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# The Effects of internal-external locus of control variables on burnout levels of teachers

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the teachers are internally controlled or externally controlled and investigate if this variable affects their burnout status in terms of their burnout levels and their style of explaining events. The sample of the study consisted of 291 teachers. Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale and Maslach Burnout Inventory were used as data gathering tools. The analyses concluded that the teachers generally have internal locus of control and they perceive themselves more burnout from the point of insensitivity and emotional burnout.

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*Keywords:* Locus of control; internal-external; burnout; teacher; variable.

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## 1. Introduction

Teacher burnout has been an ongoing problem in school systems worldwide. The concept of burnout was suggested in 1974 and defined as an emotional exhaustion experienced by people who works so hard that they cannot do their functions by Freudenberger (Freudenberger, 1974). In 1981 Maslach and Jackson re-examined burnout and developed generally accepted burnout model and defined burnout as emotional exhaustion, increase in desensitization and decrease in personal accomplishment feeling (Maslach and Jackson, 1981).

According to teachers, think factors like lack of discipline, working conditions, and administrative problems are the main reasons of teacher burnout (Matthews, 1980). On the other hand, the variables like the age, the gender of teacher and the level of class are considered to associate teacher burnout. In their study investigating burnout of instructors, Barut and Kalkan (2002) found that the variables like gender, age, marital status, working time, branch, and degree affects burnout. Kırılmaz et al. (2003) researched teacher burnout in respect of similar variables and found that the teachers experienced a considerable burnout. Locus of control concept was suggested in 1966, configured within the frame of social learning, and defined as a personal trait by Rotter. Locus of control belief is associated to which factors reinforcement of individuals, in other words accomplishments and failures were attributed. However those attributions can be linked to the factors like luck, faith, other strong people, they can be

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linked self-behaviours of individual (Solmuş, 2004). In short, locus of control refers to a person's belief about what causes the events in his or her life (Strauser, Ketz ve Keim, 2002). Dorman (2003) suggested a model, which showed that teacher burnout was affected by locus of control beside class environment, role conflict, and self-esteem.

On their study, which was conducted with nurses, Rijk et al. dealt with Karasek's job demand-control model (JD-C) and examined the relationship between burnout and controlled behaviour. They found a positive relationship between active coping ability and being controlled and they associated that with burnout status. In recent years, numerous studies emphasizing locus of control concept, which caused burnout among medical personal and teachers that required close relations, have been done. Various studies showed that there was a relationship between having internal locus of control and burnout (Hippis, 1990; Marun, 1987; Cadavid, 1986; Spector, 1984; McIntyre, 1981).

The purpose of this study was to call attention to emotional problems of teachers, who have significant role in education, and create awareness about the causes of those problems. In this connection, we will try to answer these questions:

1. What is the level of the position of teachers' burnout status and generalised control expectations on internality-externality dimensions?
2. Is there any significant relationship between locus of control, as measured by the Rotter Scale and level of teacher burnout as measured by The Teacher Burnout Scale?

## 2. Method

### *Participants*

The universe of study consisted of the teachers who served in Aksaray and sample consisted of 291 teachers. 41.9% (122) of teachers were female and 58.1% (169) were male. 86.9% (253) of them were married and 12% (35) were single, and 1% was divorced. In comparison to branches, 29.9% (87) of them were social sciences teachers, 20.6 (60) were science and technology teachers, and 49.5 (144) were classroom teachers.

### *2.1. Instruments*

#### *2.1.1. Maslach Burnout Inventory*

Maslach Burnout Inventory was adapted to Turkish by Ergin (1992). Inventory consisted of three sub-dimensions; emotional exhaustion sub-dimension (EE), desensitisation sub-dimension (D), and personal accomplishment sub-dimension (PA). Higher emotional exhaustion and desensitisation sub-dimensions and lower personal accomplishment sub-dimensions cause high burnout status (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). The Cronbach Alpha values of dimensions: emotional exhaustion .83; desensitisation .65; personal accomplishment .72. Furthermore, the reliability of inventory was examined with test-retest method. Retest reliability coefficients of the data obtained from 99 subjects after 2-4 weeks: emotional exhaustion .83; desensitisation .72; personal accomplishment .67 (Ergin, 1992). Ergin (1992) also found that inventory had sufficient structural validity.

