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SPECIALTY SECTION This article was submitted to Educational Psychology, a section of the journal Frontiers in Education

RECEIVED 17 May 2022 ACCEPTED 09 August 2022 PUBLISHED 02 September 2022

CITATION

Jaguaco D, Turpo-Chaparro J, Vásquez-Villanueva S and Apaza-Romero A (2022) Social support and general self-efficacy: Two predictors of quality of life at work in Ecuadorian teachers. *Front. Educ.* 7:946723. doi: 10.3389/feduc.2022.946723

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Social support and general self-efficacy: Two predictors of quality of life at work in Ecuadorian teachers

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The quality of life at work has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, generating labor overload, higher levels of stress, and a reduction in workers' productivity. In the education sector, thousands of teachers were affected by the change to a new online work modality and the acquisition of new work tools. The aim of this study was to determine whether social support and general self-efficacy (GSE) significantly predict the quality of life at work in a group of Ecuadorian teachers. A total of 300 teachers of both genders, whose ages ranged between 21 and 64 years, participated in the study. For measurements, the Duke-UNK-11 General Sale Scale and the Scale of Quality of Life in the CVT-Gohisalo Work were used. The predictive analysis was performed through linear regression. The results show a moderately significant relationship between social support, GSE, and quality of life at work. Similarly, the multiple regression analysis confirms that social support and selfefficacy are variables that significantly predict the quality of life at work. The findings of this research also confirm that teachers with higher levels of GSE report higher levels of quality of life at work. In conclusion, the prediction of the variables social support and GSE in the quality of life at work of Ecuadorian teachers is confirmed. The implications of the predictive model mediating quality of life at work are discussed.

KEYWORDS

social support, self-efficacy, quality of work life, teachers, Ecuadorian teachers

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO), on 11 March 2020, declared the disease caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020). In this sense, COVID-19 affected people of all dimensions and its repercussions have been observed worldwide (Khanna and Kareem, 2021), affecting companies,

consortiums, and educational organizations. In response to COVID-19, educational institutions coordinated the closure of their school buildings worldwide for the purpose of safeguarding the health of students and teachers (Sokal et al., 2020); face-to-face education changed to online teaching, and educators quickly adapted to remote teaching, supported by existing technological systems (Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al., 2021), requiring that the teachers adapt to the new environment in a very little time, regardless of its preparation and domination (Scherer et al., 2021).

The teachers are considered the first-line workers in the Educa-Party Reform (Tai and Abdull Kareem, 2019). The teaching career is a profession exposed to high levels of stress and exhaustion (Sokal et al., 2020), which affect the perception of social support, teachers' self-efficacy, and, consequently, their quality of work life. The quality of life at work is conceptualized as the extent to which workers can meet their important personal needs, whose experiences are observed in their workplace (Igbaria et al., 1994). The quality of work life is an aspect of job satisfaction and is related to personal happiness (Thomas et al., 2020).

Recent investigations highlighted social support as a component that improves mental health and individual wellbeing (Bazzano et al., 2018). The self-determination theory explains that psychological processes promote optimal functioning and health (Ryan and Deci, 2011). In this sense, the quality of life of workers requires the support of the social environment to function effectively (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Also, organizations today depend on the effective use of their workers (Hakim et al., 2021). The quality of work life of employees can be high, thanks to their physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing (Brennan and Barnett, 1998). Among the bad conditions of the quality of life at work is the low support from employers, for instance, labor overload (Akar, 2018).

