

**Team building and Teachers' Well-being in Primary Education;  
The various ways in which team building activities affect the teacher's well-being  
regarding aspects such as stress reduction, work-life balance, and overall job  
satisfaction and their subsequent impact in team performance**

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to prove that team building unites people from various backgrounds who ultimately have diverse perspectives when it comes to collaboration and teaching methodologies. When these people come together and form a harmonious team, they can accomplish remarkable achievements and even grow together. The team's cohesiveness, efficacy, efficiency, and overall productivity is closely related to the state of its "well-being" and "health". Team building plays a crucial role to this aspect as it nurtures and cultivates the team members' functioning. Creating a supportive and positive team environment in which the members trust, empathize, understand, and assist one another, then a profound impact is witnessed on the team's performance. The potential of a team's growth and possible success lies in preserving the team's welfare enabling the team to collectively become more flexible, resilient, and capable of overcoming any obstacles that might arise.

The present research work is an effort to study the sophisticated relationship between team building activities and elementary school teachers' welfare that comprises a myriad of aspects that are implicated on various facets of their work life. Team building among teachers can increase/reduce stress, make the job more enjoyable but also bring great benefits to the students? What are the effective strategies for fostering team building and how can these strategies help in cultivating a more optimistic perspective among teachers regarding their profession? The school setting, the relationships that are created within the school environment, the various school administrators and alternations in leadership, the work experience and the time that is needed for teaching preparation and planning, the demographical depth of the student population and the educational programs offered by the school are crucial factors to be considered. Consequently, the results of this research provide valuable information for efficient and effective team building among teachers and how this affects their well-being.

*Keywords: Team Building, Well-being, Stress, Job Satisfaction, Work-life balance*

## Introduction

Nowadays, in an ever-evolving landscape, teamwork, and collaboration, have become an imperative to understand in depth how effective team building activities are how they can heighten the team's performance and morale. It goes without saying that changing the culture within Cypriot schools can constitute a real challenge. The need to examine how team building activities can affect the well-being in aspects such as stress reduction, work-life balance, job satisfaction and team performance of the teachers arose. This research is distinguished by its novelty, as it addresses a gap in existing literature where comparable studies are lacking. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to provide, through our research, new insights to what actually constitutes effective strategies that will provide support to the educators and nurture positive relationships within a team. Hence, the existing gap in literature would be addressed. Furthermore, this research has the potential to contribute to the growth of educational organizations. As a result, the educational quality provided to students will be enhanced through the team building initiatives in schools. Additionally, another objective of this research is to highlight the importance of the implementation of more organized team building activities among teachers that will enable them to strengthen their relations which will ultimately benefit both faculty and students.

It is through a detailed and in-depth analysis of team building activities that this research aims to evaluate their impact on teacher's professional efficiency and inspect their potential positive attributes on their personal welfare. By doing so, the study's goal is to provide a comprehensive take on how team building initiatives can improve the life of educators both professionally and individually. The research emphasizes the essence of integrating team-building activities into educational surroundings to efficiently support educators; hence, this paper advocates for their integration in schools to improve the overall educational outcomes by underlining their positive impact on the teachers' welfare and team dynamic relationships.

Notably, team building is also considered to constitute an invaluable and powerful tool which when employed within the educational environments can result in stress reduction and a healthier work-life balance. Consequently, one of the most crucial aspects of any work environment is job satisfaction. Content and motivated employees collaborate cohesively; hence, the productivity, creativity and team dynamic aspect of behaviour thrives through these essential components of the employees' well-being that have an immense effect on team performance which will be scrutinized to be proved through this research.

This qualitative and quantitative case study was conducted using interviews of administrators', questionnaires of teachers and observation. Data from 152 teachers were analyzed. Findings confirmed the strong correlation between team building and teachers' well-being in primary education. This research aims to contribute to the understanding of how team building activities impact the well-being of teachers across multiple dimensions. Stress reduction, work-life balance, and overall job satisfaction are interrelated collectively with the teachers' commitment, motivation, and welfare. It is of crucial importance that teachers feel valued, respected, and fulfilled in their role. This can only occur when primary schools prioritize the teacher's well-being through team building activities and work within supportive environments. As a result, teachers as a team can work more cohesively and efficiently, communicate earnestly and fearlessly, and share openly their ideas that will ultimately lead to an improved team performance and organizational success.

## **Literature Review**

### **Team Building and its impact in an organization**

Numerous researchers have sacrificed countless amount of time for this very subject, conducting studies aspiring to examine the positive impact of team building activities (TBA) or team building interventions (TBI) on a team. More specifically, creativity and effectiveness were the main aspects that these researchers focused on. The aim of these studies was to explore the various implications that would arise when forming a team who would ultimately collaborate and work in unison which would be achieved through targeted team-building strategies. Ying L. & Fang J. (2019) support that in the contemporary business landscape, teams have become a fundamental and essential element in the efficient functioning of organizations. The growing significance of teams is supported by numerous studies that highlight the positive correlation between team-based work and the superior quality of products and services provided by an organization. Moreover, the researchers astutely noted that in light of contemporary business paradigms, there is a growing realization among companies regarding the crucial role played by remarkably proficient teams in driving their accomplishments and securing a competitive edge in the marketplace. Consequently, these forward-thinking enterprises are actively and assiduously pursuing avenues to bolster teamwork and collaboration through strategic investments in comprehensive training and development programs. Their statements make it evident that there is a connection between participating in team building exercises and the effectiveness of the team. Furthermore, they propose that team building intervention has a positive impact on enhancing team effectiveness.

According to Fapohunda T. (2013), introducing and supporting teams in an organization requires substantial changes and thoughtful consideration from numerous viewpoints. It affects the entire organization including team members, supervisors, managers, structure, culture, work methods, and relationships. The benefits gained from the



implementation of teams are substantial and make this time-consuming process worthwhile. Once the implementation occurs, no organization is willing to return to its previous structure. Despite the obstacles, effective team building is very beneficial to organizations.

In the words of Lencioni P. (2002) *“If you get all the people in an organization rowing in the same direction, you could dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition, at any time.”* He strongly believes that success is not achieved through mastering complicated theories; it's mostly about conquering practical wisdom and correlating it with highly increased levels of dedication and perseverance. Having this new insight in mind, one could argue that teamwork powerfully joins diverse talents, facilitates collaboration, and guides groups towards their goals, rendering it a crucial part of success in various accomplishments. As Ozibgo A. et al. (2020) observe, in an all increasing competitive world, the notion of teamwork is significantly heightened. They comprehend that individual output can be amplified through collaboration and cooperation. Hence, the realization of the potential teamwork can have through proper training, effective guidance and team-building stratagems, organizations raise their levels of creativity and innovation, efficiency, productivity, job satisfaction and engagement, shared learning, skill development, and resilience to the fullest extent.

De Meuse, K. P., & Liebowitz, S. J. (1981) put forward the idea that the concept of team building seems to be an intervention with significant potential to enhance employee attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours, along with overall organizational effectiveness. Tassi et al. (2023) recommend that utilizing TB strategies is highly advisable for enhancing both group dynamics and integrating them with the technical-tactical elements of the team's game models. Lacerenza Ch. et al. (2018) state that for a team to perform well, its members should not only have the technical skills required for their tasks but also possess teamwork abilities and leadership qualities. Additionally, the team should communicate effectively and in collaboration. To conquer these goals, teams should take part in well-designed and evidence-

based team development interventions. These engagements have been proven to develop a team's competencies and performance. According to Saraswat N. & Khandelwa S. (2015) team building is a novel concept employed in the business world to invigorate work teams. Its primary goal is to foster team spirit, enhance team synergy, and strengthen team cohesiveness. Team building constitutes a targeted intervention aimed at tackling matters pertaining to team development. According to Fapohunda T. (2013), team building activities stimulate thought-provoking potential in creativity, critical and innovative thinking as they strengthen the team's overall performance. The team's efficiency in problem solving and their highlighted effectiveness in achieving their objectives lie in the collective synergy and harmonious collaboration between the members of the team which constitute instrumental initiatives. Shuffler M. et al. (2019) observe that to achieve more efficient and effective interventions within a team, one must first observe the unique characteristics of the team and then proceed with appropriate planning. This approach will lead to successfully developing, sustaining, and maximizing team effectiveness. Klein C. et al. (2009) evaluates the influence of four distinct elements of team building (goal setting, interpersonal relations, problem-solving, and role clarification) on cognitive, affective, process, and performance outcomes. They propose that team building yields a favorable and moderate impact on all aspects of team outcomes. Advancing even further, Fapohunda T. (2013) says that the team building process encompasses two fundamental skills. The initial skill revolves around identifying pertinent issues, while the second skill entails addressing them in a suitable sequence and manner. Team building takes on diverse forms, which are contingent upon the team's size and characteristics. Presenting their perspective, researchers Kriek H. & Venter P. (2009) propose that team-building interventions reduce resistance and foster a positive atmosphere for implementing necessary behavior changes. In an ideal scenario, team-building could also serve as a solid foundation for driving changes in employee behavior and decision-making.

Tuckman's model, also known as Tuckman's stages of team development, constitutes a crucial aspect of team building. This model outlines the common phases that groups go through when they form, develop, and work in accordance with time. Psychologist's Bruce Tuckman model, proposed in 1965, is a widely recognized and discussed subject in the field of group dynamics. In the words of Bonebright D. (2009) the model comprises five stages, often referred to by the acronym "F-S-N-P-A," each representing a distinct phase in the group's evolution. It includes Forming (getting acquainted), Storming (conflict), Norming (unity building), Performing (effective work), and Adjourning (project conclusion). Tuckman's model is often paralleled as a curve, as groups initially face various challenges and barriers; however, the key in resolving these lies in effective management which ultimately leads to cohesiveness and improved job performance. It is crucial to note that the stages of this model are not followed strictly in this order by all teams as some might skip or revisit certain phases. This model functions as a valuable asset for comprehending the dynamics within teams and providing guidance to the facilitators, leaders, and team members to gain the necessary skills in navigating the challenges and opportunities that might arise throughout a group's evolution.

In their research, Kozlowski S. & Ilgen D. (2006) refer to the problem that arose in the Apollo 13 spacecraft and how a team of engineers and scientists from NASA managed to problem-solve, adapt, and invent a way for the crew to survive and pilot their damaged spacecraft back to Earth. On the contrary, they also discuss how 16 mountaineers lost their lives in their attempt to reach the summit of Everest, which was partly attributed to bad leadership. Their conclusion is firmly asserted that research offers robust evidence affirming the critical importance of various elements within teams. Some of the factors that collectively hold a significant influence over both team relationships and outcomes are the team climate, mental models, shared memory, and motivational aspects like team unity, efficacy, and

confidence, as well as behavioral processes like team competencies, functions, and self-regulations. So, according to them team effectiveness can be enhanced.

Klein C. et al. (2009) state that studying the effectiveness of team building interventions in various establishments is of immense importance due to the following three reasons. To begin with, outdoor activities and group discussions are some instances in which team building is implemented as a method to develop groups within organizations. Secondly, it's of crucial importance to assess whether team building is a worthwhile choice in comparison to other ways that may implicitly focus on team collaborations as there are numerous pathways in improving teamwork. Thirdly, comprehending the most efficient and effective ways to conduct team-progress interventions can affect organizations positively.

These interventions may involve team training or team building activities in general. Their research results were positive, indicating that team building indeed enhances team outcomes. The interventions improved process and emotional outcomes the most. Additionally, while teams of all sizes benefited, larger teams seemed to benefit the most.

