

# Teachers' professional quality of life, sense of self-efficacy and the moderating role of satisfaction with life

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The aim of the study is to explore the relationship between Greek teachers' perceptions regarding their professional quality of life and their sense of efficacy. Further, the moderating effect of life satisfaction between the dimensions of compassion fatigue (burnout and secondary traumatic stress) and teachers' sense of efficacy is investigated. The sample consisted of 389 primary and secondary teachers living in Athens, Greece. The *Professional Quality of Life Scale* (ProQOL-5) (Stamm, 2010), the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), and the *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (Townshend, 2023) were used for online data collection. The findings indicated the existence of statistically significant relations between the dimensions of professional quality of life, teachers' sense of efficacy, and life satisfaction. Life satisfaction moderated the interaction between burnout and teachers' sense of efficacy. Results provide a better understanding of teachers' perceptions, contributing to the development and provision of tailored interventions and support.

## Introduction

The teaching profession is human-centred and involves the concepts of helping and caring, which potentially exposes teachers, even indirectly, to the traumatic experiences of the people they work with. In the face of international crisis events, such as the recent Covid-19 pandemic, the need to further investigate teachers' professional quality of life has become imperative. Teaching is a demanding occupation that often results in levels of stress like those experienced by health professionals that can lead to burnout and compassion fatigue (Koenig et al., 2017). Findings show that teacher fatigue and emotional strain is related to lower teaching quality, which in turn might affect student schooling and development, thus highlighting the need to further understand these associations (McLean et al., 2018). Thus, the main objective of my study is to explore the association between teacher perception of professional quality of life with teacher efficacy. To better understand how these factors are related, other related factors are also explored, including satisfaction with life and demographics. Gaining a more holistic understanding of these associations would contribute to the provision of tailored services to support teachers in their demanding task.

## Professional quality of life

Professional quality of life (ProQOL) is a concept that refers to the negative and positive effects of providing help to those who have experienced trauma and is typically related to professions dealing with helping other people, such as medical/nursing staff, social workers, teachers, etc. (Bloomquist et al., 2015; Stamm, 2010). ProQOL includes a person's feelings when providing professional assistance and fulfilling work goals and includes two broader dimensions: compassion satisfaction, the satisfaction deriving from

helping others, and compassion fatigue, which is associated with the stress professionals may experience because of the compassion they feel towards the people they support (Sinclair et al., 2016; Stamm, 2010).

It has been suggested that compassion fatigue is a result of burnout and secondary traumatic stress when professionals are exposed to trauma during the provision of services (Cieslak et al., 2014). Burnout, which is defined as the exhaustion experienced when one is overburdened by work, is similar to compassion fatigue in that it involves many of the same symptoms, however, burnout can occur in most occupations, while compassion fatigue is usually associated with helping and is considered 'the cost of caring' (Boyle, 2015). In burnout, the onset is gradual and can lead to indifference and disengagement from clients and from the work environment for a significant period of time. In compassion fatigue, the onset is more unexpected, directly affecting client care and potentially leading to leaving the profession permanently (Gray & Taie, 2015).

The second dimension of compassion fatigue is secondary traumatic stress, which refers to the stress reactions experienced by a person from working with people who have experienced traumatic or significantly stressful life events (Essary et al., 2020). It is defined as "the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other—the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person" (Figley, 1995, p. 7). Secondary traumatic stress can have a gradual onset, such as burnout, but it also has a rapid onset when associated with a specific event or a client (Stamm, 2010).

Most of the research on the dimensions of ProQOL has been conducted with medical and nursing staff. During recent years, there has been an increased interest in teachers' ProQOL - with an emphasis on compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress - since they are often called upon to support vulnerable groups of students. Studies in the US show that the majority of teachers experience high levels of compassion fatigue, often leading to leaving the profession (Pérez-Chacón et al., 2021). In other studies moderate to high levels of compassion satisfaction for the majority of teachers are reported (Brouskeli et al., 2018; Hatzichristou et al., 2022). Women, primary education teachers, and experienced teachers seem to report higher levels of compassion fatigue (Hatzichristou et al., 2022; Yang, 2021).

A recent systematic review has resulted in the following conclusions: (a) the definition and measure of compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress are not consistent across studies; (b) teachers are at risk of developing compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress; (c) varying approaches can alleviate the negative impact of compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress in teachers; and (d) there is limited research on compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress in teachers (Ormiston et al., 2022). The prevalence rates of secondary traumatic stress symptoms experienced by teachers vary between studies, with rates ranging from 43% to 75% (Borntrager et al., 2012; Lawson et al., 2019).