Factors affecting the quality of life at work

Studies on the quality of life at work focused mostly on the health area (Parra-Giordano et al., 2020; Howie-Esquivel et al., 2022). In the educational field, instruments that evaluate the quality of life such as AQ@workt (Brondino et al., 2022) have been created. Studies showed that teachers still maintain gaps between what they expect from their work environment and what is indeed their reality (Fakhri et al., 2021). Some investigations reported the effects of yoga and mindfulness intervention programs in improving the quality of life of primary school teachers (Bazzano et al., 2018); similarly, research confirmed that perceptions about the quality of work life have a negative effect on burnout and school alienation in public school teachers (Akar, 2018). Recent reports also showed that the more teachers rated themselves as self-compassionate, the greater their need for satisfaction and personal fulfillment (Moè and Katz, 2020), in addition, that when teachers are allowed to regulate their psychological emotions, these are related to a higher level of motivating teaching and therefore with their experience of satisfaction (Moè and Katz, 2021). Recent reports showed that the quality of working life is influenced by spiritual intelligence mediated by psychological capital (Singla et al., 2021). Another example given in a study involving 345 Pakistani teachers reported that communication is an influential factor in the quality of work life (Malik et al., 2019). Similarly, it is the individual factors that affect the quality of work life of teachers when considering motivation, adaptation, communication, and experience, among others (Ghashghaeizadeh, 2020).

Social support and quality of life

Social support has been defined as the availability of people in whom the individual trusts and also feels care and valuation (Verger et al., 2009). Different studies have been developed; for example, Lerman Ginzburg et al. (2021) analyzed the effects of social support in a population of Latin Americans and found that distress symptoms decrease when social support increases. Moradi et al. (2020) analyzed the effect of social support on depressive symptoms and found that social support predicts the severity of depressive symptoms. In the work environment, Park et al. (2020) reported that social support mitigates labor exhaustion. Recent research highlighted the relationship between social support and the quality of life at work and the consequent reduction of stress (Eisapareh et al., 2022). A previous study revealed that social support is a factor that influences the quality of work life of working women who are cancer survivors (Jin, 2022). Social support has been found among the most important health resources related to the work environment (Hämmig, 2017; Hämmig and Vetsch, 2021) as is the case in the health area, where it was reported that nurses who perceived better social support were less likely to develop negative consequences on their health (Labrague and de los Santos, 2021).

General self-efficacy and quality of work life

GSE is the ability of the person to execute behaviors that lead toward the achievement of goals and toward specific achievements or performances (Bandura, 1978). Although it is considered a specific task, some researchers used the concept of general self-efficacy (GSE) to refer to a broader and more stable sense of personal competition, especially when the context is less specific (Scherbaum et al., 2006). Khalid and Dawood (2020) found that self-efficacy measured the effect of social support on depression. In another study, Chinomona and Dhurup (2014) found that the quality of life at work influences job satisfaction. Studies pertaining to the quality of work life for hotel industry workers found that the quality of work life is related to selfefficacy (Putra et al., 2021). Different studies confirmed that workers with high self-efficacy show good job performance (Mensah and Lebbaeus, 2013) and showed that self-efficacy affects the quality of work life (Orgambídez et al., 2020).

As described and referred to, the present study is relevant because it allows us to know emotional aspects in the work context of a group of Ecuadorian teachers who are teleworking. The evidence of the study will strengthen and update the knowledge of social support, GSE, and the quality of life at work, which are significant contributors to the administrative educational discipline, as well as to the community of knowledge. Recent studies in Colombia and Ecuador showed that workers, mainly in the educational area, expressed greater stress, a reduction in the balance between working and personal life, and a reduction in their job satisfaction, indicating the need to develop studies that analyze the quality of work life of Ecuadorian teachers (Sandoval-Reyes et al., 2021). Similarly, different programs aimed at improving the quality of work life were based on helping workers to better endure the pressures and difficulties of daily work; therefore, aspects such as social support and self-efficacy were found to have a positive effect on the quality of work life (Coelho et al., 2016).

On the contrary, the present study analyzed the theoretical proposal of Bandura (1978), whose significant support is to test a theoretical model whose quality of life at work is explained by the variables (social support and GSE). It will also support and guide the provisions given by the administrative staff so that strategies and programs for the improvement of the educational community (teachers and students) are implemented.

Hypothesis

Since it has been found that the quality of work life is associated with constructs such as spiritual intelligence, psychological capital, communication, social support, and selfefficacy, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1. Perceived social support is related to higher levels of quality of life.

H2. The GSE of teachers is related to a higher quality of work life.

Objective

The aim of this study was to determine if social support and GSE predict the quality of life in the work life of Ecuadorian professors.