Studying this perspective through different lenses, Kriek H. (2007) concludes that due to the various intervention methods, it is vital that more research should be conducted in this department to better comprehend its efficiency and impact. As Shuffler M. (2018) states that not implementing a clear plan as to how many interventions are going to be applied and in which way can be ineffective for the improvement of teamwork; hence, the lack of clear instructions on how to use team development activities results in organizations adopting a "more is better" approach which is problematic. Moreover, Ozigbo A. (2020) indicates that team building faces many challenges as well. There might be some employees that do not wish to conform and try to resist the pressure of implementing these resulting in conflicts over decision-making.

**Correlation of team building activities and employee's well-being**

Bin Shmailan A. (2015) advances the notion that effective companies comprehend the advantages of content employees, exceptional achievements, and engaged staff members. Thus, in the pursuit of achieving unparalleled success and fostering an enriching work environment, it is imperative for organizations to devise a holistic approach that encompasses various strategic initiatives. What constitutes a persuasive catalyst among these essential strategies is the implementation of carefully selected team building activities which is resolved in fostering and promoting the overall welfare of their valued employees.

The interrelation between team building activities and the welfare of the organizations' employees has been throughout the years a subject of interest in organizational studies and human resources research. The main reason for the investigation of this correlation is to comprehend whether team building activities within the workplace environment positively affect the overall wellbeing of the employees. Wang W. et al. (2022) states that enhancing the teamwork's standard is closely associated with a decrease in emotional exasperation and depersonalization, while simultaneously, it contributes to an increase in professional accomplishment. They highlight the fact that this objective can be achieved by increasing the number of available resources and opportunities for social activities. Research conducted by Marasi Sh. (2019) claims that team building training effectively assists people in improving their teamwork skills and create positive beliefs regarding teamwork.

Kun A. & Gadanecz P. (2022) aimed to comprehend the factors that influence the employees' happiness within the educational sector as it is well known that school constitutes an institution where the stress levels thrive among teachers. They discovered four pillars: achieving objectives, gaining feedback, finding meaning in work, and creating positive relationships. They strengthened that these factors, when prioritized, create a happier and more fulfilling workplace environment which ultimately benefits the welfare of teachers and

increases their job satisfaction. According to Cartwright S. and Cooper C. (1997), as mentioned in their book "Managing Workplace Stress", stress primarily rises due to three main factors: the challenges created by change, a feeling of limited control, and substantial amount of workload. They also argue that another factor significantly affecting the stress level of the employees, either positively or negatively, is their interaction with other colleagues within the workplace. It goes without saying that the way other people treat us during their encounters can have a great influence on our emotional world and welfare.

So, there are numerous persuasive reasons to actively promote the well-being of employees within organizations as it is of great significance. The importance of team building is undeniable and the need for nurturing team cohesion is prominent as it has the potential to reinforce interpersonal bonds and collaboratively evolve the employees' efforts and productivity within the organization.

More recently, in his research, Bin Shmailan Abd. (2015) indicates that organizations can achieve greater success by concentrating on enhancing employee satisfaction and performance. When employees are present and committed to their work, it contributes significantly to the organization's success. In the author's opinion when organizations prioritize employee satisfaction and performance, they tend to experience improved financial outcomes and a more dedicated and productive workforce. McEwan et al. (2016), add another factor that contributes to efficient work performance. They advance the notion that teamwork training works well for improving teamwork and team performance. It has shown positive results when implemented in various situations, using numerous methodologies and taking into consideration different measurements. The employees' training is most effective when it incorporates various teamwork aspects and hands-on activities offering the prospect of learning through actions, practice and constantly developing their teamwork competencies.

The following study proposes that intentionally engaging in activities to improve well-being has various impacts on employees. Sherlock-Storey M. et al. (2013) support the fact that after the coaching program, many participants felt more resilient and confident in handling changes at work. They also improved their positive attitudes; specifically, employees became more hopeful and optimistic. However, it is important to note that there wasn't any substantial improvement in the employees' self-efficacy.<sup>1</sup> Over the last two decades, as Agota Kun and Peter Gadanez (2022) mention, the happiness and welfare of the employees in the workplace has gained noteworthy attention both in the academic and business world.

In their study they emphasize that this interest aligns with the principles of positive psychology, which organizations use to explore the factors that create engaging and motivating work environments. When they analyzed the answers in their qualitative research, they found that teachers' happiness at work is mainly built on achieving goals, receiving feedback, finding purpose in their work, and having positive relationships with colleagues. Additionally, their quantitative study showed that feeling good at work is connected to personal qualities like inner strength, hope, and optimism, especially.

### **Teaching in Primary Education in Cyprus – A demanding profession**

Teaching in a primary school is a vital and rewarding profession that lays the foundation for a child's educational journey. Primary education typically spans from kindergarten through the elementary grades, covering ages five to eleven, depending on the country's educational system. Cyprus, like many other countries, offers primary education to children typically between the ages of 6 to 12 years.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Cambridge Dictionary self-efficacy is "a person's belief that they can be successful when carrying out a particular task"

Here is a comprehensive overview of primary education in Cyprus, as provided by the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth.

**Age Group:** Primary education in Cyprus usually covers children from around 6 years old (Grade 1) to approximately 12 years old (Grade 6). The specific age range can vary slightly depending on the birthdate cutoff and the child's readiness for formal schooling.

**Duration:** Primary education in Cyprus typically lasts for six years.

**Curriculum:** The primary education curriculum in Cyprus includes a wide range of subjects such as Greek language and literature, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, art, music, and foreign languages (usually English). It's designed to provide a well-rounded education and build a strong foundation for future learning.

**Assessment:** Students in primary schools are assessed through regular tests and evaluations. The curriculum is structured to help students develop key skills and knowledge in preparation for secondary education.

**Inclusive Education:** Cyprus, like many other countries, promotes inclusive education to accommodate students with diverse learning needs. Special education services are available to support students with disabilities.

**Bilingual Education:** Greek is the primary language of instruction in Cyprus. However, English is often taught as a second language from a young age, reflecting the bilingual nature of the country.

**School Year:** The school year in Cyprus typically begins in September and ends in June, with several breaks and holidays in between, including a summer break.

**Parental Involvement:** Parent-teacher collaboration is encouraged, and schools often organize parent-teacher meetings and events to keep parents informed about their child's progress.

Teaching in a primary school constitutes a fundamental stone for a child's development as it profoundly influences their growth nurturing their holistic development. This requires



focusing on emotional, cognitive, social, and physical development. As a result, teachers foster creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. Primary school teachers also lay the foundation for essential concepts across subjects like language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science.

Another vital component when it comes to primary schools is effective classroom supervision. As Headmaster A indicated in his/her interview *“Primary school teachers must acquire the necessary techniques and strategies to create a safe, appealing, and inspiring learning environment. They have the responsibility to establish routines and implement age-appropriate teaching methodologies to captivate and provoke young students' attention.”*

Teachers have the flexibility to freely navigate the educational system's guidelines when it comes to the curriculum design, which is a notable feature of primary education, to modify their lessons in such way to be accommodating to the unique needs and peculiarities of their students. Notably, this approach demands the use of differentiation to the instructions given by the teacher as within a classroom exist diverse backgrounds, skills, and abilities through their students.

Headmaster B mentioned that *“Collaboration with parents plays an integral role in primary education. It is of the utmost importance parents and teachers to openly communicate with one another, parents be constantly involved in any conferences or seminars taking place by the school, and progress reports are essential for ensuring a child's success in school as it is through these that the progress of the child can be monitored and referenced in case of need.”*

*“Assessment and feedback constitute one of the most important aspects of the primary school setting and should be continuous and appropriately transmitted to both students and parents. Teachers regularly assess their students' progress by conducting various tests, assignments,*

*and observations, providing constructive and detailed feedback to aid students recognize their strengths and areas for improvement*", as Headmaster C asserted in his/her interview.

During the *observation period* the researcher observed the following:

*Inclusive education* is of the most importance as primary teachers often teach students who have diverse learning needs and disabilities. It is through this differentiation in the educational system that teachers are able to ensure equality between students in both learning and growth.

*Professional development* is a constant variable when it comes to primary school teachers. Through the integration of up-to-date educational technology, innovative teaching methodologies and changes of the curriculum according to the needs of the students, effective instructions are delivered.

Outside of academia, primary school teachers acquire the role of mentor and a source of emotional support. They possess the powerful influence of guiding the children through social challenges, assisting in strengthening their self-esteem and aiding in the development of positive values.

Primary school teaching is widely perceived as one of the most *rewarding professions*. Some examples that justify how fulfilling this profession can be is having the opportunity to witness the intellectual and personal growth of young children, witness their growing enthusiasm for learning as time passes by and children get more invested in their learning process, but also having the opportunity to constitute a positive influence in their lives. However, one should not forget how demanding this profession is and they should acknowledge the challenges that a teacher has to face like class sizes, unpredictable student behavior and numerous administrative responsibilities.

The learning journey is not only embraced by the teachers but also by the students as well. Teachers are delighted with their students' achievements. Despite the common belief that most teachers chose this profession due to the appealing monetary rewards, teachers' actual

incentives for choosing this profession lie in their aspiration to work with children and positively contribute to their educational experience. Nevertheless, teaching is an ever-growing environment; hence, it is not surprising that the role of a teacher has evolved and expanded significantly as they are now tasked to accomplish even more in their role.

This change is a result of various global, economic, and political shifts, such as economic crises, the pervasive use of technology by young children, parents' longer working hours, challenges in marital relationships, and the consequences that these dynamics have on children. Additionally, the demands of living and thriving in a multicultural society, demographic changes due to conflicts, the presence of immigrants, and foreign laborers all contribute to the complexities of people's lives. Teachers are required to adapt and modify their teaching approaches to address these multifaceted challenges.

*So, when discussing teaching in a primary school means a very demanding profession physically and mentally.*

In the programs of the Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth the multifaceted role of primary schools and their teachers is emphasized.

**Role of Primary School Teacher:** Without a doubt, primary school teachers' role is of crucial importance for students. They constitute the foundation of the student's development both academically, when introducing fundamental concepts like mathematics, language arts etc., but also personally when it comes in nurturing real life essential skills like problem-solving, communication and socialization.

**Holistic Education:** Primary school education's focus does not lie only within academia but also in nurturing a holistic personality of their students. So, they aspire to develop children cognitively, emotionally, and socially. As a result, creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence are fostered within the primary school environment.

**Classroom Management:** Managing a primary school classroom constitutes one of the most challenging aspects of teaching and it requires the employment of a special set of skills. Teachers have the responsibility to establish a safe and friendly learning environment in which routines must be followed by everyone and age-appropriate teaching methodologies are applied for children to remain preoccupied and engaged within the learning experience.

**Curriculum Design:** One of the greatest advantages primary school teachers own is the flexibility of designing their curriculum within the guidelines proposed by the educational system. Consequently, the needs and interests of their students are prioritized.

**Differentiated Instruction:** Living in a multicultural world entails multicultural classrooms with students originating from diverse backgrounds and thus acquiring various levels of skills and abilities. Hence, the teacher's role gets even more complicated as they need to differentiate their instructions cater to the individual learning needs and abilities of each student as individual and not as a whole.

**Parental Involvement:** In primary school education, cooperation between parents and teachers is of crucial importance. It is through an open communication between the two fundamental role models in the children's life that their success can be guaranteed in school. Some common ways through which teachers and parents are in communication are through conferences and progress reports.

**Assessment and Feedback:** Tests, assignments and observations are the most common ways for primary school teachers to assess students' progress. Constructive feedback provided by the teacher on a daily basis, even numerous times throughout the day, is essential in assisting students comprehend both their strengths and areas of improvement.