In general, the majority of studies focused on burnout as a distinct concept, stressing its negative implications on teaching, such as reduced quality of performance and classroom

instruction, poor classroom climate, decreased academic achievement, etc. (Roeser et al., 2013). A recent systematic review and meta-analysis shows that secondary school teachers are at high risk of burnout syndrome; however, the different measuring instruments used in the studies should be taken into consideration (García-Carmona et al., 2019). There are studies that report high percentages of burnout in teachers that are related to various factors such as lack of resources, work demands and workload, etc. (Salmela-Aro et al., 2019). Further, teachers with more years of work experience, female teachers and secondary education teachers exhibit higher levels of burnout (Smetackova, 2017).

In Greece, research on ProQOL among teachers is limited, and the majority focuses mainly on burnout in the context of special education (Christodoulou et al., 2014; Christopoulou et al., 2020). In general, existing research shows that teachers in Greece do not have a high level of compassion fatigue or severe difficulties such as emotional exhaustion, cynicism, or a low sense of achievement (Christopoulou et al., 2020). A similar picture is provided by studies that identify sometimes low levels (Kalyva, 2013) and sometimes moderate levels of burnout (Stringari et al., 2019) in special education teachers. Surveys implemented with teachers in Greece in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic also showed high levels of compassion satisfaction and moderate to low levels of compassion fatigue, with female teachers being more burdened. The lowest scores on secondary traumatic stress were found in high school teachers, and there were no differences regarding age (Hatzichristou et al., 2022). No studies have been identified studying the relationship between ProQOL and efficacy in Greek teachers.

### **Teachers' self-efficacy**

A significant amount of research focuses on teachers' sense of self-efficacy, which has been defined as teachers' beliefs about their ability to perform their professional duties (Fackler & Malmberg, 2016). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) defined teacher self-efficacy as teachers' confidence in their ability to organise and apply instructional strategies needed to successfully complete a particular task in a particular context. Thus, teacher self-efficacy is a concept that is highly relevant to teaching, which, in turn, is shaped by teachers, classroom, school and principal characteristics (Fackler & Malmberg, 2016).

Teaching efficacy generally includes teachers' views on learning outcomes and the degree of influence of learning compared to other sources of influence in students' lives (Mastrothanasis et al., 2021). Teachers' self-efficacy is related to various aspects of students' lives, such as enhanced student motivation, increased self-esteem, adjustment during school transitions, and positive attitudes towards school (Miller et al., 2017). It also promotes students' own sense of efficacy, participation in classroom activities, and students' efforts to overcome difficulties (Künsting et al., 2016). In addition, students with highly effective teachers have been found to have higher levels of academic achievement (Alnahdi & Schwab, 2021). Consequently, teaching self-efficacy is a decisive factor for the quality and practice of teaching.

Teacher self-efficacy has been recognised not only as a stable and important indicator of teacher motivation but also as a predictor of teachers' receptivity to innovative and new

instructional strategies (Perera et al., 2019). Research indicates that teachers with high self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to implement instructional innovations in the classroom, use innovative classroom management approaches, and implement instructional methods that address students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (Woodcock et al., 2022). Several researchers have also reported that teachers with high levels of efficacy beliefs are more able to cope with stressors and negative emotions, are highly motivated and confident in their classroom practice, and set challenging goals (Herman et al., 2018; Zee & Koomen, 2016).

Studies have revealed a significant negative correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and burnout, indicating that higher burnout and emotional exhaustion is related to lower self-efficacy and vice versa (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007, 2014; Vargas-Rubilar & Oros, 2021). It has been supported that self-efficacy beliefs can serve as a predictor of teachers' burnout (Smetackova, 2017). During the Covid-19 pandemic, higher self-efficacy beliefs were associated with lower levels of burnout and higher commitment to teaching, while self-efficacy had a mediating effect between stress and burnout (Shimony et al., 2022).

While there are many studies exploring the association between teachers' self-efficacy and burnout, there is limited research on the relation between teachers' self-efficacy and compassion fatigue. Most studies researching both concepts have been conducted with medical staff, where it was found that self-efficacy negatively predicted nurses' compassion fatigue and especially burnout (Zhang et al., 2022). In another study with counsellors, a positive relationship was found between perceptions of self-efficacy and compassion satisfaction, and a negative relationship between burnout and compassion fatigue (Bozgeyikli, 2012). In relation to teachers, a negative relation between online teaching self-efficacy and compassion fatigue was found (Yang, 2021; Yang et al., 2021).

