



SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN SLOVAKIA – THEIR POSITION AND ACTIVITIES

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Introduction

School psychology is one of the most dynamically developing psychological disciplines. In Slovakia, there are only a few school psychologists. According to The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (2017), in 2015 had a status of school psychologist employee 164 primary schools (7.8%), 84 secondary schools (11.8%) and 43 special schools (12.4%). The positive is, that SP profession has been anchored in Slovak legislation. However, these documents are very general and merely define and characterize the job description, activities and competencies of SP. This causes ambiguity and diversity. Psychological services at schools and the activities of SP are very broad and varied, with specificities for each type of school. The conditions of the work at the school are also be reflected in the various activities of the SP.

SURVEY

The aim of our survey was to map the situation of SP in Slovakia and to find out what their working conditions and activities are.

We searched for answers to the following **questions**:

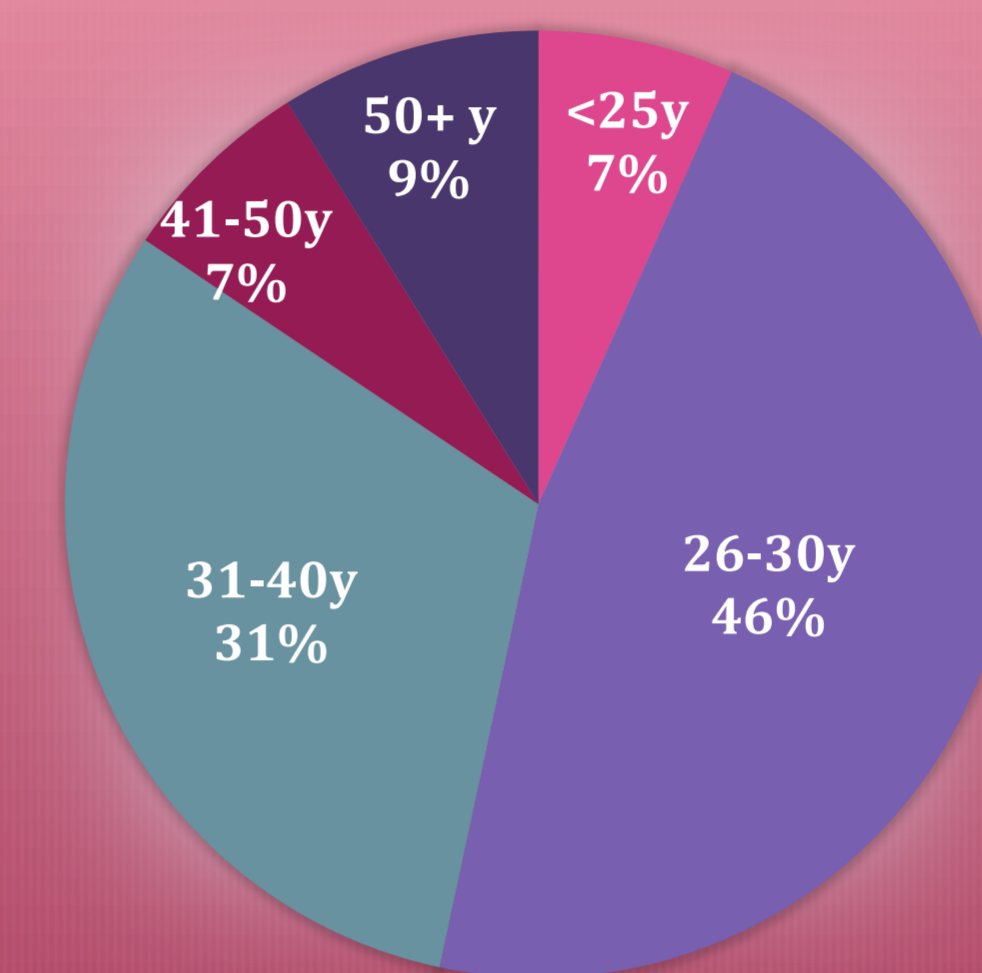
- What working conditions do SPs in Slovakia have?
- What are the activities of the SP in Slovakia?

