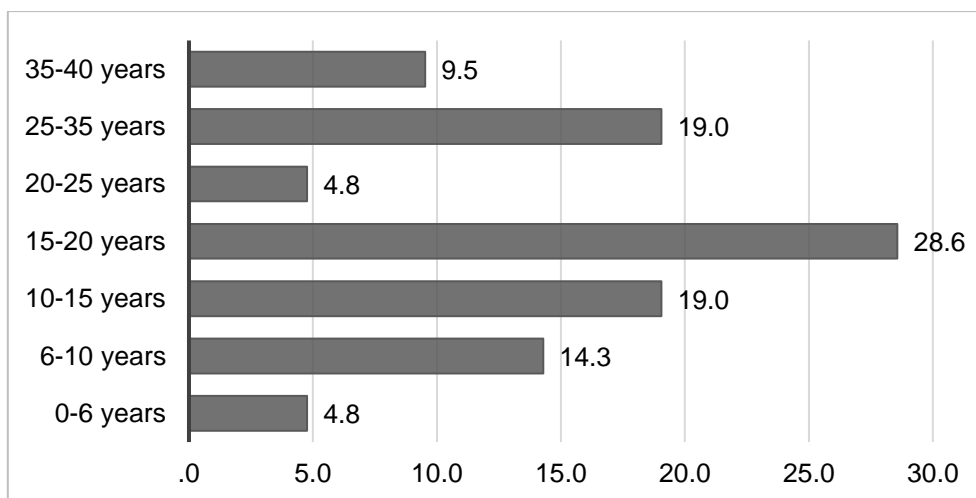


Figure 3. Structure of human resources by category of seniority (percent)

It can be seen that 80.9% or 17 out of 21 respondents have a seniority larger than 10 years of work indicating an experienced and professional workforce. The situation of service in

organization is relatively balanced (Figure 4). While 52.4 (accounting for 11 of the total 21 respondents) worked in the organization for over 10 years, 11 out of 21 respondents (representing 47.6%) were under 10 years old.

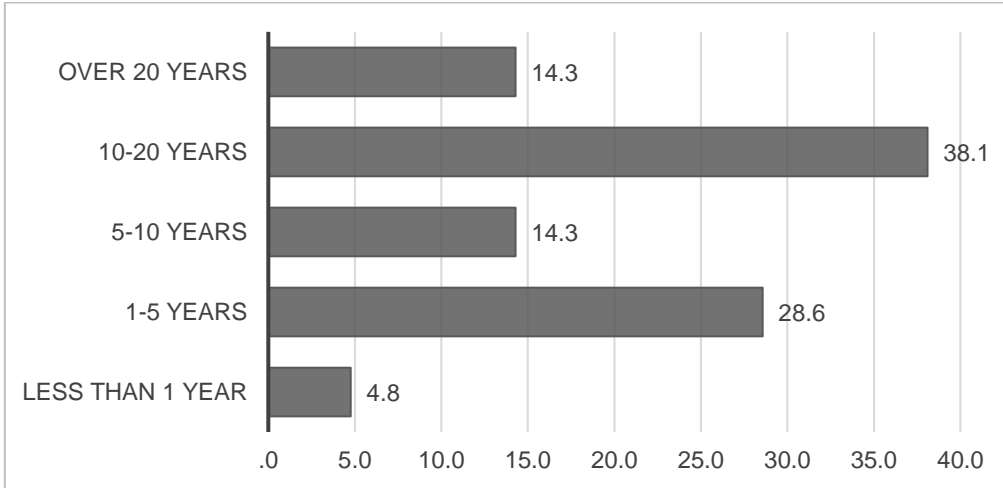


Figure 4. Structure of human resources by category of service in organization (percent)

From comparative analysis of seniority and service in the organization, we can see that there are differences between the percentages of those who have a seniority than 10 years (Figure 5). This phenomenon is explained by the fact that some employees have worked in other organizations before, coming through transfer or job contest.