Materials and methods

Participants

The sample composed of 300 Ecuadorian professors of basic education of both genders; 210 were female and 90 male (70 and 30%, respectively). The sampling was non-probabilistic and intentional, and the recruitment of the participants was made through virtual school by the school, inviting teachers of private institutions. The age ranges of the subjects were from 21 to 36 years (43%) and from 37 to 64 years (57%); 37.7% had the level of teaching in general baccalaureate, 39% in basic general education, 8.7% in the initial level, and 14.7% in the preparatory level (Table 1). Table 1 specifically shows the teaching level by age-group, where there were 129 professors in the age range of 21-36 years, among whom 42 teach at the general high school level, 44 at the basic general education level, 20 at the kindergarten level, and 23 at the high school level. In the range of 37-64 years, there were 171 teachers, among whom 71 teach at the level of general baccalaureate, 73 at the general basic education level, six at the initial level, and 21 at the preparatory level (Table 1).

Instruments

For data collection, the Duke-UNK-11 Functional Social Support questionnaire was used; the instrument was validated for the Ecuadorian population by Aguilar-Sizer et al. (2021). It presents 10 items with five Likert-type response options (never,

TABLE 1 Characteristics of the participants.

%
70.0
30.0
43.0
57.0
37.7
39.0
8.7
14.7
37-64
(23.7%)
(24.3%)
6 (2%)
21 (7%)

%: percentages.

n: number of participants.

Age: age range.

almost never, sometimes, almost always, and always). It has proven to be valid (CFI = 0.99; TLI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.050) and reliable ($\alpha = 0.70$). The General Self-Efficacy Scale (EAG) has been adopted by Moreta-Herrera et al. (2019) in the Ecuadorian population. It is composed of 10 items with Likert-type response options, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither disagree nor agree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The GSD is valid (CFI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.04; RMSEA = 0.06) and reliable ($\alpha = 0.80$). Similarly, the quality of life at the work scale, validated in the Ecuadorian population by Pando et al. (2018), was used; it is composed of 31 items, with Likert-type response options: 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = moderately satisfied, 4 = satisfied, and 5 = very satisfied. The scale is valid (KMO = 0.93, Bartlett's test of sphericity p < 0.01) and reliable ($\alpha = 0.91$). The scales can be displayed in Appendix Tables A1– A3.

Procedure

This study was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic between June and October 2021. Given the social isolation measures for the prevention of COVID-19 infection and due to the online education modality developed by the educational institutions in Ecuador, the study participants answered a virtual questionnaire through the Google Forms platform. In addition, the link was shared through the social network WhatsApp and emails of teachers. In the first part of the link, the instructions, the purpose of the investigation, and the invite to accept the informed consent, emphasizing that the participation is voluntary and anonymous, were presented. In relation to the use of the data, a confidentiality agreement was obtained. This procedure followed the ethical and methodological recommendations for research through the Internet (Das et al., 2018), such as including an informed consent form through which the participants in the study received information about the purpose of this research, data use, and confidentiality agreement. In addition, no personal identification was requested. In all cases, the participation was voluntary, and only those people who completed the informed consent were accepted into the study. The study was approved by the ethics committee (CE-EPG-000031).

Data analysis

All the information collected through the virtual questionnaire was entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and then exported to the statistical program IBM SPSS for Windows version 25.0. First, descriptive statistics were analyzed with the purpose of analyzing the distribution of the data. Second, a correlation analysis and finally a linear regression analysis were performed to answer the research objectives.

Results

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the study variables regarding the coefficients of asymmetry and kurtosis of social support, GSE, and the quality of work life. The asymmetry and kurtosis values do not exceed the range of -/+1.5 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2019). Similarly, it shows the correlations between the study variables. A moderate and significant correlation was found between social support and quality of work life. The magnitude of the correlation between GSE and quality of work life was also moderate.

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine which variables best predict the quality of life at work; the multiple correlation coefficients R, R2, corrected R2, standard error of the estimate (SE), and the *F*-value of ANOVA (**Table 3**) were used. It can be seen that the coefficient of determination R2 = 0.332 indicates that social support and self-efficacy explain 33.2% of the total variance of quality of life at work. The corrected R2 explains 31.8%. The ANOVA *F*-value (*F* = 70.687, *p* = 0.000) indicates that there is a significant linear relationship between the predictor and criterion variables (**Table 3**).