**Special Education:** Once more, inclusive education is a fundamental factor of teaching in primary schools. Teachers may be faced with students who have diverse learning needs and disabilities, so it is vital that they adapt their teaching methodologies accordingly.

**Professional Development:** Primary school teachers should be constantly up to date when it comes to their learning and professional development. It is critical that they should be informed on time about new teaching methods, curriculum alternations and innovative educational technology.

**Emotional and Social Support:** It is very common for teachers to serve as mentors and sources of emotional support for their students in times of need. Children turn to them for help in navigating various social challenges, improving their self-esteem, and developing positive values in life.

**Challenges:** No one should doubt how demanding teaching in a primary school really is. Some of the challenges that teachers face daily are the class sizes, the administrative requirements, but also the behavior of the students. Hence, time management and resilience within the classroom environment is of essence to have an effective learning process.

**Rewards:** Despite the numerous challenges and demands that primary school teaching entails, it is one of the most full-filling professions. Having such a huge impact on the students' lives both intellectually but also emotionally is one of the greatest rewards a teacher can aspire to achieve in their career.

Bearing in mind the above, the following question arises. Will the implementation of team building activities assist teachers to cope more easily with the demands of their profession and simultaneously increase their effectiveness and efficiency in their role?

### **Relation between key concepts and theories to this research topic**

According to Wood T. & McCarthy Ch. (2002) teachers, while having to deal with and overcome all the above, may find themselves at a higher risk of experiencing depersonalization. This is because their daily routine often includes a notable level of separation from their colleagues. Throughout their workday, the interaction of teachers with other individuals, like

colleagues or professional staff, is minimized as they mostly interact with their students which can be quite challenging and pressuring as at times teachers are in need of a person who can empathize with their struggles.

Matheny K.B. et al., (2000) stated that even though contemporary working conditions may give the impression of being somewhat more compassionate towards employees, it is essential to acknowledge the persistent existence of numerous ongoing workplace trends that continue to jeopardize the physical health and overall well-being of the workforce. These trends may be job-related, like over-encompassing stress, extended working hours, limited security professionally but also personally as the teacher's health can be at risk due to their work environment.

As an extension to the above, modern schools nowadays can constitute an environment that precludes numerous challenges for the educators due to the high demands that this profession entails, which ultimately leads to stress. Work-related stress can result in teachers' burnouts which has a negative impact not only on their welfare but also on their professional contentment; therefore, their relationships with their students, colleagues, and families is at risk as well.

According to the **headmasters'** perspectives during their interviews, these challenges can be outlined as follows:

**Large Classes:** Teachers are expected to teach large classes with many students having to manage simultaneously the class but also each student individually.

**Diverse Levels:** Teachers must adapt their teaching style and methodologies accordingly to the various needs and comprehension levels of the students to accommodate everyone within the classroom.

**Behavioral Issues:** Teachers must address any behavioral issues that they may notice during their lesson. Discipline among elementary school students is profoundly hindered in primary

education by the lack of an effective grading system and disciplinary punishments, as they exist in secondary education.

**Pedagogical Adaptation:** Teachers need to be pedagogically flexible and adjust their methods to meet students' needs. In their free time, they need to attend seminars, either online or by going themselves, for self-improvement. This summer, they were required to participate in extensive online seminars on violence and delinquency.

**Time Pressure:** Lesson preparation, student assessment, and bureaucratic tasks can create time pressures for teachers. They finish school relatively early, around 1:05, but in the afternoon, they need to prepare for the lessons of the next day. Additionally, they often need to talk to parents about issues that arise regarding their children.

**Educational and Technological Updates:** Educational improvements and technological integration in schools can be quite troublesome and might require extra effort; however, they are vital for an effective learning experience.

**Additional Responsibilities:** Taking part in extracurricular activities and attending educational programs for the teachers' edification are some of the extra duties that teachers take on throughout their career.

**Isolation from Professional Conversations:** Due to the constant interaction that teachers have with their students, they might occasionally feel isolated from their colleagues.

These challenges make the teaching profession demanding, yet simultaneously engaging and vital for the education of the younger generation. It has ceased to be a simple profession and has become a multifaceted role. Teachers must take on the roles of nurses, psychologists, and even parents for their students in the morning.

Teachers frequently experience heightened stress levels and psychosomatic health issues in comparison to other occupations as Wettstein A. et al. (2021) stated. This elevated teacher stress has wide-ranging effects on their well-being, student motivation, and the

economy. However, studies on teacher stress primarily depend on self-assessments, which means stress is evaluated solely through subjective perceptions. In the words of Mariotti A. (2015) the way an individual can predict a particular stressor and subsequently manage it significantly shapes the stress response that follows, including how quickly and effectively it is triggered to facilitate adaptation, and how rapidly it subsides once balance is restored. So, as Wettstein A. et al. (2021) support that the inclusion of biological measures may be a valuable predictor of stress-related illnesses and provide feedback to teachers about the predominantly unconscious biological (re)activity that makes teachers aware of their stress responses under certain circumstances.

### **Team Building in primary education**

It is clear that teachers face numerous challenges in their roles so the need for effective assistance arises; hence, seeking ways to keep them engaged and interested within their professional environment. Therefore, exploring the ways team building activities positively influence teachers' overall intellectual and emotional well-being is crucial as this will reduce their work-related stress. Hence, teachers will achieve a better work-life balance and improve their job satisfaction. In the long term, improved team performance and cooperation will be achieved as the teacher's welfare will be prioritized and taken care of.

As Babin Dhas D. & Karhikeyan P. (2015) argue, work-life balance can be achieved through effectively and efficiently balancing paid work with other vital individual activities like spending quality time with their family, volunteering, or education. The challenges of work-life balance are likely to affect recruitment, retention, and willingness to work in challenging locations. In simpler terms, it's important to help teachers deal with their difficulties and stay motivated. Team building activities can play a role in reducing stress, improving their work-life balance, and making them happier in their job. When the mental and



emotional world of teachers is improved, it is more likely to collaborate better with their colleagues, which will ultimately benefit their students as McCallum F. & Price D. (2013) mention.

Collaboration and cooperation between teachers, staff and administrators in primary schools constitute the foundation of team building within primary education. The goal is to create a supportive and effective working environment that benefits both the school community and the students. The attributes of a flourishing educational institution come to light through several key elements contributing to its overall health.

Aduni J. et al. (2021) emphasize the important role of promoting open and constructive communication among teachers; hence, collegiality and empathy is fostered within the team. They highlight that management decisions should be taken in accordance and in consultation of core values and standards. Furthermore, they argue that teachers when acquiring efficient methods to assist their problem-solving skills through teamwork, can enhance their educational efforts. As a result, creativity within educational environments can be achieved through the incorporation of university courses customized for pre-service teachers with a focus on innovative collaborative strategies. Additionally, learning and teaching experiences can be supplemented through the addition of collaborative creativity exercises within the classroom setting. They also argue that principals who are actively involved within the school environment and support their teachers both professionally and personally play a key role in the teacher's intrinsic growth, specifically their motivational levels, satisfaction, and engagement at work.

Another critical component is a well-structured framework that includes comprehensive school regulations and clearly defined roles and expectations from the members of the organization. Hence, a sense of clarity and direction is provided to all involved.

According to Koswara D. et al. (2021), teachers' organizational commitment is strongly influenced by the pointers provided to teachers, the leadership of each principal, and the self-efficacy of the members in general, with the main attributes correlating to higher commitment levels.

Furthermore, Headmaster C emphasizes the importance of giving constructive feedback and praise to the teachers to increase their dedication and motivation to work even harder and aspire to be even better in their profession. Equally crucial in this endeavor is the provision of the appropriate and adequate resources and facilities to support teachers in their tasks, along with constantly available mechanisms that can be utilized when faced with various challenges. When paperwork and rules are simplified and clarified then work runs smoother. An appealing workplace, both physically and culturally, can make a huge difference. This presupposes a well-thought-out and effective planning executed by senior management to ensure the smooth running of the institution. As Parks' S. et al. (2005) discovered in their study, teachers who manage to collaborate effectively, ultimately provide a strong prediction regarding their commitment to the team.

Considering Sparks' D. (2013) key characteristics that ignite a successful team, one might suggest that team building activities and strategies in primary education encompass a range of carefully crafted approaches and endeavors. Some examples are the follows:

**Professional Learning Communities:** Teachers aim through collaboration to share their experiences so as to discover best practices by analyzing their students' data, and design and execute various strategies to enhance their teaching and consequently their students learning.

**Regular Team Meetings:** Holding and taking part in frequent meetings in which all faculty is gathered is very beneficial as the curriculum, the students' progress but also the school's objectives can be discussed in unison.

**Collaborative Lesson Planning:** Designing and implementing stimulating and efficient lesson plans within the curriculum regulations constitutes the core of teamwork between teachers.

**Interdisciplinary Projects:** Teachers aim to improve the students' holistic learning experience by integrating various subjects into a single project.

**Inclusive Education:** Individualized support originates from the teachers' collaboration to ensure that students with diverse backgrounds and learning needs are getting the necessary support.

**Professional Development:** Workshops, training, and conferences are considered the backbone of educational growth of the teachers as they provide the opportunity of improving their skills, knowledge and enriching their teaching methodologies.

**Mentorship Programs:** When experienced teachers mentor newer educators, they provide their hard gained perspective of teaching which will enable the newer teachers to adjust more easily in this new challenging environment and feel supported and understood by their colleagues.

**Parent Involvement:** Parents should actively be involved in their child's educational journey for a successful bond to be created between home and school which will increase the possibility of a successful learning experience for the students.

**Positive School Culture:** Creating a positive and inclusive school environment where every staff member feels valued and supported.

Sparks D. (2013) captures the idea that when teachers work together, they generate a powerful synergy that ultimately contributes to the success and strength of educational institutions.

### **Methodology**

The methodology employed within this research to investigate the effect that team building had on teachers' welfare in primary education will be clarified. The numerous ways in which team building activities affect the teachers' well-being like stress reduction, work-life balance, and overall job satisfaction and ultimately the impact that it has on team performance in primary school will be elucidated. Qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques were combined and employed enhancing the methodology of this study through a mixed-method approach. This approach's purpose is to validate and justify the reliability of this study as it will provide an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon.

Implementing both quantitative and qualitative methods, in this research, offers valuable benefits. While quantitative data provides numbers and patterns, qualitative data provides the logic behind these numbers, like the "how" and "why". This mix is really enlightening when it comes to comprehending deeply the topic and cross-checking findings. This research also provides the opportunity to a wider audience, including reviewers and readers of this thesis, to generate new ideas which makes this study even stronger.

### **Operationalization of Variables**

It is of great essence the elaboration of the operationalization of variables. In this way the relationship between team building activities, teachers' well-being and team performance will be defined. It would be easy for researchers to understand the effectiveness of such interventions in schools' environments.

Team building activities according to Fapohunda T. (2013) are organized initiatives that target the communication, collaboration, and unity of teachers in their working environment. These activities include workshops, and professional training sessions designed to build trust and communication among employees. It is the independent variable in this research.

Teachers' well-being, stress reduction, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and team performance are the dependent variables that will be analyzed and examined in this research. The teacher's well-being level relies on all the above key aspects.

The first dimension is stress reduction. Can et al. (2020) define stress as the emotional situation under which an individual encompasses great amount of anxiety. Another key aspect of teachers' well-being is work-life balance which is referred to the ability of individuals to balance personal life and work career.

Through the questionnaires the researcher tried to find out the level of the teachers' perceptions of how effectively they handle their stress level and the requirements of their professional and personal lives.