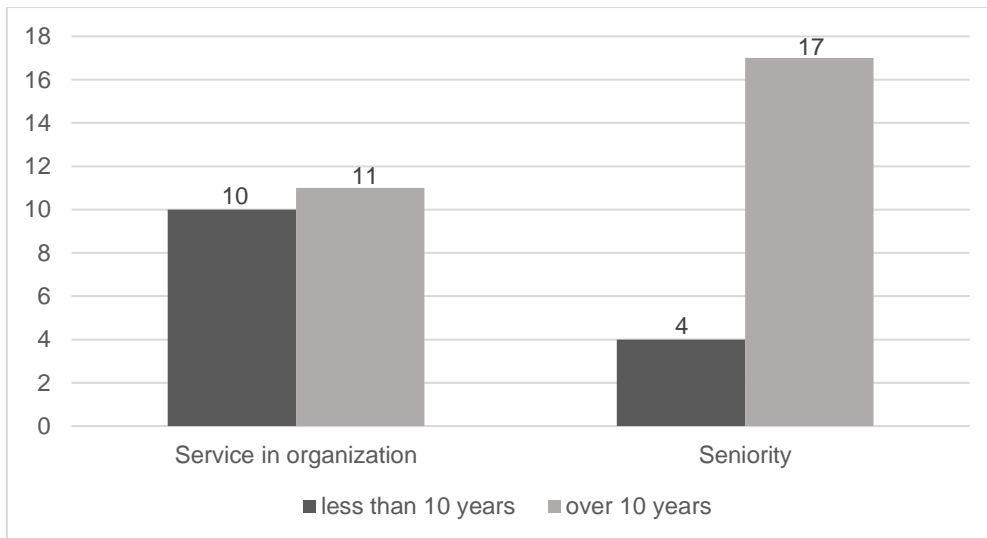


Figure 5. Comparative analysis of human resources by category of service in organization and seniority (absolute indicators)

Of the 21 respondents, 10 are teachers at secondary level, three teachers are at preschools level, three are teachers at primary level, three are auxiliary staff, and two are non-teaching staff (Figure 6).

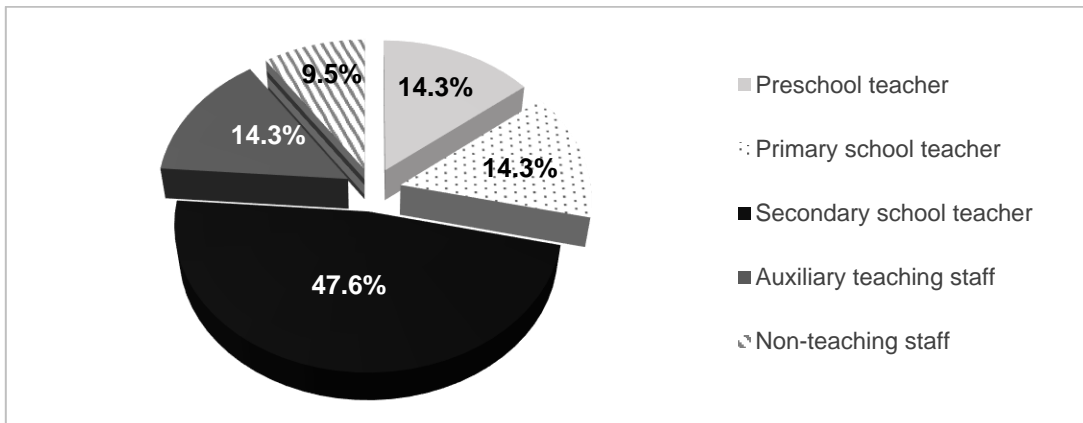


Figure 6. Structure of the human resources by profession indicators (absolute indicators and percent)

Of the 16 teachers, 11 have teaching degree I, two have teaching degree II, one has definitive teaching degree and one is debutant (Figure 7).