Table 4 shows the non-standardized regression coefficients (B) and standardized regression coefficients (B). The B coefficients (0.214 and 0.446) indicate that social support and self-efficacy (predictive variables) significantly predict the quality of life at work (criterion variable) in Ecuadorian teachers (adjusted R2 = 0.33). The *t*-value of the beta regression coefficients of the predictor variables are highly significant (p < 0.01).

Discussion

The quality of life at work is an important variable in achieving greater productivity (Rodríguez et al., 2021). It is also one of the most important factors for the motivation and improvement of human resources (Royuela et al., 2009). Similarly, work determines social status and gives meaning to life (Parra-Giordano et al., 2020) and is still under constant study (Tonon de Toscano, 2009). In this sense, the objective of this research was to determine whether social support and GSE predict the quality of life at work for Ecuadorian teachers.

The results found in this research confirm the hypothesis that teachers with a higher level of social support show a higher quality of life, which is in line with the results reported by Eisapareh et al. (2022), who state that social support is directly related to the quality of life at work, and many studies demonstrated this report (Arvind et al., 2015; Xiao et al., 2017). The results indicate that social support plays a role that increases the level of quality of work life, and inadequate social support is associated with inverse health behaviors, deterioration of quality of life, and dissatisfaction with life (Strine et al., 2008). Under the theory of social support proposed

Variable	Μ	DS	Α	К	Social support	General self-efficacy	Quality of work life
Social support	39.87	7.524	-0.047	-0.031	1		
General self-efficacy	38.67	5.254	0.386	-0.319	0.408**	1	
Quality of work life	115.97	16.064	0.189	0.452	0.396**	0.533**	1

TABLE 2 Descriptive analysis and correlation of the variables.

**Significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

by Cohen and Wills (1985), social support acts as a protector of people in times of crisis. Considering the different levels of teacher stress due to the changes caused by COVID-19, social support could provide a positive effect on the quality of work life of teachers.

The findings of this research also confirm that teachers with higher levels of GSE report higher levels of quality of work life. The background shows that self-efficacy leads to lower levels of emotional exhaustion (Salanova et al., 2002). Similarly, under the theory of self-determination (Deci and Ryan, 2000), self-efficacy improves workers' needs for autonomy and is recognized as a motivational variable that leads to workers' creativity (Ng and Feldman, 2012) and improves the quality of work life (Xu et al., 2022). Numerous studies confirmed the influence of self-efficacy on the quality of work life (Mensah and Lebbaeus, 2013; Orgambídez et al., 2020; Putra et al., 2021). Recent research showed that the quality of work life can also predict self-efficacy, which shows the relationship between both the constructs (Alibakhshi et al., 2021). In the case of self-efficacy, the theory suggests that job satisfaction is the result of a presence of high self-efficacy (Schaufeli, 2017), which is consistent with that reported in this study. In addition, previous reports showed significant positive relationships between self-efficacy and job satisfaction, which have become indicators of the quality of work life (Orgambídez et al., 2020).

The final model shows that social support and self-efficacy predict the quality of life at the work of Ecuadorian teachers. Similar results were reported in nurses (Chami-Malaeb, 2022), although different from the finding of Akter et al. (2018) who reported that salary, work climate, commitment, and work stress predict the quality of work life. This result is similar to that found by Bustamante et al. (2020) who revealed that support shows the greatest positive correlation with the employment, and the study of Rodríguez et al. (2021) which highlighted the highest scores correspond to social support factors in relation to the quality of working life. Also, this result is in accordance with the studies of

TABLE 3 Multiple correlation coefficients R, R2, corrected R2, EE, and F.

Model	R	R2	R2 corrected	EE	F	Sig
1	0.568 ^a	0.332	0.318	13.267	70.687	0.000 ^b

^aPredictor variables: (constant), social support, and self-efficacy.

^bDependent variable: quality of work life.