Methods - We've created an electronic questionnaire distributed by Google Docs. The questionnaire consisted of 64 questions, divided into 3 parts

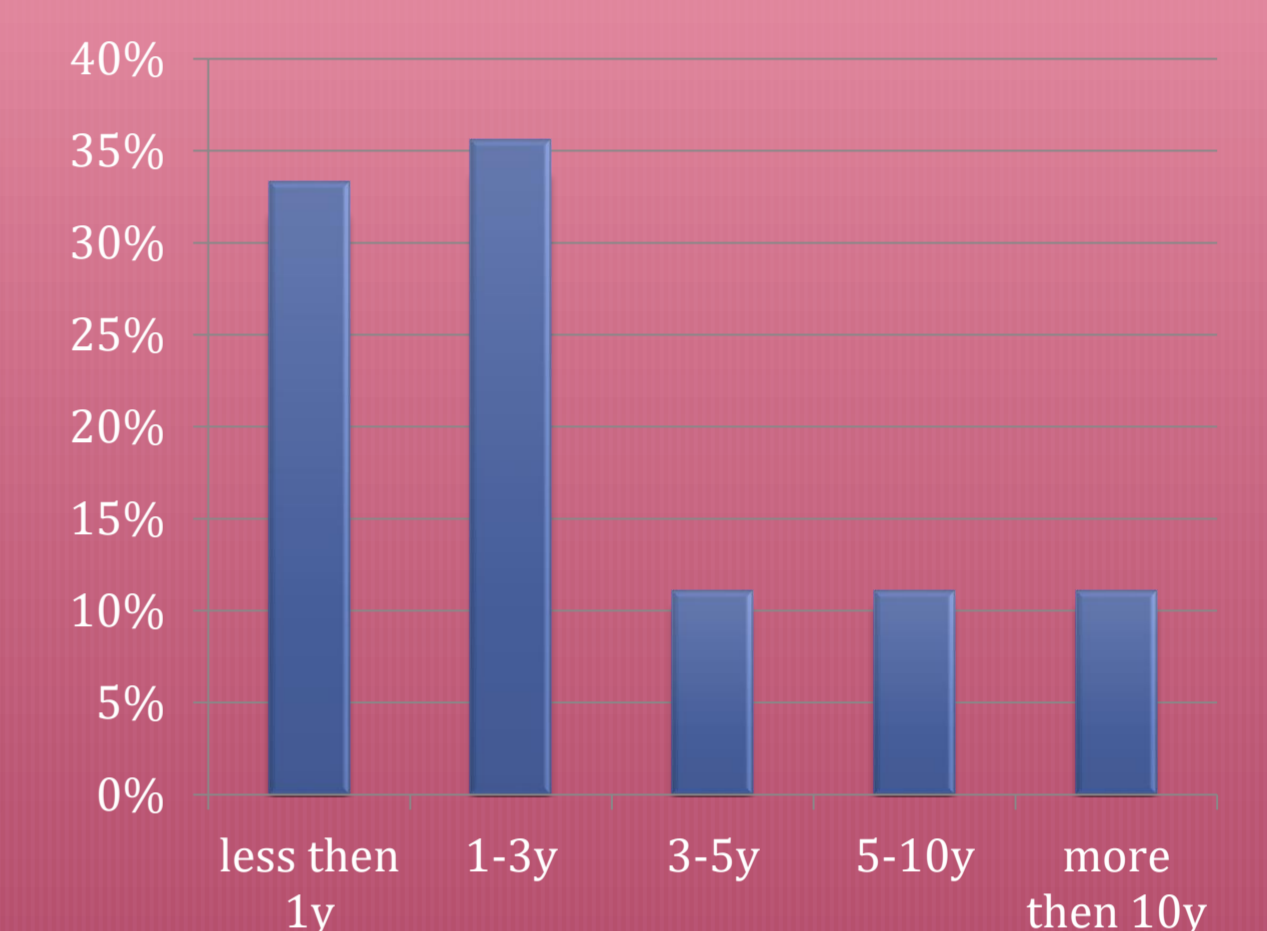
- demographic data, job position data and SP conditions;
- SP activities;
- personal experience and subjective evaluation of the work position of SP.

In the survey **participated** 45 School Psychologists (43 women and 2 men) from all over Slovakia.