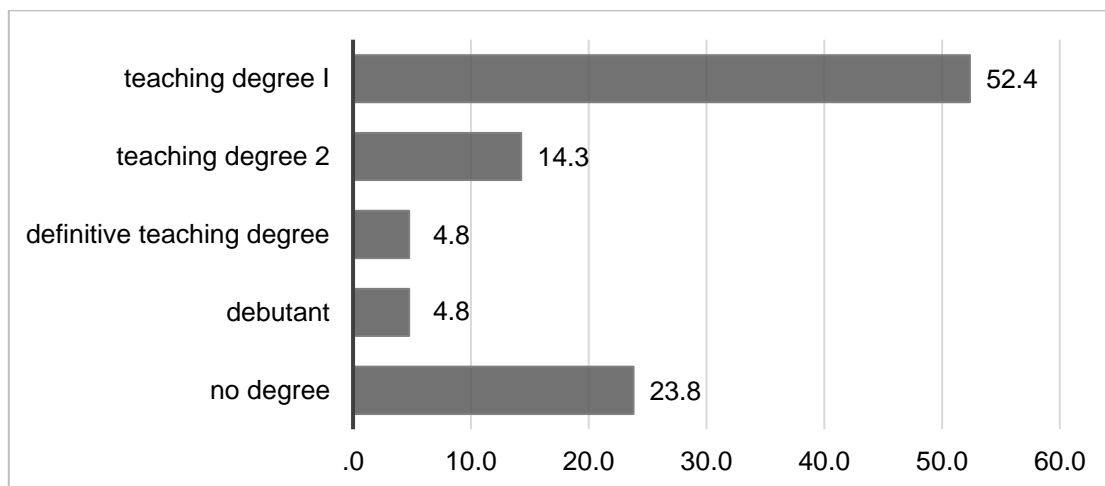


Figure 7. Structure of staff on teaching degrees (percent)

This structure demonstrates the professionalism of teachers in Secondary School Vișina Nouă, being correlated with age, seniority and experience in their work. A second part of our human resources satisfaction research in the Secondary School Vișina Nouă is devoted to human resource management and how it influences the satisfaction. Statements from 7-24 are statements having a scale with five responses: strongly agree (to whom we attributed the value 5); partially agree (to whom we attributed the value 4); moderate (to whom we attributed the value 3); partially disagree (to whom we attributed the value 2); total disagree (to whom we attributed the value 1). Question 25 allows multiple responses (maximum of three) of the six possible to determine which aspects are valued by employees from Vișina Nouă Secondary School.

Hypotheses on which we based our research on the satisfaction of human resources in a pre-university educational institutions in rural areas were as follows:

H₁. The overall level of employee satisfaction within the organization is good, given good organizational climate, the close relationship between colleagues, offering work opportunities in an underdeveloped Romanian rural area.

H₂. Satisfaction level of human resources is influenced by all areas of human resource management.

Analyzing descriptive statistics indicators of Vişina Nouă Secondary School (Table 1), it can be seen that the variables which characterize human resources generally recorded an arithmetic average of over 4, with two exceptions: on salaries variable (3.57) and variable on conflicts within the organization (2.86). This shows that most respondents were fully or partially agree with the statements in the questionnaire dealing with various areas of HR management. Researching overall satisfaction concerning the level of wage, we observed that the distribution of values within the range of variation is platykurtic (kurtosis, being smaller than the 3) with values spread out over a longer interval around the mean and extreme values in certain cases. Asymmetry coefficient (-0.822) indicates a distribution skewed to the right, having left more extreme values (few people are very dissatisfied with the level of remuneration). Concerning the variable that characterizes the existence of conflicts in school, positive asymmetry coefficient (0.795) and the negative kurtosis below normal value (-0.950) indicates that there is less conflict within the organization and perception concerning conflicts belongs to a small number of employees.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics indicators of the human resources analysis in Vişina Nouă Secondary School