Montero Vizcaíno et al. (2020), who exposed the evidence that the absence of support is among the main stressors in the work context. Also, Toscano-del Cairo et al. (2020) affirmed that a healthy organization is one that is characterized by an environment of social and organizational support. Several studies reported that the lack of support can lead teachers to abandon the educational institution (Kuehn, 2010; Parra-Giordano et al., 2020).

Multiple regression analyses indicate that social support and self-efficacy explain 33.2% of the quality of work life. This shows that the variables social support and self-efficacy significantly predict the quality of life at work. In relation to this, Moradi et al. (2020) commented that social support helps the person to avoid negative vital experiences and, therefore, has beneficial health effects. For Rodríguez et al. (2021), the social support experienced by workers is one of the main factors that influence the quality of life at work. For Orgambídez et al. (2020), self-efficacy is another important variable that influences the quality of life at work, although it is mediated by other variables-job satisfaction or affective commitment. In the study of Jin and Lee (2021), social support had a significantly direct effect on the quality of life, which implied that workers perceive their health positively (Park et al., 2018) and contributed to the organization by achieving stability (Torp et al., 2012). In a study with workers, it was reported that the high social support of coworkers and supervisors predicted a better quality of work life (Flores et al., 2011).

Practical implications

One of the difficulties in the development of effective interventions to improve the quality of working life in the educational environment is the lack of understanding of the constructs responsible for keeping at optimal levels the work

TABLE 4 Multiple regression coefficients B (non-standardized), β (standardized), and t-test.

Model	В	EE	β	t	Sig
1 (Constant)	45.013	6.018		7.480	0.000
Social support	0.457	0.112	0.214	4.091	0.000
Self-efficacy	1.364	0.160	0.446	8.526	0.000

Dependent variable, quality of work life (test F = 70.687, p < 0.001; adjusted R² = 0.332); B, non-standardized coefficient; EE, standard error; β , standardized regression coefficient.

environment (Bagtasos, 2011). We believe that this investigation can be used to provide a general look at this phenomenon. To help teachers and improve the quality of their life at work, we suggest that social support improvement programs should be established, as well as programs that stimulate self-efficacy skills. On the other hand, these results may have important implications for teachers who are in working in the teleworking mode and have an increase in their workload; therefore, educational organizations must ensure constant training that improves self-efficiency skills and provides greater support for social balancing work and family responsibilities. These programs could be structured in training before the start of the school year in various 1-h sessions for teachers on the organization and for the execution of plans that allow greater confidence in teachers, as well as programs that help employers and teachers improve the levels of perception of social support and an improvement in organizational communication.

Limitations

This research also presents some limitations. The sample size was 300 teachers. Therefore, it is important to develop studies with the participation of a larger sample size to increase the data and clarify the results found in this study. The participation was voluntary, some participants had some motivation to convey their own experiences, and there may be some differences between the method of obtaining data, in the virtual form and in the face-to-face interview (Utzet and Martin, 2020). On the contrary, being a cross-sectional study, the variables were evaluated in a single moment, so it is also important to develop longitudinal studies. This study is based on teachers' self-report, which raises the concern of the bias in the reports, although the most used method to measure these constructs is the self-report (Bong and Skaalvik, 2003); therefore, methods should be considered experimental and monitoring so that the measurements of the variables are more objective and precise. Also, it is recommended for future studies to include information related to years in teaching and materials taught, among other relevant aspects.

Conclusion

Despite these limitations, this study is relevant and extends the theoretical and practical understanding that social support and self-efficacy are factors that influence the quality of life at work, according to a representative sample of Ecuadorian teachers. Educational organizations must contribute by providing spaces of social support to their teachers, as well as activities that allow improving levels of self-efficacy, which influence the quality of life of teachers. We conclude that social support and self-efficacy are predictors of the quality of work life in Ecuadorian teachers.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee (CE-EPG-000031) Universidad Peruana Unión. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

JT-C, DJ, SV-V, and AA-R conceived and designed the experiments, performed the experiments, analyzed and interpreted the data, and wrote the manuscript. JT-C and DJ contributed to reagents, materials, and analysis tools and data, and wrote the manuscript. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Funding

Funding for open-access charge was provided by the Universidad Peruana Unión (UPeU).