Additionally, another dependent variable is job satisfaction that is specified as the sense of fulfillment that an individual derives from their job. It includes motivation, engagement, recognition, positive relations.

Finally, team performance depends on the level of cooperation, communication, trust among employees. It shows how successfully teachers' team functions and at what level the aims and objectives of a school are accomplished after the intervention of team building activities. So, team performance contributes to successful school outcomes achievement.

By examining the relationships between team building activities and these dependent variables, this study aims to explain how team building activities might help teachers feel better and work together more effectively, helping to create better schools and improve students' learning.

**Table 1**  
*Operationalization of variables*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Conceptual Definition</b>	<b>Operational Definition</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Measurement Scale</b>
Team Building (Qualitative)	Interventions to improve interpersonal relations	Academic performance questionnaire. Responses are collected using a Likert scale.	Professional Support Encouraging Teamwork	Trust Communication Collaboration Respect Cohesion Empowerment	Ordinal
Stress (Qualitative)	The feeling of being overwhelmed by a high-pressure situation	Academic performance questionnaire. Responses are collected using a Likert scale.	Anxiety Irritability Memory Problems	Nervous Habits Headaches Relationships Conflicts Sadness Errors Decreased Self-Esteem Time	Ordinal
Work-Life Balance (Qualitative)	The balance between personal life and career work	Academic performance questionnaire. Responses are collected using a Likert scale.	Clear Boundaries Prioritize Health	Allocation Flexibility Boundaries Energy Levels Engagement Harmony Engagement Fulfillment	Ordinal
Job Satisfaction (Qualitative)	The sense of fulfillment that an individual derives from their job	Academic performance questionnaire. Responses are collected using a Likert scale.	Work Fulfillment Compensation and Benefits	Positive Relationships Recognition Contentment with work tasks Autonomy Job Security Goal	Ordinal
Team Performance (Qualitative)	How well a team meets its objectives	Academic performance questionnaire. Responses are collected using a Likert scale. inferential statistics.	Task Management Problem Solving Adaptability Team Dynamics	Achievement Efficiency Communication Collaboration Satisfaction Engagement Quality Output Feedback and Learning	Ordinal

### **Data Collection Methods**

**Interviews with School Administrators:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted as a primary data collection method with school administrators of primary schools. The aim of these interviews was to gain insight into the impact that team building activities had on the welfare of teachers. Specifically, the challenges and strategies that were associated with reducing teachers' stress and providing work-balance and overall job satisfaction influenced the welfare of teachers and subsequently the team's performance. The participants were selected on purpose to ensure that a variety of primary schools would be represented. In-person and online interviews were conducted to ensure flexibility and adjust to the participants' preferences.

**Questionnaires for Teachers:** Questionnaires were distributed to teachers in a selection of primary schools. These questionnaires included a series of scales focusing on their perceptions of how team building activities are implemented in their work life as well as their impact on their teaching practices. The questionnaires were distributed electronically in Google forms survey software to maximize participation and ease of data collection. Participation in this research was voluntary, and the teachers' responses were and will be kept confidential for the protection of personal information.

**Observations:** Direct observations of teachers' behavior and practices within the context of team building between primary school teachers were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of their educational processes. Bearing in mind the interviews and questionnaire's results, it was very beneficial to observe the teachers in their workplace as it became evident which areas needed improvement regarding their relationships. Real-time assessment was carried out within the classroom setting to observe the specific aspects that this research is focusing on as mentioned above. A structured observation protocol was used to document these observations.

**Table 2**

Data Collection	Analysis Method
Quantitative Data (Questionnaires)	Analyzed using SPSS for patterns, correlations, and associations through descriptive and inferential statistics.
Qualitative Data (Interviews and Observation)	Transcribed and thematically analyzed to extract key themes and insights.

### Data Analysis

Data was received from interviews and questionnaires. Regarding the questionnaire, a 5-point Likert scale method was used by the responders to answer the questions which consists of: (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. SPSS software tool was used to analyze and interpret the data retrieved from the questionnaires. Additionally, it was of crucial importance to provide neutral section names in the questionnaire to avoid any bias in the methodology. To assess the reliability and consistency of the answers provided by the participants', reversed questions were incorporated within the questionnaire. The identification of recurring themes and patterns in the qualitative data and the statistical analysis of the quantitative data occurred in the analysis section. A descriptive analytical approach was employed to analyze the observational data.

To reach a wider audience demographically, the questionnaire was distributed through various social platforms, namely Viber and Email. Furthermore, the administrative team of eight schools received the questionnaire which was subsequently circulated with the faculty members of each school, specifically the teachers, assistant headmasters, and headmasters.

To have the credibility of conducting this research in schools, permission was requested and granted from the CERE institute. Lastly, the questionnaire was also submitted to the University of Cyprus and specifically to the Department of Educational Sciences, for distribution to undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral students thus increasing the numerical aspect but also the demographical range of the participants.



Difficulties were encountered during the data collection and analysis phase of the research, as anticipated. Initially, it was necessary to obtain the required permissions through the Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation (CERE) and subsequently through the Ministry of Education and Culture for conducting research in primary schools. This process took some time to be accomplished. Fortunately, the response from the authorities was immediate.

While the questionnaires were initially sent to 8 primary schools, with the expectation of receiving a satisfactory number of responses for data collection, the response from educators was minimal. Consequently, the questionnaires were distributed to a much larger number of primary schools across all districts, in the hope of eliciting a better response. Additionally, the researcher communicated with school principals via telephone to promote the research via email to educators and to remind them to complete the questionnaire. Only then did data collection begin to take place.

### **Participants**

The study's participants were from all over Cyprus namely Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaka, Paphos and Ammochostos. More specifically, in this study participated primary school teachers and headmasters from 14 different schools. In total, 152 teachers participated randomly to ensure a diverse representation of schools. All participants were informed of the study's objectives and provided their informed consent to participate.

### **Materials**

The online survey consisted of 47 questions. Participants indicated the extent to which they endorsed each statement using a 5-point Likert type scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). An example item is: *“Do you think that team-building activities have contributed to a*

*more supportive work environment?*”. Moreover, another type of statement used in the questionnaire was multiple answer questions where participants could choose more than 1 answer. An example item is *“How do you measure the success or effectiveness of team building initiatives for teachers in your school?”* To make sure that validity and reliability were ensured, similar phased questions were utilized as well as reverse questions.

To ensure that the participants' responses were relevant and relatable to their experiences, a selective approach was adopted within the methodology. More specifically, a section was exclusively designed for teachers who participated in team building activities, while for those who did not, they were directed to subsequent sections. This methodological choice aspired to more validated and reliable findings that will allow for a more accurate portrayal of the correlation between team building activities and the variables that were being examined.

## **Procedures**

The online questionnaire was divided into 9 sections. The first section, participants accepted an informed consent statement. Participation in this online survey was optional and participants had the right to freely withdraw their participation at any time. To maintain confidentiality, participants were not asked to indicate their name at any point during the process of completing the survey. The questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete. A clarification was mentioned in the second section, that to participate in this study, the participants must be primary school teachers or university students currently enrolled in or students that completed their degree in primary education. Another section included the demographic information where participants had to fill in their gender and age. In the concluding sections, the study incorporated a series of inquiries, thoughtfully categorized into distinct sections that corresponded to the various sectors scrutinized within this research.

The interviews consisted of 12 questions and were conducted either through personal interviews or sent via email after personal communication.

### **Data collection/analysis**

The research employed a multi-method approach to gather comprehensive insights into the efficacy of team building initiatives in primary schools. Data collection involved the distribution of structured questionnaires among teachers, aimed at assessing their perceptions and experiences regarding team dynamics and collaborative practices within the school environment. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with headmasters to gather qualitative perspectives on the implementation and impact of team building strategies at the administrative level.

Furthermore, teachers were directly observed during regular school hours to gain a more real-time approach regarding teachers' interaction and team-based activities. These observations complemented the qualitative data gathered from the questionnaires and interviews as they provided a more contextual understanding.

When data collection was completed, statistical software like SPSS, was employed for their analysis. Regarding the quantitative data gathered from questionnaires, patterns, correlations, and substantial association were identified after a descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Regarding the qualitative data, key themes and insights were extracted by transcribing and analyzing thematically the data obtained from interviews and observations.

Both quantitative and qualitative data sources were crucial as they heightened the reliability and validity of our findings. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of how effective and efficient team building interventions are within primary school settings was possible and accessible.

### **Ethical Considerations**

To maintain confidentiality, the data was collected anonymously. To ensure ethical research conduct, informed consent was obtained from all participants. At the beginning of the survey a statement of consent had to be accepted by the participants to complete the questionnaire. At the outset of each interview, participants were briefed on the study's objectives and methods to secure informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity of the responses were assured. Participants were also reminded of their right to withdraw from the interview at any time.

During the observation process, all the ethical guidelines and parameters were adhered to ensure personal data protection; hence an informed consent of all participants was requested. The individuals' credentials who were observed were kept confidential to respect their rights and privacy to the extent permissible by law. Any sensitive or personal information that was collected during the observations was securely stored and managed in compliance with the relevant data protection regulations.

Furthermore, extensive training was provided to the research team in observation techniques to ensure reliability and consistency in data collection. The quality of the data was ensured through detailed observation protocols that were established. A deeper understanding of the research topic is accomplished by presenting the findings in a clear and structured manner, thus fulfilling this study's objectives.

The results of the study will be disseminated at the CERE institute to promote transparency and facilitate knowledge exchange among researchers and stakeholders.

## Results

### Demographic information

In the sample, most participants were female, comprising 83% (n=127), while males constituted 16.3% (n=25).

*Table 3: Distribution of Participants by Gender*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Female	127	83.0	83.0
	Male	25	16.3	16.3
	Total	152	100.0	100.0

The majority of the participants fell within the age group of 45 to 54 years, comprising 33% of the questionnaire's sample (n=51). The next age bracket of 35 to 44 years constituted 30% of the respondents (n=46). In addition, in the age group ranging from 25 to 34 (n=21) 13% responded, while 11.8% (n=18) of the sample was set up by the 18 to 24 year old participants. Lastly, 11% of the sample (n=1) was accounted for by the respondents aged between 55 to 65 years.

*Table 4: Distribution of Participants by age*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	18-24	18	11.8	11.8
	25-34	21	13.7	13.7
	35-44	46	30.1	30.1
	45-54	51	33.3	33.3
	55-65	17	11.1	11.1

	Total	153	100.0	100.0
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Of the participants, a notable majority, comprising 52% (n=80), held master's degrees, while 42.5% (n=65) possessed bachelor's degrees. The remaining participants were holders of doctoral degrees.

**Table 5: Distribution of Participants by Level of Education**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	University bachelor's Degree	65	42.5	42.5	94.8
	University master's Degree	80	52.3	52.3	52.3
	Doctoral Degree	8	5.2	5.2	100.0
	Total	153	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 illustrates that the largest portion of participants, accounting for 66%, comprised classroom teachers (n=101). Student teachers constituted 17% of the sample, while Assistant Headmasters and Headmasters made up 10.5% and 6.5% of the sample, respectively.

**Table 6: the Distribution of Participants According to Their Position in the Primary School**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Student Teacher	26	17.0	17.0	17.0
	Classroom Teacher	101	66.0	66.0	89.5
	Assistant Headmaster	16	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Headmaster/Headmistress	10	6.5	6.5	23.5

Total	153	100.0	100.0
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### Inferential Statistics

The objective of this study was to investigate the correlations between participation in team building activities and its effects on stress reduction, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and team performance among teachers.