There is converging evidence suggesting a negative correlation between teacher self-efficacy and burnout, however it is unclear whether low self-efficacy is a result of burnout or if it predicts it (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). There are data revealing that teachers with low self-efficacy are more predisposed to burnout (Larrivee, 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014) and data showing that increased burnout may lead to low self-efficacy (Herman et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). As Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki (2019, p. 5) stated: "while there is robust evidence suggesting a high correlation between these two variables, the causal direction is not fully understood". However, as Smetackova (2017) suggested, more studies in different educational systems are needed to understand the relationship between teachers' burnout and self-efficacy, and especially the underlying mechanisms that could lead to the development of effective interventions.

### **Satisfaction with life as a protective factor**

It has been suggested that the implementation of self-care practices and work-life balance constitute means to prevent burnout and secondary traumatic stress (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016). Further, several interventions have been developed to prevent burnout, focusing on stress reduction but also on enhancing job satisfaction, which is considered to

be a significant factor related to burnout and life satisfaction (Luque-Reca, et al., 2022; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Life satisfaction is a construct referring to individuals' overall cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives. It is based on the person's subjective appreciation of how much he/she likes his/her life and the extent to which he/she judges that his/her life develops positively (Fujita & Diener, 2005).

Despite the suggested significance of life satisfaction, there are limited relevant empirical data regarding teachers (Dağlı & Baysal, 2017; Luque-Reca et al., 2022). The existing data indicate that teachers report lower life satisfaction compared to the general population (Office for Standards in Education, 2019) and a "moderate" level of teachers' perception of life satisfaction (Dağlı & Baysal, 2017). Teacher life satisfaction is associated with job satisfaction; longitudinal studies report a bidirectional association, while low job satisfaction is related to burnout (Marcionetti & Castelli, 2022). Further, among various factors that have been studied regarding burnout, job and life satisfaction, self-efficacy stands out as an important variable. Teachers' sense of efficacy has been positively associated with professional achievement, job satisfaction and life satisfaction (Marcionetti & Castelli, 2022; Shimony et al., 2022). In their study, Çelik and Kahraman (2018) found that self-efficacy had negative effects on teachers' burnout and a positive effect on life satisfaction, while burnout had negative effect on life satisfaction. Similarly, Aydogmus and Serce (2021) highlighted the regulatory effect of self-efficacy on life satisfaction and burnout.

While studies on teacher life satisfaction are limited; research exploring the interaction between life satisfaction, compassion fatigue and ProQOL is scarce. Most studies aiming to determine protective factors against compassion fatigue at an individual level have focused on social and emotional skills and resilience, suggesting that well-being can act as a protective factor against compassion fatigue or burnout (Yang, 2021). Satisfaction with life is associated with an individual's well-being, therefore it could also be considered as a potential protective factor against compassion fatigue.

The importance of ProQOL and self-efficacy on teachers' professional functioning and on students' progress and school adjustment has been evident in the literature. The emerging role of life satisfaction in relation to compassion fatigue and teachers' sense of self-efficacy is also acknowledged. The limited research on teacher ProQOL and on its potential predictive role in teacher self-efficacy, as well as the limited understanding of the relationship of ProQOL, self-efficacy and life satisfaction led to the present study. Hence, the goal of this study is (a) to investigate teachers' perceptions of their ProQOL, self-efficacy, and life satisfaction and possible demographic differences; (b) to investigate the predictive role of compassion satisfaction in the positive aspect of professional life quality; and (c) to investigate any moderating role of life satisfaction between compassion fatigue (burnout and secondary traumatic stress) and self-efficacy. Based on the literature review, it is expected that teachers would have a moderate to high level of ProQOL and self-efficacy (H1). Further, it is expected that compassion satisfaction will predict teachers' self-efficacy (H2) and that satisfaction from life will have a moderating role between the two dimensions of compassion fatigue and self-efficacy (H3).

## Method

### Data collection and sample characteristics

Quantitative data were collected via self-report online questionnaires (Google Forms). Chain-referral sampling was implemented to build the sample. The link to the questionnaires was promoted to teachers from schools the author is working with, and they were then asked to promote it to other colleagues or post it on their social media (e.g., Facebook) teacher groups. Permission for the study was granted by the University Research Ethics Committee. Information was provided on the first page of the survey, describing the aims and process of the study along with the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw at any time.

Three hundred and eighty nine primary ( $n = 188$ , 48.3%) and secondary ( $n = 201$ , 51.7%) teachers who lived in the broader area of Attica, where the capital of Greece is located, completed the survey. Out of the participants, 324 (83.3%) were women and 63 (16.2%) were men, while 2 respondents answered that they preferred self-identification. Most participants ( $n = 149$ , 38.3%) were 25-34 years old, 90 (23.1%) were 45-54 years old, 88 (22.6%) were 35-44 years old, and 62 (15.9%) were over 55 years old. Most teachers ( $n = 203$ , 52.2%) had a masters degree, while the rest had a bachelor degree. Finally, 176 teachers (45.2%) had more than 10 years of experience, 121 (31.1%) had 1-5 years of experience, 59 (15.2%) had 6-10 years of experience, while 33 teachers (8.5%) reported less than one year of experience.