	Variable	N	Minim	Maxim	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Identification variables								
1	Sex	21	1	2	1.81	0.402	-1.700	0.975
2	Age	21	1	4	2.76	0.889	0.045	-0.903
3	Seniority	21	1	7	4.10	1.729	0.159	-0.857
4	Service in organization	21	1	5	3.29	1.189	-0.221	-1.087
5	Profession	21	1	5	2.90	1.136	-0.023	-0.087
6	Teaching degree	21	0	4	2.67	1.713	-0.809	-1.189
Human resources variables								
7	Recruitment	21	4	5	4.67	0.483	-0.763	-1.579
8	Evaluation	21	3	5	4.67	0.577	-1.595	1.895
9	Feedback	21	3	5	4.48	0.602	-0.662	-0.394
10	Resources and conditions	21	3	5	4.43	0.746	-0.928	-0.467
11	Encouraging career development	21	2	5	4.29	0.902	-1.087	0.403
12	Management involvement in career development	21	2	5	4.10	0.944	-0.994	0.476
13	Personal development	21	2	5	4.10	0.831	-0.767	0.498
14	Wage	21	1	5	3.57	1.028	-0.822	0.679
15	Equity	21	3	5	4.43	0.676	-0.788	-0.350
16	Collaboration	21	3	5	4.48	0.680	-0.962	-0.102
17	Trust	21	3	5	4.33	0.658	-0.474	-0.551
18	Conflicts	21	2	5	2.86	1.108	0.795	-0.950
19	Organizational climate	21	3	5	4.14	0.854	-0.294	-1.588
20	Equal opportunities	21	2	5	4.19	0.928	-0.828	-0.294
21	Work conditions	21	4	5	4.76	0.436	-1.327	-0.276
22	Health and safety	21	4	5	4.90	0.301	-2.975	7.562
23	Personal satisfaction	21	3	5	4.52	0.680	-1.150	0.260
24	Professional future	21	3	5	4.62	0.590	-1.319	0.989

Following research on human resource variables (Table 2), we conclude that the hypothesis H_1 is valid. The overall level of employee satisfaction within the organization is good,

given good organizational climate, the close relationship between colleagues, offering work opportunities in an underdeveloped Romanian rural areas.

Regarding the degree of satisfaction and trust in professional future, we found that most employees of Secondary School Vișina Nouă are satisfied and have confidence in their professional future, only two, respectively one of the employees having an opinion more moderate (Figure 8).

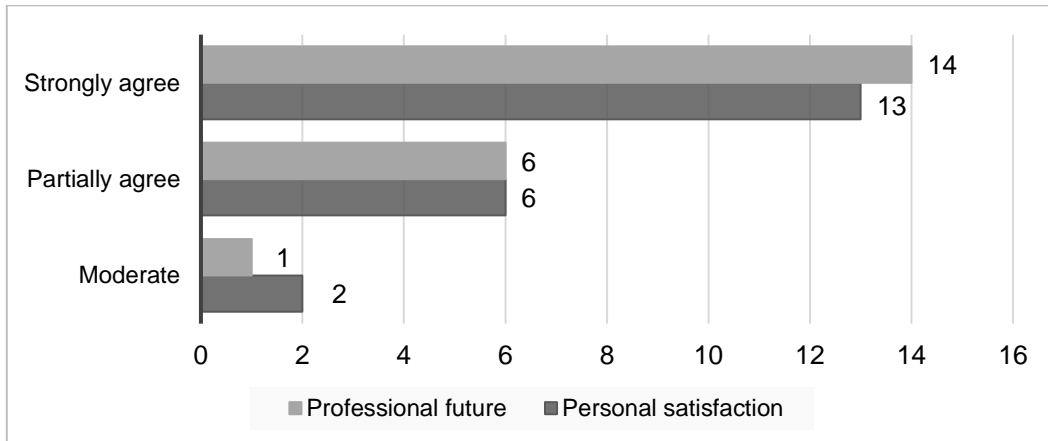


Figure 8. Perception of personal satisfaction and professional confidence in the future (absolute indicators)

Confidence in the professional future is correlated only with material variables, those concerning the conditions and resources, as well as those aimed at wage levels (Table 2).