Prior to conducting correlation analyses, due to the sample size exceeding 50 participants, the normality of the data distribution was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Results indicated that all variables, except Team Performance, exhibited a statistically substantial departure from normality ( $p < 0.01$ ). Hence, the need for non-parametric tests arose. The relationship between the variables of participation in team building activities stress reduction, work-life balance, and job satisfaction, were examined by applying Pearson's correlation due to their normally distributed nature ( $p > 0.01$ ). However, the Team Performance variable was assessed with other variables by Spearman's rho which is the non-parametric equivalent to Pearson's correlation test, as it did not adhere to the assumption of normality.

**Table 7: Tests of Normality**

	<i>Kolmogorov-Smirnova</i>			<i>Shapiro-Wilk</i>		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Stress	.122	134	<.001	.965	134	.001
Work-Life Balance	.117	134	<.001	.966	134	.002
Job Satisfaction	.125	134	<.001	.951	134	<.001
Team Performance	.060	134	.200*	.983	134	.089

Team Building	.140	134	<.001	.968	134	.003
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\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

**Correlation Analysis**

**Hypothesis 1:**

**Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** Teachers who participated in team building activities do not demonstrate any significant difference regarding their stress levels to those who did not.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** Teachers who participate in Team Building activities exhibit decreased stress levels in comparison to those who did not.

Table 6 results exhibits a statistically substantial positive correlation between participation in team building activities and stress reduction ( $r(133) = .29, p < .001$ ). This relationship connotes that an increasing engagement in team building activities results in a small yet meaningful decrease in stress levels among the respondents. The validity of this relationship was assessed by Pearson's correlation coefficient, having a sample size of 133 participants. The obtained p-value strengthens this observed association as it indicates that correlation coefficient is statistically noteworthy.

**Table 8: Correlation Analysis Team Building and Stress**

		<i>Team Building</i>	<i>Stress</i>
Team Building	Pearson Correlation	1	.288**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	135	135
Stress	Pearson Correlation	.288**	1



	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	135	153

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

**Hypothesis 2:**

**Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** Work-life balance and participation in team building activities are not significantly related.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** A better work-life balance is achieved by the teachers who engage in team building activities.

As shown in table 7 below, there is a statistically noteworthy positive correlation between the teachers who engaged in team building activities and the perceived work-life balance ( $r(133) = .45, p < .001$ ). A medium-strength relationship between the variables was denoted through the derivation of Pearson’s correlation analysis of a 133 participants’ sample of the correlation coefficient. The validity and reliability of this association is further affirmed by the obtained p-value which suggests that the correlation observed did not occur by chance alone. In short, the more actively participants were engaged in team building activities, the higher were their levels of perceived work-life balance as they have reported which highlights how beneficial such initiatives are in reinforcing a more holistic welfare among the participants.

**Table 9: Correlation Analysis Team Building and Work-Life Balance**

		<i>Team Building</i>	<i>Work-Life Balance</i>
Team Building	Pearson Correlation	1	.451**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	135	135

Work-Life Balance	Pearson Correlation	.451**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	135	153

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

**Hypothesis 3:**

**Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** Participation in team building activities and job satisfaction among the participants are not notably associated.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** Job satisfaction is positively influenced by teachers who participate in team building activities.

Table 8 results demonstrate that there is no statistically substantial relationship between feeling satisfied in your work and participating in team building activities ( $r(133) = .17, p = .050$ ). There is a weak relationship between the variables suggested by the correlation coefficient which was computed by Pearson’s correlation analysis having 133 participants in the questionnaires sample. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the p-value of 0.50 reaches the conventional threshold of statistical importance as the p value is typically set at .05; hence, this constitutes a borderline result. Even though the correlation coefficient denotes a positive association, the lack of statistical significance suggests that, among the population, this relationship may not be reliably present.

**Table 10: Correlation Analysis Team Building and Job Satisfaction**

		<i>Team Building</i>	<i>Job Satisfaction</i>
Team Building	Pearson Correlation	1	.170
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.050
	N	135	134

Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.170	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.050	
	N	134	136

**Hypothesis 4:**

**Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** *The relationship between active participation in team building activities and team performance is of no significance.*

**Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** *Higher levels of team performance are demonstrated by the teachers who actively take part in team building activities.*

Table 9 gives compelling results regarding the existence of a positive and statistically substantial association between engagement in team building activities and the teachers' performance within teams ( $\rho(151) = .411, p < 0.01$ ). There is a vigorous association between the variables which was revealed through the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient employed due to the non-parametric nature of the data within a sample of 151 respondents. The observed correlation is highly unlikely to have occurred by chance alone as the p-value falls below the conventional threshold of importance, thus underscoring the reliability of this relationship. These findings are of great importance as they shed light to the potential efficacy of team building interventions in nurturing cohesive and productive team relationships within the primary school environment which is achieved through the increased participation in team building activities that is ultimately associated with an improved team performance.

**Table 11: Correlation Analysis Team Building and Team Performance**

<i>Team Building</i>	<i>Team Performance</i>
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Spearman's rho	Team Building	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.411**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001
		N	135	135
	Team Performance	Correlation Coefficient	.411**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.
		N	135	136

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

## Discussion

### Commentary on the Research Results

The aim of this study is to demonstrate that team building positively influences the well-being of teachers in primary education. How does it affect them? Our focus was on stress reduction, effective workload management, fostering work-life balance, and overall job satisfaction, as well as examining how these factors influence team performance.

The significance of this study lies within the setting of the primary schools as it is one of the first studies to research team building within this educational environment in Cyprus. As Klein C. et al. (2009) stated in their research, teachers constitute a team; hence, it is crucial to implement TBA (Team Building Activities) to promote the team's effectiveness. While they may work autonomously, their collectiveness lies in the fact that they must achieve the goals of the curriculum and the school unit. According to our research most of the participants support the idea that there is room for improvement (e.g., relationship between co-workers, team-building activities, work outcomes) in primary schools at the moment. Although they also maintain that team building activities have contributed to a more supportive work environment and increased team collaboration. Perhaps they would like to see organized programs that can educate them about the positivity of team building because they responded negatively to the question of whether they believe there are specific team building training programs for primary education teachers.

The positive relationship observed between stress and work-life balance suggests that *“interactions with other individuals in the workplace can also significantly impact our stress levels, either as sources of stress or as sources of support”* as Cartwright S. and Cooper C. (1997) stated. Being an educator in primary education is accompanied by stress almost daily, whether it's in the classroom, on the playground, during field trips, in lesson planning, organizing events and celebrations, communicating with parents and fellow colleagues. It's a

highly demanding job continuously. Therefore, there arises the need for ways to reduce this stress. In such professions, stressors, according to Dijkstra F. S. et al. (2021), the proper and effective functioning of the team is crucial because it reduces the stress that negatively affects team performance. An effective team is a team that promotes proper communication, mutual understanding, and assistance along with cooperation. Educators that contributed to our research findings strongly believe that incorporating team building activities into their everyday routine is of crucial importance. Both camaraderie and collaboration among teachers can reduce the educators' stress levels and improve their overall quality of life as suggested by our findings. According to Agyapong B. et al. (2023), students are directly influenced by their teachers' negativity when they are overwhelmed by stress that might result in their system's burnout. School based-interventions are suggested by them as the essential for teachers to assist them in improving their stress-coping mechanisms, reduce possible burnout risks, and prioritize their well-being. Agyapong B. et al. (2023) also emphasize the importance of increasing awareness and intervention programs within schools that should be prioritized by policymakers, governments, school boards and administrators. Hence, their perspective heightens our proposal for the essential organized implementation of team-building activities within primary educational environments.

Furthermore, our research suggests that there is a statistically substantial positive correlation between engagement in team building activities and the perception of work-life balance. Having in mind the participants' indication that their workload management and time efficiency was moderately to considerably improved, underscores the multilayered nature of team building activities and how influential they can be on teachers' work-life balance. Team building interventions often require cooperation between the participants and even adequate planning and time management. By taking part in such activities, teachers enhance and enrich their skills in coordinating assignments, prioritizing tasks and effectively manage their time to

meet deadlines, thus implementing them to accomplish the essential balance between work and personal life. Moreover, accountability and responsibility are nurtured through the collaborative nature of the team building activities, encouraging them to approach their workload more efficiently and consequently improving their work-life balance. When teachers work within a friendly, inclusive, and pleasant work environment, they are motivated to collaborate with each other, and they do so with enthusiasm. They are even willing to plan activities that will assist in achieving the overall objectives of their school, further contributing to a healthier work-life balance. They exchange ideas, attend each other's classes, and design lessons and various activities in collaboration. Ultimately, team building activities offer an array of diverse skills and experiences that assist teachers in developing effective strategies that will help them effectively navigate their workload while simultaneously managing with confidence their time; hence, work-life balance is once more prioritized. From our research results it can be inferred that the satisfaction and effectiveness of team building for educators depend on the dynamics within each school team. As Desmond McEwan et al. (2017) define teaching people who work better together can really help teams perform their tasks well. This will also help them to work well with their colleagues, resulting in better teamwork as Fapohunda T. (2013) mentioned. This is crucial because in primary schools having teams that cooperate effectively and do their jobs excellently is extremely important.

Additionally, through our research, evidence was discovered that the overall team performance is substantially enhanced by teachers' engagement in team building activities. Parks et al. (2005) study supports this finding, which highlights that team performance is improved through effective teamwork among teachers. Similarly, Sparks (2013) articulates the ideology that cooperation among teachers creates a powerful interaction which contributes even more to their collective effectiveness.

Likewise, a weak and insignificant relationship is suggested in our research between participation in team building activities and job satisfaction. This implies that the participants did not correlate their participation in team building activities with how satisfied they feel within their working environment. While it appears to be a slight positive connection between team building and job satisfaction, it's unclear if this holds universally true, as it might not consistently apply across different populations.

Dhurup M. et al. (2016) argue that an industry's overall productivity is impacted by the employee's job satisfaction. This demonstrates how crucial it is to discover new methodologies to effectively nurture job satisfaction through team building activities. Collaboration is not the only aim that organizations strive to achieve nowadays in their work environment as they also want their employees to derive satisfaction from their roles. Hence, investing in strategies that will simultaneously increase job satisfaction along with teamwork, thus promoting the employee's welfare and productivity, is of utmost importance.

### **Commentary on the Questionnaire Responses**

The analysis of the questionnaires was conducted to derive meaningful conclusions regarding the participants' responses. Three principals responded to the research questionnaire, all expressing willingness to participate. They all endorsed the notion that integrating team building into professional development programs for primary education teachers is essential. By doing so, educators break away from their daily routines, gain insights from different perspectives, and thereby foster a stronger bond. Furthermore, they emphasized that such activities are sometimes conducted sporadically and at other times more frequently, but never under a specific designation.

The findings of Agota Kun & Peter Gadanecz (2020) research align with the opinion of the headmasters. Their research revealed that the key components contributing to teachers'



job satisfaction include accomplishing objectives, receiving feedback, finding meaning in their work, and fostering positive relationships with colleagues.

Headmasters supported the idea that if such activities are organized either within or outside the school premises, they undoubtedly assist educators in developing diverse and multifaceted relationships. This helps them to exchange ideas more freely, support each other on a pedagogical level, exchange materials, observe each other's lessons, and thus improve. They assist each other in activities that require a lot of effort and work. They believe that the teaching approach is slightly influenced.