### Measures

For data collection the following questionnaires were used:

(a) *The Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL-5) (Stamm, 2010).*

Thirty questions on a five-point Likert scale (1=never to 5=very often) yielded the following factors: compassion satisfaction (e.g., I get satisfaction from being able to support people), burnout (e.g., I feel trapped by my job), and secondary traumatic stress (e.g., I worry intensely about more than one person I support). Cronbach alphas for this survey were .82, .70 and .70 respectively.

(b) *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001)*

This comprised 24 items on a five-point Likert scale (1=not at all to 5=a lot) (8 items per factor) producing 3 factors; efficacy in students' engagement (e.g., How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work) (Cronbach alpha=.92), efficacy in instructional strategies (e.g., How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students) (Cronbach alpha=.87), efficacy in classroom management (e.g. How much can you do to control disruptive behaviour in the Classroom) (Cronbach alpha=.92). A total score is also provided (Cronbach alpha=.94), which was used in regression analyses for the purposes of the study.

*(c) Satisfaction with Life Scale (Townshend, 2023)*

This is a brief questionnaire consisting of 5 questions (e.g., I am satisfied with my life) on a seven-point Likert scale (1=totally disagree to 7= totally agree) aiming at evaluating global cognitive judgments about teachers' life satisfaction as a single factor. Cronbach alpha for this survey was .89. Finally, demographic data were collected.

## Results

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations, and the correlation matrix among all variables. The correlations between compassion satisfaction, and teachers' sense of efficacy were all statistically significant and positive, ranging from 0.4 to 0.51. Statistically significant negative correlations were observed between burnout and teachers' sense of efficacy, ranging from 0.29 to 0.39. No significant correlations were found between secondary traumatic stress and efficacy, while all correlations between life satisfaction and the rest of the factors were statistically significant (Table 1).

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and inter-correlations of the variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Teachers' sense of efficacy	1							
1. Students' engagement		1						
2. Instructional strategies	0.58**		1					
3. Classroom management	0.55**	0.62**		1				
4. Total score	0.86**	0.86**	0.84**		1			
Professional life quality								
5. Compassion satisfaction	0.46**	0.43**	0.4**	0.51**		1		
6. Burnout	-0.35**	-0.29**	-0.36**	-0.39**	-0.6**		1	
7. Secondary traumatic stress	0.01	-0.03	-0.05	-0.03	0.08	0.49**		1
8. Satisfaction with life	0.25**	0.21**	0.27**	0.28**	0.54**	-0.57**	-0.2**	
Mean	3.99	4.08	3.99	4.02	3.91	2.32	2.96	4.89
Std deviation	0.64	0.60	0.62	0.53	0.49	0.45	0.49	1.17

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Rather high mean scores are observed in relation to self-efficacy factors with the lowest being for efficacy in students' engagement and classroom management ( $M = 3.99$ ), and the highest for instructional strategies ( $M = 4.08$ ). Similarly, a rather high mean score ( $M = 3.91$ ) was found for compassion satisfaction, while the lowest mean score was found for burnout ( $M = 2.32$ ). In relation to satisfaction with life, the mean score was 4.89, suggesting a rather moderate level of satisfaction (Table 1).

Differences in gender, educational level that teachers teach, and educational degree were tested with Student's  $t$  tests, while differences in teaching experience were tested with

analyses of variance (ANOVA). The results of the *t* test in relation to gender are presented in Table 2. The analysis showed that women had statistically significant higher means in all ProQOL factors compared to men.

Table 2: Results of *t*-test and descriptive statistics for teachers' sense of efficacy, ProQOL and satisfaction with life dimensions by teachers' gender

		Male ( <i>n</i> =63)	Fem. ( <i>n</i> =324)	<i>t</i> (385)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
		<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )			
Teachers' sense of efficacy	Students' engagement	4.03 (0.61)	3.98 (0.64)	0.61	0.54	0.08
	Instructional strategies	4.04 (0.52)	4.08 (0.62)	-0.53	0.59	-0.07
	Classroom management	4.06 (0.64)	3.97 (0.61)	0.97	0.33	0.13
	Total score	4.04 (0.51)	4.01 (0.53)	0.42	0.67	0.06
Professional life quality	Compassion satisfaction	3.78 (0.51)	3.93 (0.48)	-2.26	<0.05	-0.31
	Burnout	2.22 (0.44)	2.34 (0.45)	-1.97	<0.05	-0.27
	Secondary traumatic stress	2.73 (0.38)	3.00 (0.51)	-4	<0.001	-0.55
Satisfaction with life		5.01 (0.97)	4.87 (1.21)	0.87	0.38	0.12