Results - Characteristics of participants and their position



Graph 1 - Age of participants



Graph 2 - Length of time in the school

71% of participants are the first SP at the school

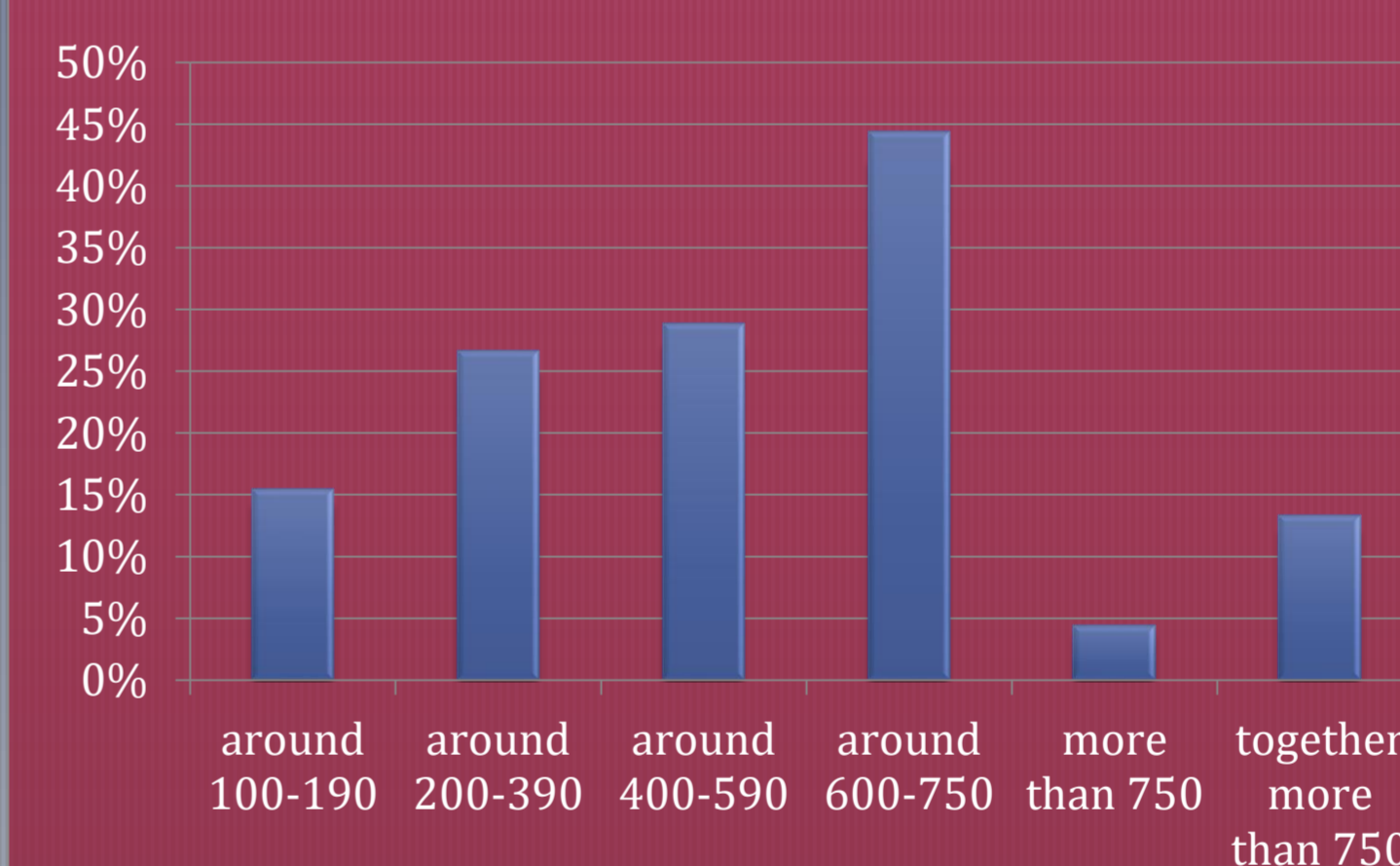
Type of school

- 13% - kindergarten
- 67% - primary school
- 36% - secondary school
- 15% SP work at 2 or 3 schools

Type of working time

- 60% - full time
- 20% - half time
- 20% - part time

25% have combined job position at school, mostly with a teacher's position or a teacher's assistant position.



Graph 3 - Representation of participants in terms of school size - number of students