Table 2. Correlations between indicators characterizing human resource, personal satisfaction and confidence in the future

	Personal satisfaction	Professional future
Recruitment	-0.051	-0.117
Evaluation	0.085	-0.098
Feedback	0.582	0.114
Resources and conditions	0.620	0.503
Encouraging career development	0.804	0.403
Management involvement in career development	0.776	0.248
Personal development	0.793	0.180
Wage	0.767	0.460
Equity	0.466	0.054
Collaboration	0.407	0.351
Trust	0.596	0.215
Conflicts	0.104	0.295
Climate	0.640	0.213
Equal opportunities	0.547	0.231
Work conditions	0.441	0.407
Health and safety	0.501	0.349
Personal satisfaction	1	0.398
Professional future	0.398	1

Following research on personal satisfaction and professional confidence in the future, as well as the correlations analysis of the degree of satisfaction with other variables of human

resource management, we conclude that the hypothesis H_2 is valid. Relationships with colleagues, working conditions and workplace are top three in terms of answers to the question that invites employees Secondary School Vișina Nouă to list up to three aspects they like about the institution where they work (Figure 9).

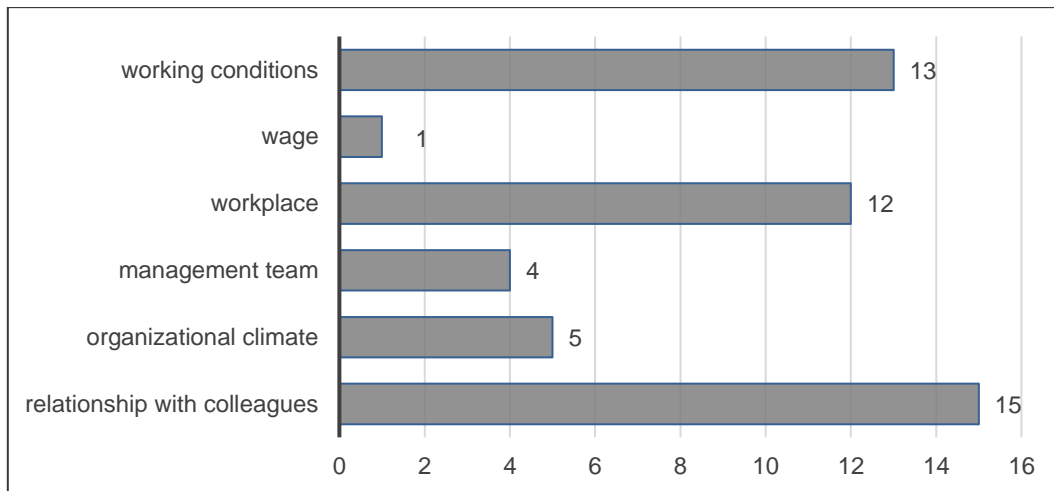


Figure 9. Perception of positive aspects of the organization

5. Conclusion

Without an adequate, qualified, well-motivated labor force, operating within an effective program management of human resources, development is not possible. Every education system at every level depends largely on human resources for the execution of its program. Research conducted at Vișina Nouă Secondary School show that the overall level of employee satisfaction within the organization is good, given good organizational climate, the close relationship between colleagues (team being narrow), offering work opportunities in an underdeveloped Romanian rural area.

The overall conclusion that emerges from empirical research and observations overview of the education system is that in order to improve pupils' outcomes, secondary schools need a strong and ambitious strategy to improve the educational process. Developing a strategic approach to human resources management starts from understanding and accepting the need to dramatically improve organizational performance, especially pupils' achievement. Indeed, many advocates for education reform at all levels and segments of society continue to push for higher levels of pupils' performance and for reducing disparities in pupils' performance between urban and rural areas.

A thorough understanding of the need to improve the performance in the education system should lead to taking into consideration of the motivating driver, in order to stimulate both developing a strategy for improving education and a strategy for human resources management aligned to it. In conclusion, in Romania an improving education strategy must include also new approaches of organizational governance and human resources in order to obtain a satisfied workforce.

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