Table 3. Results of *t*-test and descriptive statistics for teachers' sense of efficacy, ProQOL and satisfaction with life dimensions by educational level

		Primary educ. ( <i>n</i> =188)	Secondary ed. ( <i>n</i> =201)	<i>t</i> (387)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
		<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )			
Teachers' sense of efficacy	Students' engagement	4.08 (0.61)	3.89 (0.65)	2.88	<0.01	0.29
	Instructional strategies	4.08 (0.53)	4.07 (0.66)	0.22	0.82	0.02
	Classroom management	4.04 (0.57)	3.93 (0.65)	1.75	0.08	0.18
	Total score	4.07 (0.48)	3.96 (0.56)	1.93	0.06	0.19
Professional life quality	Compassion satisfaction	3.94 (0.45)	3.87 (0.51)	1.45	0.15	0.15
	Burnout	2.32 (0.45)	2.32 (0.44)	0.02	0.98	0.01
	Secondary traumatic stress	3.03 (0.52)	2.89 (0.46)	2.66	<0.01	0.27
Satisfaction with life		4.92 (1.15)	4.86 (1.18)	0.5	0.61	0.05

The analysis presented in Table 3 reveals statistically significant differences only for efficacy in students' engagement and secondary traumatic stress, where primary education teachers had statistically significant higher mean scores than secondary education teachers. Further, it was found that teachers who had a masters degree had a statistically significant



lower mean score in secondary traumatic stress and a statistically significant higher mean score in efficacy in instructional strategies than teachers with a bachelor degree (Table 4).

Table 3. Results of *t*-test and descriptive statistics for teachers' sense of efficacy, ProQOL and satisfaction with life dimensions by degree

		University degree ( <i>n</i> =186) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Masters degree ( <i>n</i> =203) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i> (387)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Teachers' sense of efficacy	Students' engagement	3.94(0.66)	4.02 (0.62)	-1.24	0.22	-0.13
	Instructional strategies	3.98 (0.62)	4.16 (0.57)	-3.07	<0.01	-0.31
	Classroom Management	3.98 (0.64)	4 (0.6)	-0.32	0.75	-0.03
	Total score	3.97 (0.54)	4.06 (0.51)	-1.79	0.07	-0.18
Profession- al life quality	Compassion satisfaction	3.89 (0.47)	3.92 (0.51)	-0.4	0.69	-0.04
	Burnout	2.35 (0.47)	2.3 (0.42)	1.01	0.31	0.1
	Secondary traumatic stress	3 (0.54)	2.91 (0.46)	2	<0.05	0.2
Satisfaction with life		4.8 (1.19)	4.97 (1.15)	-1.45	0.15	-0.15

In relation to teaching experience, the only statistically significant difference that was found was for efficacy in classroom management ( $M_{<1 \text{ year}} = 3.82$ ,  $M_{1-5 \text{ years}} = 3.86$ ,  $M_{6-10 \text{ years}} = 3.99$ ,  $M_{>10 \text{ years}} = 4.11$ ) as determined by one-way ANOVA [ $F(3, 388) = 4.66$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ]. A Bonferroni post hoc test revealed that teachers in particular who had more than ten years of experience reported a significantly higher perceived sense of efficacy in classroom management than those who had 1-5 years of teaching experience ( $p = 0.011$ ).

### Regression analysis and moderation by satisfaction with life

A regression analysis was performed to assess whether compassion satisfaction predicts teachers' sense of self-efficacy. It was found that 26% of the self-efficacy variance was accounted for by compassion satisfaction ( $R^2 = 0.26$ ,  $F(1, 388) = 133.54$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The coefficients examined show that compassion satisfaction contributes to self-efficacy prediction ( $\beta = 0.51$ ,  $t = 11.56$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Regression analyses were performed to assess whether the negative dimensions of ProQOL interact with satisfaction with life to predict teachers' sense of efficacy. The macro PROCESS Procedure for SPSS (v. 24) was used (model 1) (Hayes, 2013) for the analysis. Bias-corrected bootstrap tests with a 95% confidence interval were conducted in order to evaluate the significance level of the indirect effects in Figure 1. Using random samples with replacement from the original data set, 5,000 bootstrap samples were estimated.

Satisfaction with life and the two dimensions of ProQOL were entered in the first step of the regression analysis. In the second step, the interaction between the dimensions of ProQOL and satisfaction with life was entered.