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Appendix

Data collection instruments

TABLE A1 Duke social support questionnaire-UNK-11.

1	2	3 4		5
Much less than I want	Less than I want	Neither too much nor too little	About as much as I want	As much as I wish
1) I receive visits from my friend	ls and family			
2) I receive help in matters relate	ed to my home			1 2 3 4 5
3) I receive praise and recognitio	on when I do a good job			1 2 3 4 5
4) I have people who care about	what happens to me			1 2 3 4 5
5) I receive love and affection				1 2 3 4 5
6) I am able to talk to someone a	bout my problems at work	or at home		1 2 3 4 5
7) I have the opportunity to talk	to someone about my perso	onal and family problems		1 2 3 4 5
8) I have the opportunity to talk	to someone about my econ	omic problems		1 2 3 4 5
9) I receive invitations to distrac	t myself and go out with oth	ner people		1 2 3 4 5
10) I receive useful advice when	something important happ	ens in my life		1 2 3 4 5
11) I get help when I am sick in b	bed			1 2 3 4 5
1) I receive visits from my friend	ls and family			1 2 3 4 5

TABLE A2 Questionnaire general self-efficacy.

N°		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I can find a way to get what I want even if someone opposes me					
2	I can solve difficult problems if I try hard enough					
3	It is easy for me to persist in what I have proposed until I reach my goals					
4	I am confident that I could effectively handle unexpected events					
5	Thanks to my qualities, I can overcome unforeseen situations					
6	When I find myself in difficulties, I can remain calm because I count					
7	with the necessary skills to handle difficult situations					
8	Come what may, I'm usually able to handle it					
9	I can solve most problems if I put in the effort					
10	If I find myself in a difficult situation, it usually occurs to me what I should do					

TABLE A3 Questionnaire 3 quality of life at work.

N°	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Regarding the form of contracting that I have at this time, I find myself:					
2	It is the degree of satisfaction I feel with the way the procedures are designed to carry out my work.					
3	This is the level of satisfaction I have with the process that is followed to supervise my work.					
4	The following is my degree of satisfaction regarding the salary I have.					
5	It is my degree of satisfaction with respect to the physical conditions in my work area (noise, lighting, cleanliness, order, etc.).					
6	My degree of satisfaction with the type of training I receive from the company is:					
7	My degree of satisfaction with working in the company (compared with other institutions I know) is:					
8	In relation to the functions I perform in this company, my level of satisfaction is:					
9	My degree of satisfaction with the use I make of my skills and potential in this job is:					
10	Degree of satisfaction I feel from the work I have with my co-workers.					
11	It is the degree of satisfaction I have regarding the treatment I receive from my superiors.					
12	Regarding the recognition I receive from other people for my work, I feel:					
13	My degree of satisfaction with my performance as a professional in this job is:					
14	Regarding the quality of the basic services of my home, I find myself:					
15	I have been told clearly and precisely how I should do my job.					
16	I consider that I receive in sufficient quantity the supplies necessary to carry out my work activities.					
17	Corresponds to the frequency in which my labor rights are respected in my company.					
18	How much do I perceive that my work is useful to other people?					
19	I look for the mechanisms to remove the obstacles that I identify in the achievement of my objectives and work goals.					
20	I receive feedback from my colleagues and superiors regarding their evaluation of my work.					
21	Efficiency and preparation efforts are recognized in my company with opportunities for promotion.					
22	I believe that I am free to express my opinions regarding work without fear of reprisal from my bosses.					
23	My job allows me to fulfill the activities that I plan for when I am outside of work hours.					
24	My work activities allow me to participate in the care of my family (children, parents, siblings, and/or others).					
25	I have the integrity of my physical, mental and social capacities to perform my daily activities (dress, walk, move, eat, etc.).					
26	My work allows me to access my food in quantity and quality.					
27	My work contributes to the good image that the company has before its users.					
28	I consider that the achievement of personal satisfactions that I have achieved are due to my work in the company.					
29	My potential improves by being in this job.					
30	I consider that the work has allowed me to provide the necessary care to preserve the integrity of my physical, mental and social capacities.					
31	It is the degree of commitment I feel toward achieving my goals, with respect to work.					