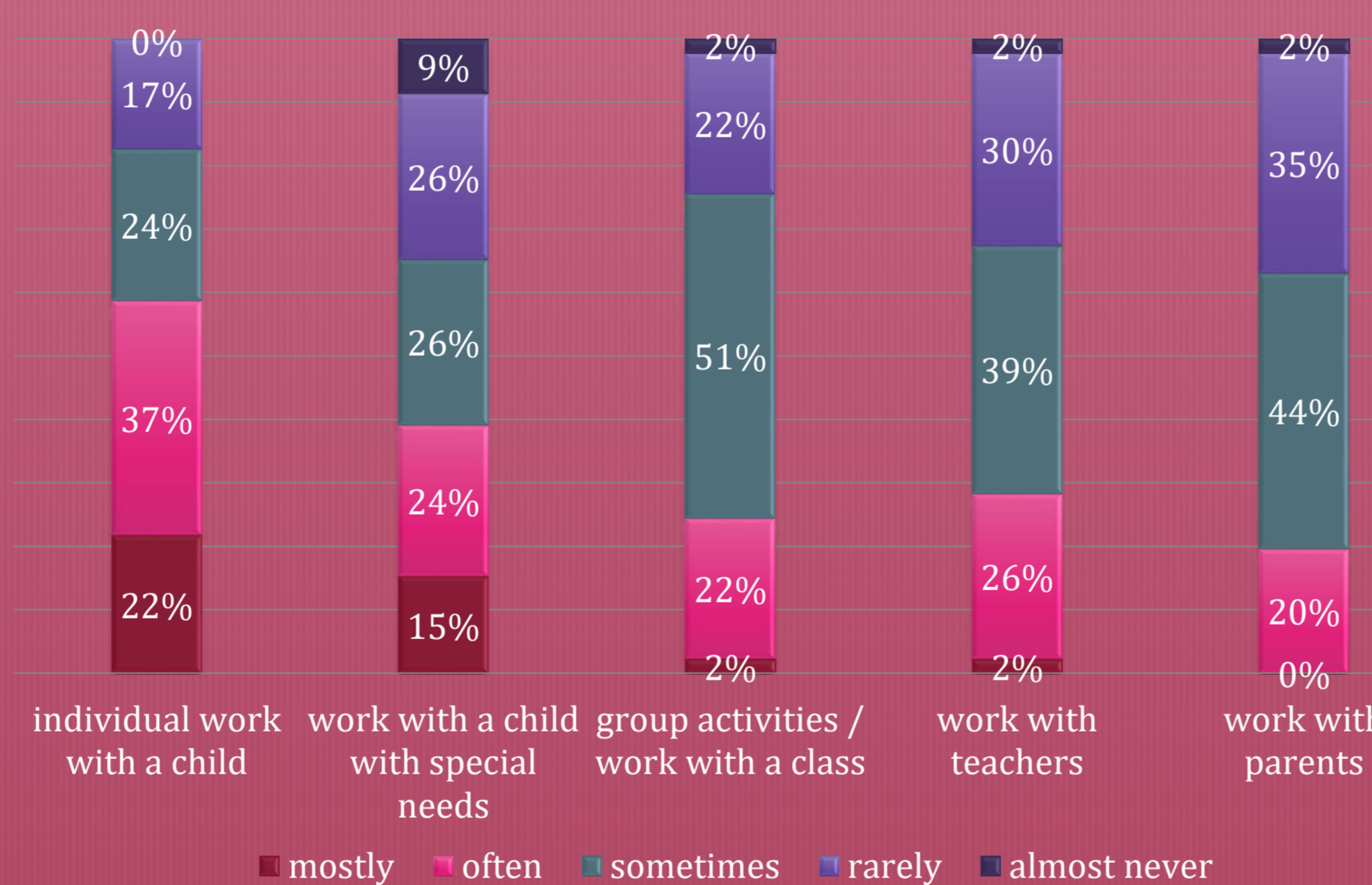
30% of SPs work in the school within the project and therefore have a contract for its duration. But this SPs are often in a team with other experts (special pedagogue, social pedagogue, assistant teacher)

36% of participants are the only one of expert school staff

Results – Activities of school psychologists and issues what they solve

Individual work

- family problems - 95%
- relationships at the class - 93%
- personal problems - 89%
- behavioral problems - 87%
- learning problems - 69%
- problems with adaptation - 63%
- diagnostics - 37%
- others - 9%



Graph 4 - Proportion of SP activities

Work with a child with special needs

- personal development - 69%
- promoting classroom relationships - 64%
- administrative activities - 53%
- reeducation - 19%

Work with teachers

- consultation on the pedagogical process - 84%
- consultation about pupils - 75%
- social-psychological activities with teachers - 30%
- educational activities - 25%
- discussion groups with teachers - 13%

Group activities/work with a class

- promoting a positive class climate - 100%
- solving class/group problems - 75%
- finding relationships in the classroom (sociometry) - 75%
- social-psychological activities - 73%
- preventive programs - 69%
- intervention activities in the class - 46%

Work with parents

- consultation about child problems - 98%
- consultation about integration of their child with special needs - 62%
- others - 5%

Results – What SPs need

- intervention and supervision
- other experts at school
- further education and workshops
- more space (time & room) to do their activities
- equipment

Conclusion

The main positive is that the position of school psychologist is getting a firm place in the school system and also that most of the SP are young colleagues. SP has a position also in kindergartens. The potential problem could be the stability of the SP positions funded now by school projects and also the part-time work at schools with a high number of students. The model of objectification proposed in 2017 states that at school with over 400 students should be at least one full-time SP. From our results we see, that most time SP work individually and that they see a room for more time to devote to work with classes, teachers and parents. A great help could be also other experts at school, so the SP could be not the main expert at work with pupils with special educational needs and in reeducation. Also, we take as positive that SPs are mostly young, but they need supervision further education and better working conditions.

References:

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (2017). Model of objectification of the number of professional employees in school. Available online <http://www.vssr.sk/clanok-z-titulky/model-objektivizacie-poctu-odbornych-zamestnancov-v-skole.htm>.