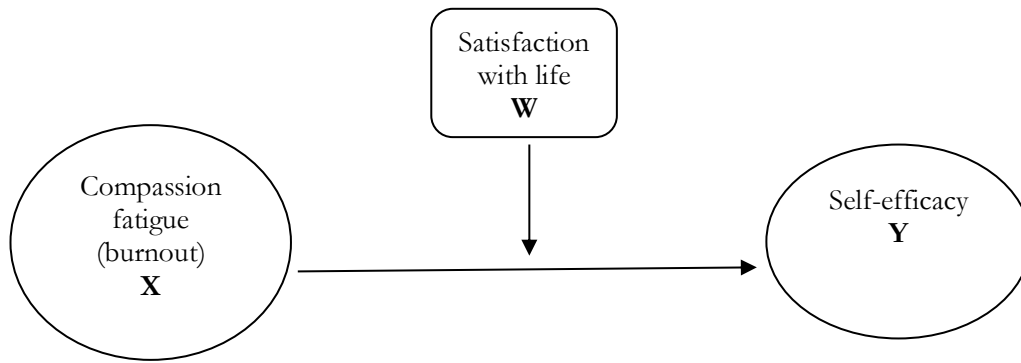


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the compassion fatigue (burnout) self-efficacy association moderated by satisfaction with life

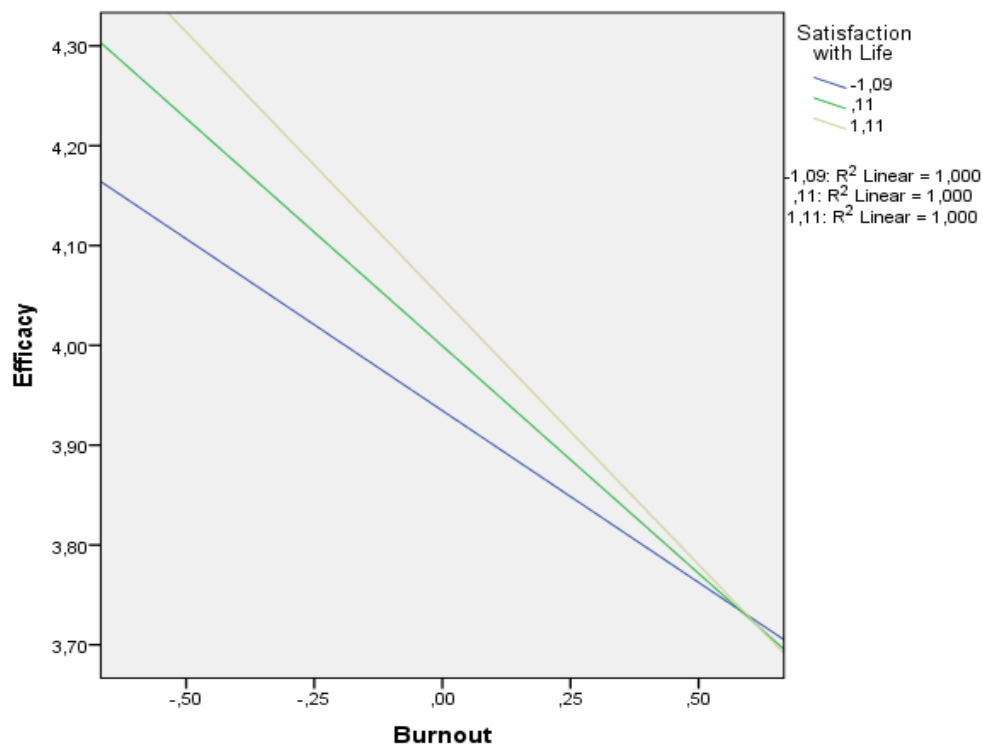


Figure 2. Simple slopes of satisfaction with life predicting teachers' sense of efficacy for 1 SD below, the mean, and 1 SD above the mean of compassion fatigue (burnout).

A significant increase in efficacy was identified, due to the interaction between life satisfaction and burnout,  $R^2 = 0.17$ ,  $F(3, 385) = 21.05$ ,  $p = <0.001$ . Thus, satisfaction was a significant moderator of the relationship between burnout and efficacy ( $b = -0.09$ ,  $t(385) = -2.19$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ). The unstandardised simple slope for

1 SD below the mean was  $-1.09$  [ $t(384)=-3.94, p < 0.01, LLCI = -0.52, ULCI = -0.17$ ], the unstandardised simple slope with a mean level was  $0.11$  [ $t(384) = -5.78, p < 0.01, LLCI = -0.6, ULCI = -0.3$ ], and the unstandardised simple slope for 1 SD above the mean was  $1.11$  [ $t(384) = -5.93, p < 0.01, LLCI = -0.71, ULCI = -0.36$ ] (see Figure 2). According to the Johnson-Neyman test, for the lower 5% of the values in life satisfaction, the relations between burnout and efficacy were not statistically significant.