They said that handling conflicts or disagreements within the teaching team becomes easier when participation in team building activities precedes. *“If I disagree with a colleague with whom we participate in team building activities, it's easier for us to find a solution!”* They mentioned that they follow certain strategies to cope with disagreements. *“I hold regular meetings for teachers to discuss goals, challenges, and successes, fostering collaboration and problem-solving, facilitate peer observation and feedback among teachers, recognize and celebrate individual and team achievements, organize team-building activities and social events within the school unit.”*

They emphasized that experiencing the daily needs and challenges within a primary education unit necessitates tailor-made team-building activities. Thus, while the underlying philosophy remains consistent, the approach varies according to the specific needs of educators in each school unit. While there are programs that promote collaboration and mutual assistance among teachers, it is clear that dedicated team-building initiatives should be structured and organized both by the Pedagogical Institute and the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.

In order to measure the success or effectiveness of team building initiatives for teachers in a primary school a headmaster can administer surveys or questionnaires to teachers to gather feedback on their perceptions of the team building activities, including aspects such as

engagement, stress, satisfaction, and perceived impact on collaboration and teamwork or can conduct observations during team building activities to assess levels of participation, interaction among teachers, and overall atmosphere to gauge the effectiveness of the initiatives. Moreover, they can encourage teachers to provide feedback to their colleagues on their perceived strengths and areas for improvement following team building activities. In this way a culture of support and accountability will be fostered.

They emphasized the pivotal role of leadership in facilitating successful team-building initiatives. Leaders who demonstrate respect and offer tailored support based on individual educators' capabilities, challenges, and requirements are deemed essential for effective implementation. A principal who embodies leadership qualities and fosters a sociable environment, prioritizing fairness, and inclusivity, greatly facilitates the promotion and execution of team building among primary education teachers.

*“By sharing teaching techniques and strategies as well as materials, you improve since there is always something to learn from colleagues. When there is collaboration and mutual understanding, then this is achievable.”* They argue that indirectly, students also benefit from the camaraderie and collaboration among teachers.

Ultimately, they emphasize that many aspects require more effective organization. *“Up to now, without explicitly labeling it as such, we have independently participated in various activities that have improved our well-being. However, now there is a need for systematic organization. Training should be provided because it impacts teachers' effectiveness in the classroom, and consequently, students' performance or behavior.”*

### **Commentary on the Observation Among Teachers**

To deeply comprehend the dynamics of teachers' interactions within their educational setting, observation was employed as one of the most valuable methods in doing so. This study

focused on exploring the various ways in which team building activities affect the welfare of teachers regarding from various perspectives like stress reduction, work-life balance, and overall job satisfaction. The subsequent impact that all these factors had on team performance was also under examination.

Observations were conducted over a three-month period in a primary school setting. The approach employed was participant observation as this allowed the researcher to immerse within the classroom setting, specifically the daily activities carried out by the teachers, while simultaneously maintaining a neutral stance. These observations were discreetly conducted during team building activities, staff meetings, and classroom interactions.

Regarding the impact of team building activities on teacher dynamics, several themes emerged during the observation period. After participating in team building activities that took place in their free time, the participating teachers were prone to collaborate and communicate more smoothly, they accomplished an effortless understanding and mutual assistance was immediate from that point onwards.

A positive association between observed behaviors and team performance outcomes was detected. Effective collaboration among teachers not only in lesson planning but also in addressing student needs and incorporating school initiatives were observed after team building activities as a result of cohesive teamwork and improved communication. These findings strengthen Tannenbaum S. et al.'s (1992) viewpoint of team-building interventions as largely effective and having a positive impact on both perceptions and behaviors.

This resulted in improved behaviors and overall school effectiveness. When individuals communicate on a personal level outside the school environment, they can feel comfortable in their workplace, fostering trust among them.

There was an evident requirement for educators to receive more structured and coordinated information regarding the advantages of team building activities. Tannenbaum et

al. (1992) findings that team-building interventions were moderately successful and had a positive impact, underscored the importance of policymakers, governments, school boards, and administrators. As a result, the implementation of school-based awareness and intervention programs was prioritized, as advocated by Agyapong B. et al. (2023).

It is common in environments where the number of people is relatively high for individuals to not collaborate or even interact with everyone. Consequently, it was noticed that subgroups were formed when participating in team building activities. Collaboration and trust were built within these subgroups which operated simultaneously.

Indeed, the observation among educators highlighted the significance of team building in reducing stress, as it promotes collaboration, dedication to work, satisfaction, and increased efficiency. Therefore, educators need to be informed because most of them are unaware of the term "team building" and the positive outcomes it has on both educators' mental well-being and the enhancement of their teaching skills. By participating in team building activities, teaching methodologies are enriched and consequently teaching practices as well as opinions and effective methods are exchanged.

### **Limitations**

This study has contributed to expanding our understanding of team building and its influence on the teachers' welfare within primary schools. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge this study's limitations as well. The data was collected from teachers across Cyprus, and future research could explore each province separately and delve deeper into each factor's relationship with team building. Therefore, caution should be exercised in interpreting the study results, as the sample size was small, and the findings, particularly regarding job satisfaction, may have been different. Although the correlation coefficient indicates a positive connection between team building and job satisfaction, the absence of statistical significance

implies that this association may not be consistently found within the population. However, these results do not entirely dismiss the possibility of a potential relationship. Differentiated research should be conducted which will apply either a different research methodology or manage to acquire a larger sample size of respondents to gain an even greater in-depth understanding of the correlation between team building activities and job satisfaction. A comparison of the two variables separately might be a good suggestion for future research to examine in detail each factor.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative data within research could offer various pathways of exploration that will ultimately assist educators grow both on a personal as well as on a collective level. The response rate from teachers was relatively low, which raised some concerns. However, factors like the English language used in the questionnaire, which is not the native language in Cyprus, the novelty of the topic, or even requirement for electronic completion should be noted as possible reasons for the low percentage of participants and considered for possible future studies.

Additionally, even though we live in a rapidly growing technological world, teachers are used to completing surveys in a hardcopy format, which might have made some of them struggle in locating the research either via email or Viber.

This study's goal was to contribute to an under-researched area in the existing literature regarding the correlation of team building and teachers' well-being. However, it is important to note that further systematic research should be conducted to gain an even greater and more accurate perspective within this area of study.

### **Conclusion**

This study scrutinizes that impact that team building activities have on the welfare of primary school teachers with a focus on stress reduction, management of workload, balancing work-life, and job satisfaction, and how these factors affect team performance. This research's significance lies in addressing the need for improvement while stressing the positive effects of team building practices on work environment and cooperation within the Cyprus' primary schools. The study indicates a positive relationship between team building and work-life balance. This is achieved through an improved workload management and time efficiency within the school setting. Furthermore, it highlights how important collaboration and companionship is among the teachers to alleviate some levels of stress and enhance the overall quality of the teachers' life. Additionally, this research, in accordance with previous studies, demonstrates a substantial improvement in overall team performance when teachers take part in team building activities. Nevertheless, a weak association between team building activities and job satisfaction is suggested, which necessitates further examination of methodologies that will cultivate and sustain job satisfaction within the educational setting. Overall, this study's goal is to underscore the significance of investing in strategies that when implemented will enhance teamwork and contribute to both employees' welfare and productivity through team building activities.

The research's findings shed a new light to the influence that team building activities have on a teacher's well-being and to an organization's effectiveness, stressing their impact on reducing stress, creating a more satisfying environment, balancing work, and personal life, and improving team performance.

The implementation and comprehension of team building practices and strategies is one of the main aspects that this study encompasses to assist teachers in their role by promoting cooperation and cohesion within the educational team. Teachers can improve their work

performance and well-being when they comprehend the correlation that exists between team-based activities, stress reduction, job fulfillment, and achieving work-life balance. Additionally, practical solutions for addressing stress issues and effectively managing time are offered. Hence, this study provides specific guidelines for improving the educational processes and the work environment. Ultimately, through these findings will enhance the readers' knowledge and nurture a more harmonious and cohesive work culture which will lead to an improved educational process resulting in an improved quality of education provided to students.

Integrating team building strategies are considered to be a vital step towards improving both individual and collective outcomes as educators attempt to navigate their profession's challenges. Thus, this study's objective is to serve as a facilitator for a continued exploration and incorporation of teamwork initiatives aimed at promoting and supporting teachers' welfare and organizational effectiveness in primary educational settings.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A – Questionnaire

4/1/24, 2:42 PM

Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

## Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking part in this survey. I am Antrea Loizou, a student in a Master's program at the University of Cyprus, specializing in Human Resource Management. I am currently conducting a significant research study focusing on **Team Building and Teachers**. Today, I am inviting you to participate in this scientific endeavor.

In this questionnaire, I am specifically seeking primary school teachers or university students currently enrolled in or those who have completed their degree in primary education.

My research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the various ways in which team building activities impact teachers' work, help reduce stress, maintain a work-life balance, and enhance job satisfaction. Your insights and experiences are invaluable for achieving this goal. Your participation will contribute to the development of new knowledge in this field. This survey will take approximately 10-14 minutes.

Your involvement in this research project is entirely voluntary and confidential. You have the option to withdraw at any point. The data collected through this questionnaire will be utilized solely for research purposes. Your identity will be handled confidentially and will only be used to correlate your responses. No personal information such as names or email addresses will be solicited.

\* Required

### Consent for Data Use

1. I verify that I am 18 years or older, and I authorize the use of my responses for this research \*

Yes

No

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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

### **What is Team Building?**

**Team building** is about **activities** and strategies that help a **group work better together** by **improving communication, trust, and teamwork**.

Spending time together in these activities enables you to **bond** while **gaining insights, sharing ideas, and enhancing teaching methods collaboratively**

#### **Examples:**

- Team brunch/lunch/dinner
- Beach trip
- Road trip
- Games etc.

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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

## Demographics

2. What is your age? \*

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-65

3. What is your gender? \*

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

4. What is your highest completed level of education? \*

- University bachelor's Degree
- University master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree

5. What is your current position or role at the primary school? \*

- Student Teacher
- Classroom Teacher
- Assistant Headmaster
- Headmaster/Headmistress

6. How long have you been working in your current position at the primary school? \*

- Less than a year
- 1 to 10 years
- More than 10 years

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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

## Team Dynamics

7. On a scale of 1 to 5, how important do you believe team building is for teachers in primary education?

\*

- 1 - Not Important
- 2 - Slightly Important
- 3 - Moderately Important
- 4 - Important
- 5 - Very Important

8. Have you participated in any team building activities or workshops as a primary education teacher?

\*

- Yes
- No

9. Do you think team building should be incorporated into the professional development programs for primary education teachers?

\*

- Yes
- No

10. How often does your school or educational institution organize team building activities or events for teachers?

\*

- Regularly
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never



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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

11. Do you believe that team building among teachers can have a positive impact on student outcomes in primary education? \*

- Yes
- No

12. Have you ever faced communication barriers while working in a team with other teachers? \*

- Yes
- No

13. In your opinion, what is the ideal balance between individual teacher autonomy and collaborative teamwork in a primary education setting? \*

- Strong Emphasis on Autonomy
- Moderate Emphasis on Autonomy
- Balanced Emphasis on Autonomy and Teamwork
- Moderate Emphasis on Teamwork
- Strong Emphasis on Teamwork

14. How do you handle conflicts or disagreements while working in a team with other teachers? \*

- Address them openly and collaboratively
- Avoid addressing them
- Seek help from a mediator or supervisor
- Other

15. Are there specific team building training programs for primary education teachers? \*

- Yes
- No

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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

16. How do you measure the success or effectiveness of team building initiatives for teachers in your school?

(Feel free to choose more than one answer)

\*

Improved collaboration and communication

Enhanced teacher morale

Increased student engagement

Other

17. Would you be interested in participating in future team building activities or workshops for teachers in your school?