#### *2.1.2. Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale*

The original form of Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale was developed by Rotter in 1966 and adapted to Turkish by Dağ (1991). In the scale consisted of 29 item, there are two choices in every item: a and b. Total point is between 0 and 23. Higher points show increase in the external locus of control and lower points show that individual has internal locus of control. It was found that Cronbach coefficient of the scale was .71 and test-retest reliability was .83.

## 2.2. Procedure

The teachers were randomly selected and measurement tools mentioned above were given them in group sessions considering voluntariness. The statistical analysis of data was done using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS 15) for Windows. The results were evaluated by employing mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Moments Multiple Correlation Coefficient.

## 3. Results (Findings)

The correlational study included 291 nonrandom participants. A Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to conclude if a correlation existed between an external locus of control and/or teacher burnout

Table 1. The average and standard deviation values of teachers regarding to their burnout status and locus of control levels.

Sub-dimensions of Burnout Scale and Locus of Control	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
EE	291	13.11	9.67
D	291	3.41	3.98
PA	291	33.89	8.62
Locus of Control	291	8.59	3.94

As it is seen in Table 1, desensitisation (Mean=3,41) and emotional exhaustion (Mean=13,11) points of teachers were considerably low. Regarding the perception of personal accomplishment, they got high points (Mean=33,89). In respect of locus of control scale (Mean=8,59), it is obvious that the individual of group have internal control.

To investigate the association between burnout levels of the teachers and internal-external locus of control, Pearson Moments Multiple Correlation Coefficient was used. The finding of analysis were presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The association between burnout scale sub-dimensions and locus of control of the teachers

	1	2	3	4
<b>1. EE</b>	-	.478(**)	-.189(**)	.287(**)
<b>2. D</b>		-	-.264(**)	.107
<b>3. PA</b>			-	-.204(**)
<b>4. Locus of Control</b>				-

\*\*P<.001

As it is seen in Table 2, there is a positive relationship between emotional exhaustion and the other sub-dimensions of teacher's burnout, which are desensitisation and locus of control, in the level of .001. In the light of this finding, it can be said that higher emotional exhaustion level leded desensitisation and being external-controlled ( $r=.478$  ve  $r=.287$ ). On the other hand, a negative relationship was found between points personal accomplishment perception and the others ( $r=-.189$ ) ( $r=-.264$ ) ( $p<.001$ ). In other words, the increase in accomplishment perception of the teachers leads decrease in desensitisation and emotional exhaustion level. Another negative relationship was found between personal accomplishment and locus of control ( $r=-.204$ ) ( $p<.001$ ).

Accordingly, if personal accomplishment perceptions of teachers increase, they will be more internal-controlled. Finally there was no reasonable association between desensitisation dimension and locus of control ( $r=.107$ ) ( $p>.001$ ).

#### 4. Discussion

In this study, we examined what were the burnout levels of teachers and whether the explanations, which they accounted for events, were internal/external control focused as a variable affecting burnout status. In the light of findings, the teachers experience desensitization and emotional exhaustion however their personal accomplishment perceptions were found high. In her study conducted with 112 classroom teachers, Tmkaya (2001) found that the burnout points of male teachers were higher than the burnout points of female teachers and teachers with external locus of control experienced more burnout.

Another result of the study was the relationship between burnout and locus of control. Most teachers in study group had internal locus of control. There was a significant association between the emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment dimensions and locus of control. In his study, which was conducted with 53 pre-school teachers, Bevis (2008) found a reasonable relationship between locus of control and burnout ( $r=0.450$ ). In their study, Lunenberg and Cadavid (1992) investigated the relationship between burnout, locus of control and student control thought and they found that the students, who have high internal control experienced more burnout and control thought.

This finding also is compatible to the findings of Tsay's (1989) research. There was a significant positive relationship between teacher's report of external locus of control and emotional exhaustion or depersonalization. There was a significant negative relationship between teacher's external locus of control variable and personal accomplishment. (3) The variables of teacher characteristics and teacher locus of control explained 10.37% of variance in emotional exhaustion, 10.10% of variance in depersonalization, and 17.53% of variance in personal accomplishment.

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

According to the findings, desensitisation and emotional exhaustion are seen to be in evitable for teachers and generally occurs because of their internal evaluations. The views associated that those evaluations generally include negative judgments about themselves are obvious. Therefore, to reduce burnout insight education or awareness education as emotional literacy should be given or working groups should be formed. With further studies, the effects of awareness educations on burnout levels should be examined.

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