The results of the regression analysis showed that only a small percent of the total variance is explained by traumatic stress, and though there was a statistically significant interaction between life satisfaction and secondary traumatic stress, ( $R^2= 0.09, F(3, 385) = 9.25, p = <0.001$ ), it was not a significant moderator of the relationship between efficacy and traumatic stress ( $b = -0.09, t(385) = -1.81, p = 0.07, LLCI = -0.18, ULCI = 0.01$ ).

## Discussion

The main focus of this study was to examine the correlation between ProQOL and teachers' perceived self-efficacy and whether satisfaction with life could act as a moderator of the relationship between the two dimensions of compassion fatigue (burnout and secondary traumatic stress) and teachers' sense of self-efficacy. The findings could contribute to a better understanding and prediction of teachers' self-efficacy in order to develop tailored interventions to support teachers and enhance their self-efficacy.

The results of the study show that teachers reported medium to high levels of self-efficacy, indicating that teachers feel competent and efficient regarding their professional role, which is in accordance with other studies (Gale et al., 2021). The highest score was found in efficacy in instructional strategies, indicating that teachers seem to feel more confident regarding the process of teaching rather than classroom management or students' engagement, in line with other studies (Farhadiba & Wulyani, 2020). Maybe teachers are more familiar with teaching methods since training programs seem to focus more on preparing teachers for teaching strategies (Moore, 2014).

A rather high score was also found on compassion satisfaction, revealing that teachers experience an increased sense of fulfillment because of helping their students and a rather low level of compassion fatigue. The mean score on secondary traumatic stress was low, however slightly higher than burnout, the latter having the lowest mean score, indicating that participant teachers may have some level of stress related to their students' difficult stories. This might be related to the multiple adversities that have affected school communities in Greece, such as the increased number of refugees in schools, the post-pandemic consequences, or the economic recession that still affects Greek society (Hatzichristou et al., 2022). The findings on ProQOL and especially on burnout are also congruent with other studies suggesting a higher burnout score (Salmela-Aro et al., 2019), but they are in accordance with studies in Greece suggesting

differences depending on cultural settings (Hatzichristou et al., 2022). Finally, in relation to life satisfaction, findings suggest that teachers have moderate satisfaction with their lives. They scored above the middle point of the scale, but they are not at the highest levels. This finding agrees with other studies as well (Dağlı & Baysal, 2017; Office for Standards in Education, 2019). The teaching profession is demanding, and the working conditions in the specific cultural context are adding to that difficulty (low salaries, increased number of refugee and immigrant students, lack of resources, etc.). However the high scores of compassion satisfaction and efficacy and the low level of burnout may partially account for an acceptable level of life satisfaction related to teachers' professional lives.

The statistically significant correlation that was found between the dimensions of the ProQOL and teachers' sense of efficacy confirms the significant interaction that has also been suggested elsewhere (Shimony et al., 2022; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Vargas-Rubilar & Oros, 2021). Self-efficacy correlated positively with compassion satisfaction and negatively with burnout. It appears that the more satisfaction a teacher gets from helping others and the less burnout he/she experiences, the more efficient he/she feels. Maybe teachers who manage to help their students and feels that they are successful in helping them are reinforced in their sense of efficacy. In addition, teachers who do not experience emotional exhaustion and feel that they can offer and get satisfaction from their occupation are also reinforced in relation to how effectively they deal with occupational difficulties or the everyday in school.

In correlational studies, it is difficult to identify causal relationships; therefore, it might be efficacy that leads to increased compassion satisfaction or less burnout. Research data confirm the relationship between the two concepts (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Smetackova, 2017), however, as studies have different foci, some studies focus on efficacy as a source of job satisfaction and lack of burnout, while others explore the role burnout and job satisfaction on efficacy (Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki, 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014).

In this study ProQOL was considered as the predictor variable, and in particular, it was hypothesised that compassion satisfaction (the positive aspect of ProQOL) would predict teachers' sense of efficacy. This hypothesis was confirmed as a significant percentage of the efficacy variable was explained by compassion fatigue. Teachers who report feeling professionally adequate in helping others report higher levels of self-efficacy. Nonetheless, the explained percentage is not especially large since teachers' efficacy depends on various factors (Hussain & Khan, 2022). The observed statistically significant correlations between life satisfaction, self-efficacy and ProQOL add to the above arguments. Teachers who are more satisfied with their lives (including their professional lives) feel more efficient and have a positive perception of their professional quality of life.