\*

Yes

No

18. Do you believe that team building among teachers can have a negative impact on student outcomes in primary education? \*

Yes

No

19. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the team building activities you have participated in as a primary education teacher. \*

Very Satisfied

Satisfied

Neutral

Dissatisfied

Very Dissatisfied

I have never participated in a team building activity

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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

## Employment Fulfillment

20. How effectively do you believe the team-building activities have improved your ability to collaborate with other teachers? \*

- Very ineffectively
- Somewhat ineffectively
- Neither effectively nor ineffectively
- Somewhat effectively
- Very effectively

21. How often do you participate in team-building activities with your colleagues? \*

- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Regularly
- Frequently
- Always

22. Do you believe that team-building activities have enhanced your communication skills with fellow teachers? \*

- Yes
- No

23. To what extent do you feel more connected with your colleagues after participating in team-building activities? \*

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Considerably
- Extremely
- I have never participated in a team building activity

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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

24. How well do you think these activities have improved your ability to resolve conflicts within the teaching team? \*

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Considerably
- Extremely

25. Have you noticed a positive impact on your motivation overall due to team-building activities? \*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

26. How would you rate the creativity within the teaching team since the introduction of team-building activities? \*

- Very Low
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Very High

27. Do you believe the team-building activities have worsened your ability to collaborate with other teachers? \*

- Yes
- No

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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

28. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the team-building activities conducted in the school:

\*

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

Employment Fulfillment (Cont.)

29. Do you think that team-building activities have contributed to a more supportive work environment? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

30. How effective do you find team-building activities in improving team collaboration? \*

- Very ineffective
- Somewhat ineffective
- Neither effective nor ineffective
- Somewhat effective
- Very effective

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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

## Personal Wellness

31. Do you believe that team building activities improved your well-being in the work place? (e.g., high satisfaction; a positive mood; happiness)? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- I have never participated in team building activities

32. Does your job have positive characteristics (e.g., control over what you do or how you do it; support from other teachers)? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

33. Does your job have negative characteristics (e.g., high demands; requires a lot of effort; little consultation on change; role conflict; issues with other members of staff)? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

34. Do you try to cope with problems in a positive way (e.g., you focus on the problem and try and solve it; you get social support)? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

35. Do you deal with problems in a passive way (e.g., avoid them; use wishful thinking; blame yourself)? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

36. Do you think you have a positive personality (e.g., open; conscientious; extravert; agreeable; stable; high self-esteem; high self-efficacy; optimistic)? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

37. Are you a model teacher (e.g., helping; inspiring; motivated)? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree



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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

38. Are you committed to your job (e.g., high job satisfaction; a motivated employee who does not intend to leave)? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

39. Do you and your headmaster or superior have a good psychological contract (e.g., keep promises; treated fairly; high commitment)? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

40. How are you feeling about work/life balance at the moment? \*

- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied

41. Do you feel there is anything that can be done to improve things (e.g. relationship between co-workers; team-building activities; work outcomes) at the moment? \*

- Yes
- No

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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

42. Do you have a low level of wellbeing (e.g., low satisfaction; a negative mood; sadness)? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

## Work-Life Harmony

43. Do you feel that participating in team-building activities has improved your work-life balance? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

44. Has your ability to manage your workload and time effectively increased as a result of these activities? \*

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Considerably
- Significantly

45. Do you believe that the school's team-building initiatives have positively influenced your stress levels and overall well-being? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

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Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

46. How often do you find yourself able to disconnect from work and focus on personal life after participating in team-building activities? \*

- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Regularly
- Frequently
- Always

47. How satisfied are you with the school's efforts to support your work-life balance through team-building activities? \*

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

4/1/24, 2:42 PM

Team building and Teachers Well-being in Primary Education

Thank you for your participation!

We sincerely appreciate your time and valuable input in completing this survey. Your participation is instrumental in our efforts to gather valuable insights, and we are grateful for your contribution. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at [aloizo03@ucy.ac.cy](mailto:aloizo03@ucy.ac.cy)

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## **Appendix B - Letter for the Headmasters**

Antrea Loizou

Student in a master's program

University of Cyprus

14/01/2024

Dear Administrator of the primary school \_\_\_\_\_,

I am Antrea Loizou, and I am a student in a master's program at the University of Cyprus, specializing in Human Resource Management. I am currently conducting a significant research study focusing on Team Building and Teachers of primary education.

My research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the various ways in which team building activities impact teachers' work, help reduce stress, maintain a work-life balance, and enhance job satisfaction. Teachers' insights and experiences are invaluable for achieving this goal. Your participation will contribute to the development of new knowledge in this field. To complete my research, I will need to collect data among the teachers at your school. I will be using the attached online survey and conducting interviews with teachers who express interest. I have acquired the required license from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, which I am also attaching herewith. Hopefully, you will be granted the necessary permission to complete my research and kindly encourage your staff members to participate in the questionnaire.

I remain at your disposal for any further information you may require.

Kind Regards,

Antrea Loizou

Tel. 99790597

## Appendix C - Permission from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth



ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ  
ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ, ΑΘΛΗΤΙΣΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΝΕΟΛΑΙΑΣ

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31 Ιανουαρίου, 2024

Κυρία  
Αντρεα Λοΐζου  
Ιπποκράτους 8  
2480 Τσέρι

**Θέμα: Άδεια για διεξαγωγή έρευνας με εκπαιδευτικούς δημοτικών σχολείων**

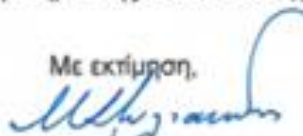
Αγαπητή κυρία Λοΐζου,

Έχω οδηγίες να αναφερθώ στη σχετική με το πιο πάνω θέμα αίτησή σας προς το Κέντρο Εκπαιδευτικής Έρευνας και Αξιολόγησης, που υποβλήθηκε στις 30 Ιανουαρίου 2024, και να σας πληροφορήσω ότι εγκρίνεται το αίτημά σας για διεξαγωγή έρευνας με εκπαιδευτικούς δημοτικών σχολείων που εσείς θα επιλέξετε, με θέμα «*Team building and teachers well-being in primary education. The various ways in which team building activities affect the teacher's well-being regarding aspects such as stress reduction, work-life balance, and overall job satisfaction and their subsequent impact in team performance*», τη σχολική χρονιά 2023-2024. Η απάντηση του Κέντρου Εκπαιδευτικής Έρευνας και Αξιολόγησης σας αποστέλλεται συνημμένα, για δική σας ενημέρωση. Θα πρέπει, επίσης, να παρουσιάσετε το Αναλυτικό Σχέδιο Έρευνας, σε περίπτωση που αυτό σας ζητηθεί.

2. Νοείται, βέβαια, ότι πρέπει να εξασφαλιστεί η άδεια των διευθυντών/ριών των σχολείων, εκ των προτέρων, ώστε να ληφθούν όλα τα απαραίτητα μέτρα, για να μην επηρεαστεί η ομαλή λειτουργία τους. Η έρευνα θα πρέπει να διεξαχθεί με ιδιαίτερα προσεγμένο τρόπο, ώστε να μη θίγεται το έργο των εκπαιδευτικών, το σχολικό περιβάλλον ή οι οικογένειες των μαθητών/ριών και όλες οι δραστηριότητες που θα αναπτυχθούν πρέπει να εμπόττουν στο πλαίσιο που καθορίζεται από το Αναλυτικό Πρόγραμμα. Οι εκπαιδευτικοί πρέπει να λάβουν μέρος στην έρευνα στον μη διδακτικό τους χρόνο. Σημειώνεται, επίσης, ότι τα πορίσματά σας κρίνεται απαραίτητο να είναι ανώνυμα και οι πληροφορίες που θα συλλέξετε να τηρηθούν απόλυτα εμπιστευτικές και αποκλειστικά και μόνο για τον σκοπό της έρευνας.

3. Η παρούσα έγκριση παραχωρείται με την προϋπόθεση ότι τα πορίσματα της εργασίας, θα κοινοποιηθούν μόλις αυτή ολοκληρωθεί, στη Διεύθυνση Δημοτικής Εκπαίδευσης για σχετική μελέτη και κατάλληλη αξιοποίηση.

Με εκτίμηση,

  
(Δρ Μάριος Στυλιανίδης)  
για Γενική Διευθύντρια

Κοιν.: Π.Λ.Ε., Επαρχιακά Γραφεία Παιδείας

ΑΚΣ ΕΡΕΥΝΗΣ 2023-2024 Επιστολή Αντρεά Λοΐζου - 125589





## Appendix D – Questions for Interviews

### *Questions for the interviews*

Having in mind that team building is an ongoing process that helps a work group evolve into a cohesive unit. The team members not only share expectations for accomplishing group tasks, but trust and support one another and respect one another's individual differences.

1. Do you think team building should be incorporated into the professional development programs for primary education teachers? Why or why not?
2. Have you noticed any positive changes in your teaching approach or classroom environment because of participating in team building activities?
3. How do you handle conflicts or disagreements within your teaching team, and do you believe team building can help address such issues?
4. What strategies do you use to foster a sense of collaboration and camaraderie among teachers in your school?
5. How can team building activities be tailored to address the unique needs and challenges of primary education teachers compared to teachers in other grade levels?
6. Are there specific team building resources or training programs you would recommend for primary education teachers?
7. What role do school leaders and administrators play in promoting and facilitating team building among primary education teachers?
8. In your opinion, what is the ideal balance between individual teacher autonomy and collaborative teamwork in a primary education setting?
9. How do you measure the success or effectiveness of team building initiatives for teachers in your school?

10. Can you share any success stories or positive outcomes that have resulted from effective team building experiences with your fellow teachers?
11. Do you believe that team building can have a positive impact on student outcomes in primary education? If so, how?
12. What additional support or resources do you believe would enhance the effectiveness of team building efforts for primary education teachers?

**Appendix E - Interview-Headmaster A***Answers for the interview-Headmaster A*

Having in mind that team building is an ongoing process that helps a work group evolve into a cohesive unit. The team members not only share expectations for accomplishing group tasks, but trust and support one another and respect one another's individual differences.

1. Do you think team building should be incorporated into the professional development programs for primary education teachers? Why or why not?

Yes, I strongly believe that team building integration within professional development programs is vital in primary educational settings. In doing so, educators are given the opportunity to break away from their mundane routine and get to interact and get to know their colleagues a bit better through a different perspective, and thus, this will assist in the creation of a distinctive bond.

2. Have you noticed any positive changes in your teaching approach or classroom environment because of participating in team building activities?

In the school unit where I work, the team building activities organized are minimal. However, teachers formed subgroups with some colleagues with whom they communicate more easily, and they often organize activities outside of school hours. Personally, TBA have helped me to get to know these colleagues better, to see them beyond the school setting and its concerns. It hasn't made any change regarding my approach in teaching. However, there is a significant shift in my emotional world as I feel lighter within the school environment as I feel understood by my colleagues, and I can communicate with them more easily. Hence, I am happier and more positive when I am in my workplace setting.

3. How do you handle conflicts or disagreements within your teaching team, and do you believe team building can help address such issues?

How I handle conflicts or disagreements within my teaching team depends on many factors. If I disagree with a colleague with whom we participate in team building activities, it's easier for us to find a solution!

There are many factors that I take into consideration when I am faced with conflicts or disagreements and how I should handle them. If the colleague I have the disagreement with takes part in the same building activities as I am, then it is easier for us to come in agreement. If I disagree with the colleague who shares the same class, meaning we both have the same students, then I will either compromise if it's not something significant or I will do what I believe is right if I judge it necessary. I have discovered through my personal experience that when you have a disagreement with a colleague that has the same class as you, then it is more difficult to collaborate with him/her even throughout the whole year which can be really mentally exhausting.

4. What strategies do you use to foster a sense of collaboration and camaraderie among teachers in your school?

First of all, I try to empathize with them and really listen to them so that I can understand what they are going through to help them in any way possible. It is crucial for teachers to possess the necessary skills to create a safe, friendly, engaging, and stimulating learning environment. We achieve this by establishing routines and employing teaching methodologies that are age-appropriate to captivate the attention of young students. So, teachers must have my help and attention at any given moment.

5. How can team building activities be tailored to address the unique needs and challenges of primary education teachers compared to teachers in other grade levels?

In primary education, unlike in secondary, the team of educators within a school is much smaller in number. This facilitates the planning and organization of team-building activities. Now, how these activities will be organized depends on individuals who are active and highly social to take on this role. If it's the principal even better. Simple activities are easy to organize, but more complex ones require good organization. For instance, I heard that some employees went paintballing at a confectionery or grilled souvlaki and had a meal, or the owner cooked for them, and they ate... These are more difficult to organize and fit into our framework because we can't escape certain stereotypes... We stuck to Secret Santa and going out for a meal... Let it be. These also help. Teachers in the secondary level cope with different style of correlation so team building activities might be differently organized for them. TBA should be organized according to their teamwork experience.

6. Are there specific team building resources or training programs you would recommend for primary education teachers?

Unfortunately, when it comes to primary education teachers, there aren't any specific team building resources or training programs. In my opinion, specialists for training and support seminars, should be invited at the beginning of each school year to enhance the teachers' teamwork experience. Nevertheless, if this is not feasible, then each teaching team should start on their own with small and simple team building activities. For instance, the organization of brunches, meals or even Secret Santa could make a huge impact on creating a stronger bond between the teachers.

7. What role do school leaders and administrators play in promoting and facilitating team building among primary education teachers?

If the principal is a leader and highly sociable, striving to be fair to everyone without making distinctions, then promoting and facilitating team building among primary education teachers

would be much easier. However, it's difficult to find such principals... Our role is crucial in organising team building activities as we must inspire our teachers in any way possible to achieve better results both within the teaching staff but also regarding our students' improved learning experience.

8. In your opinion, what is the ideal balance between individual teacher autonomy and collaborative teamwork in a primary education setting?

Balance is the key in every aspect of our lives. So, it is only logical to argue that balance should be achieved between individual teacher autonomy and collaborative teamwork in a primary educational setting. Hence, the teachers will learn to be flexible and put aside their autonomy when entering the team to collaborate with one another for the team's benefit and for increasing creativity in the workplace.

9. How do you measure the success or effectiveness of team building initiatives for teachers in your school?

When after a team-building activity you see happy faces at work and colleagues joking with each other, then you can confidently say that the goal of the team-building activities has been achieved. When there is a problem at school and everyone tries collectively to address it, helping each other, then the efforts through team building have paid off. It's not something you can measure with numbers.

10. Can you share any success stories or positive outcomes that have resulted from effective team building experiences with your fellow teachers?

After our sub team's initial outings, during breaks we became more expressive. We exchanged humorous anecdotes about our funny experiences with the children, even the challenges we were called to handle – in a light-hearted way -, organized informal gatherings in the teachers' office, and cracked jokes and laughed about them throughout the day.

11. Do you believe that team building can have a positive impact on student outcomes in primary education? If so, how?

Personally, I don't believe that team building can have a direct impact on student outcomes in primary education. However, it does positively affect the morale of teachers, which certainly influences their behaviour in the classroom. If problems arise in the classroom, they are tackled with the cooperation and assistance of colleagues. Similarly, when colleagues collaborate for an event or celebration, everything becomes easier.

12. What additional support or resources do you believe would enhance the effectiveness of team building efforts for primary education teachers?

The responsible educational administrations should organize customised workshops for primary education teachers, to provide them with fresh perspectives offered by external facilitators. Moreover, it is important that teachers should have online resources for autonomous learning. Feedback as well as regular reflection sessions should take place to improve the effectiveness of team building efforts. Lastly, customized activities should be designed in accordance with the school's needs to ensure inclusive participation.

**Appendix F -Interview- Headmaster B***Answers for the interview-Headmaster B*

Having in mind that team building is an ongoing process that helps a work group evolve into a cohesive unit. The team members not only share expectations for accomplishing group tasks, but trust and support one another and respect one another's individual differences.

1. Do you think team building should be incorporated into the professional development programs for primary education teachers? Why or why not?

Yes, I totally believe that professional development programs for primary education teachers will benefit through the incorporation of team building activities. As technology advances and we live in an era where human relationships have become more challenging, there should be something to facilitate them and, in general, to break people free from their behavioural stereotypes. In primary education, we need to work autonomously but also collaborate with fellow colleagues. This requires both skills and willingness, as well as effort.

2. Have you noticed any positive changes in your teaching approach or classroom environment because of participating in team building activities?

When I participate in team building activities, I feel that my relationships with colleagues are strengthened, which motivates me to work with more enthusiasm and energy. I know that I can rely on them and share any concerns or grievances, seeking their advice. However, my teaching approach remains unchanged. If I collaborate effectively with a colleague from another class, I am open to asking questions, accepting advice, and this might alter my teaching approach if I judge it to be more effective. I can also enrich my teaching methodologies with positive characteristics that I have gathered from my colleague.



3. How do you handle conflicts or disagreements within your teaching team, and do you believe team building can help address such issues?

I speak and share my grievances, concerns with other colleagues with whom I can communicate. I listen carefully to what they have to say and act accordingly. Yes, I believe that when there is a good relationship with colleagues, even if we disagree somewhere, we will find common ground. With good will, everything is possible. And if there is also a good and healthy relationship, then it becomes easier. I invite my colleagues to my office, and we try to find a solution to the problem that has arisen. First individually, and then, if possible, together, attempting to find a solution.

4. What strategies do you use to foster a sense of collaboration and camaraderie among teachers in your school?

I encourage them to join each other's classes to gain a new perspective of other teaching approaches and methodologies incorporated within the classroom. Moreover, I also suggest that it is of great benefit to exchange their ideas, teaching materials and methods with one another as in this way they can enrich their knowledge and broaden their educational horizons.

5. How can team building activities be tailored to address the unique needs and challenges of primary education teachers compared to teachers in other grade levels?

First and foremost, colleagues who have been working for years in primary education must engage in the planning of team building activities and seminars. They are familiar with the structure and issues in relationships, understanding what could be implemented to bring about effective change in colleague dynamics. In secondary education, this is different with colleagues due to the larger size of educators within each school unit. In primary schools, the number of teachers is smaller. Nevertheless, I believe that the general objectives and goals of each school unit will remain the same. It is possible that a variation can be observed regarding

the specific goals that each school sets and the challenges that the educators in that unit may have to face and handle.

6. Are there specific team building resources or training programs you would recommend for primary education teachers?

Unfortunately, such programs do not currently exist, but they could be proposed for organization at the Pedagogical Institute and the Ministry of Education. We have progressed and must continue to evolve in all areas. We want happy teachers who enter school cheerfully and creatively, with calmness and good psychological disposition.

7. What role do school leaders and administrators play in promoting and facilitating team building among primary education teachers?

As school principals, we must promote activities that foster positive relationships among the educators in our school unit.

**Appendix G - Interview- Headmaster C*****Answers for the interview- Headmaster C***

Having in mind that team building is an ongoing process that helps a work group evolve into a cohesive unit. The team members not only share expectations for accomplishing group tasks, but trust and support one another and respect one another's individual differences.

1. Do you think team building should be incorporated into the professional development programs for primary education teachers? Why or why not?

"Team building" existed throughout the years in different forms as a need to break away from stereotypes and created stronger and differentiated bonds among us. Nowadays, it was branded with its current name, team building which focuses more intently on empathy.

2. Have you noticed any positive changes in your teaching approach or classroom environment because of participating in team building activities?

Contentment within the work environment and job performance are very closely related with one another. This will affect the behaviour of educators in the classroom. After participating in such activities, I have more energy in the classroom.

3. How do you handle conflicts or disagreements within your teaching team, and do you believe team building can help address such issues?

Trust, communication, and understanding are promoted within team building activities among team members. As a result, these vital components assist teachers in resolving any possible

conflicts effectively and efficiently. A more positive and collaborative work environment is cultivated through teachers' participation in team building exercises as they develop stronger relationships, empathy, and respect for each other. I try to listen to them and help them in every way I can.

4. What strategies do you use to foster a sense of collaboration and camaraderie among teachers in your school?

As a school unit, we schedule regular meetings in which all teachers must participate to discuss common goals, challenges and even share our successes with one another. These meetings provide a safe space for ideas to be exchanged, collaboration to thrive and problem-solving skills to be developed.

We also, encourage teachers to frequently observe each other's classes to gain an insight to other teaching practises and methodologies and provide constructive feedback to one another.

Recognition and celebration of achievements and milestones of individual teachers and the team as a whole is common within our school setting. This could include acknowledging exceptional teaching practices, student successes, or collaborative projects.

Lastly, we organize team-building activities and host social events outside of the school setting.

5. How can team building activities be tailored to address the unique needs and challenges of primary education teachers compared to teachers in other grade levels?

Having experienced daily the needs and challenges in a primary education setting, it is easier to tailor accordingly team-building activities. Thus, the basis of the philosophy remains the same and varies according to the needs of the educators in each school unit.

6. Are there specific team building resources or training programs you would recommend for primary education teachers?

Such programs do not currently exist.

7. What role do school leaders and administrators play in promoting and facilitating team building among primary education teachers?

Leaders always play an instrumental role in any business. If they consider each educator's individual capabilities, difficulties, and needs and approach them with respect and assist them in any way they can, then team-building activities will be implemented more easily and successfully within the educational setting. Moreover, similarly to students, teachers need to get recognized through the provision of positive feedback for their commitment. As a result, their motivation is enhanced. Equally vital is making feasible for teachers to gain access to sufficient resources and facilities to support their work. Readily accessible support systems are also crucial for teachers to address any challenges that they may encounter.

8. In your opinion, what is the ideal balance between individual teacher autonomy and collaborative teamwork in a primary education setting?

Collaboration and autonomy are two aspects that characterize the work that is accomplished by primary school educators. These two elements coexist almost on a daily basis in our line of work. Sometimes one of these may prevail, but both are constantly present.

9. How do you measure the success or effectiveness of team building initiatives for teachers in your school?

Observing the behaviour of colleagues, the level of collaboration among them, the relaxed atmosphere that exists...

10. Can you share any success stories or positive outcomes that have resulted from effective team building experiences with your fellow teachers?

After team-building activities, the teachers who participated accompanied each other during their breaks where we sat together, talked, and laughed with each other.

11. Do you believe that team building can have a positive impact on student outcomes in primary education? If so, how?

Yes, because by sharing teaching techniques and strategies as well as materials, you improve since there is always something to learn from colleagues. When there is collaboration and mutual understanding, then this is achievable. Assessment and feedback are continuous processes in the primary school setting. Tests, assignments, and observations are implemented by teachers within their classrooms on a regular basis to provide constructive feedback. In this way, they assist students in understanding their strengths and weaknesses and how they can improve.

12. What additional support or resources do you believe would enhance the effectiveness of team building efforts for primary education teachers?

Seminars are of essence when it comes in understanding how useful and creative team-building activities are, not only professionally but also personally. TBA make us feel relieved and lighter, and even increase our level of contentment.