The hypothesis that life satisfaction would play a moderating role in the relationship between burnout and efficacy is confirmed. It appears that life satisfaction mitigates the negative impact of burnout on self-efficacy. Hence, when satisfied with their lives,

teachers' sense of efficacy is not so affected by emotional or physical exhaustion. Life satisfaction has been associated in other studies with burnout and efficacy (Luque-Reca, et al., 2022; Madigan & Kim, 2021). In the relevant literature, self-care practices are highly stressed as a protective factor against stress or burnout (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016). Teachers who experience satisfaction with their different aspects of their lives other than their job and who are able to separate work from personal life and engage in practices that offer satisfaction and pleasure offer themselves a means to counterbalance the negative effect of job-related stress and exhaustion (Buonomo et al., 2017). This finding did not apply for secondary traumatic stress; maybe secondary traumatic stress is more related to empathy and feeling overwhelmed due to the trauma and suffering of others and therefore may not be directly related to personal or job satisfaction, but rather constitutes a distinct personal characteristic.

Regarding demographics, some interesting findings were produced. In relation to gender, the only differences found were related to ProQOL levels. In all three ProQOL factors, female teachers had higher scores than their male counterparts. The increased compassion satisfaction, burnout and secondary traumatic stress in women has also been found elsewhere (Hatzichristou et al., 2022; Smetackova, 2017; Yang, 2021). This finding might be related to the social role attributed to women, who are expected to provide help and increased care to others, while it is more accepted for women to express feelings such as compassion, empathy and care.

Differences were also found regarding the education level teachers work at. Primary teachers scored higher in the student engagement and secondary traumatic stress subscale, in comparison to secondary teachers. Both of these findings might be explained by the different characteristics of primary and secondary education. In primary education, there is one basic teacher who is a continuing position in the classroom, knowing the interests, the personalities, and capabilities of his/her students better, thus being able to engage students more effectively. Further, this may contribute to the development of closer relationships and better communication with parents, which may make teachers more knowledgeable of difficult personal stories and more prone to secondary traumatic stress.

Teachers' education also accounted for differences in instructional strategies and secondary traumatic stress. Teachers who had a masters degree had a higher score in efficacy in instructional strategies and a lower score in secondary traumatic stress, in comparison to teachers who had an undergraduate degree. Both may be related to the increased knowledge and skills acquired by the additional education resulting into those teachers being better equipped in relation to teaching strategies and better prepared to deal with adversities. This difference has also been found in other studies, highlighting the significant role of continuous education (Hatzichristou et al., 2022). Regarding teaching experience, it was found that the more experienced teachers have a higher sense of efficacy in relation to classroom management. Experienced teachers probably feel more confident in dealing with difficulties in the classroom and have gained the knowledge and skill to effectively manage their classrooms. This is also in accordance with other studies indicating increased efficacy because of teaching experience (Putman,

2012). No other significant demographic differences were found. An interesting research question would be the role of teachers' subject specialisation regarding their sense of efficacy, but since it was outside the scope of this study, this could be addressed in future research efforts.

Findings regarding teachers' sense of efficacy and ProQOL are potentially important because they can have significant implications for school psychological practice. Understanding factors that enhance teachers' efficacy can provide a basis for the development of tailored school psychological/counseling services. However, certain limitations of this study should be considered, such as the use of self-report questionnaires and the online data collection that may have inhibited other teachers from participating. The chain-referral sampling is subject to bias and maybe has affected the profile of the sample in relation to the demographics (e.g., fewer men participating in the study). The characteristics of the sample narrow the possibility for generalisation, and although the majority of women in the sample depict the reality of the Greek teaching population, men are under-represented in this study. Also, this research was conducted in a specific cultural and educational context. Further research is needed, ideally including more educational and cultural settings, in order to fully understand the underlying mechanisms among the factors under research. This will provide further insight that could lead to the development and provision of appropriate services.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the participating teachers appear to feel quite efficient in their professional role and, in particular, in their teaching methods. They do experience compassion satisfaction, low levels of compassion fatigue, and low levels of burnout. The significant correlation among all the variables under research indicates that the more satisfied teachers are with supporting their students and the less emotional and physical exhaustion they feel, the more efficient they perceive themselves in their professional role. The moderating role of life satisfaction between burnout and efficacy suggests the importance of supporting teachers and implementing interventions that would enhance their well-being and promote self-care practices. Demographics were found to be partially significant. Women seem to have an increased level of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue, highlighting a further need for support. Primary education teachers seem to feel more efficient in relation to students' engagement and experience more secondary traumatic stress, probably due to the closer relationships primary teachers have with their students. Finally, experienced teachers seem to feel more efficient in classroom management, while teachers with postgraduate studies feel more efficient in instructional strategies and exhibit lower secondary traumatic stress, highlighting a probable significant role of in-service training. My study provided useful findings that can form the basis for further research, including research in more educational and cultural contexts or exploration of additional factors that have been studied in the literature, for a more holistic approach that would provide a deeper understanding of teachers' needs.

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