International Conference on Learner Diversity 2010

Burnout and Career Self Concept among Teachers in Mashhad, Iran

Afsaneh Zamani Rad[^1]*, Rohany Nasir[^2]

School of Psychology and Human Development, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

Abstract

The main aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between burnout with career self concept among teachers and the differences in burnout and career self concept based on gender. A total of 150 teachers in Mashhad, Iran were the respondents of this study. Results of study showed there were significant differences in burnout and career self concept between male and female teachers. Furthermore it was found that there was a negative correlation between career self concept and burnout.

© 2010 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under CC BY-NC-ND license.

Keywords: Burnout; Career Self Concept; Teachers; Maslach Burnout Inventory

1. Introduction

There is now a growing awareness of the importance of the role of jobs in different aspects of life because having a job is not only a means of livelihood, but also a way of having a direct relationship with an individual’s mental and physical health. In fact, a job will affect the total pattern of life and helps to determine the income level and economic security. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 400 million people around the world suffer from mental disorders, this number of mental disorders cases could be a reflection of the stressful lifestyle that are prevalent in the new millennium. In fact, stress has been identified as the 20th century disease (Bailey 1980).

Each one of us, regardless of who we are, students, workers, housewives, professionals, seems to experience various types of stressors in our lives. For instance, professional people feel stressful because of the demand of their work and responsibilities. Any professional can be a candidate for burnout if they do not know how to avoid and manage daily stressors. High levels of occupational stress often lead to job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, turnover and burnout. Burnout is a pathological syndrome in which emotional depletion and maladaptive detachment develop in response to prolonged occupational stress (Niku 2004).

In Iran, as in many other large countries, burnout and other stress-related disorders occur as a result of social problems. Nowadays, Iran is facing major problems such as increasing inflation, economic depression and high cost of living. In fact, many people feel stressful combined with tension and anxiety, fears, resentment and other

[^1]: Corresponding author, Tel.: +06-017-313-6970; fax: +03-8925-43-72
[^2]: E-mail address: Afsaneh_zamanirad@hotmail.com
emotional disturbances when they start to work. Investigations have shown that stress and burnout can affect teachers’ job satisfaction, decrease the amount of time and energy spent on job-related tasks, and reduce effectiveness when working with students (Blasé 1982; Borg et al. 1991). According to Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2009) the causes of stress may include lack of support from the school leadership, conflicts in cooperating with colleagues, increased workload, students with behavioural problems, problem in the parent–teacher relationship and lack of autonomy.

Similarly, (Cooper & Sutherland 1992; Schwab et al. 1986) found that burnout predicts intention to leave and actual job turnover. A negative perception of the profession can lead to progressive absenteeism and, finally, to withdrawal from teaching (Hall et al. 1988). An understanding of the effect of burnout in work environment would help in understanding why some individuals are more apt to leave their work than others. From this point of view, assessment studies of the effectiveness of burnout are necessary to be conducted in any field especially among teachers, nurses, counsellors, and police officers. Since, teachers have an essential role in our society; the purposes of the present study are: to determine the differences in burnout and career self concept between male and female teachers and to ascertain the relationship between burnout and career self concept among the teachers.

1.2 Burnout and Career Self Concept

In recent years, burnout has become a common problem in the human service professions. Burnout was first introduced as a concept in the literature by Freudenberger (1974) in relation to front-line human service workers. His description of burnout depicted idealistic young men and women who, while working harder and harder, sacrificed their own health in the process of meeting ideals larger than themselves and reaped few rewards for their efforts. The operational definition of burnout has three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is commonly considered a core symptom of the burnout syndrome (Shirom, 2003). According to Lee and Ashforth, (1996) emotional exhaustion appears to be highly associated with job stressors or demands such as overload. Prosser et al. (1999) mentioned depersonalization to be more closely associated with patient factors and to Payne, (2001) personal accomplishment was associated with individual and personality factors. Teacher burnout has been an ongoing problem in school systems worldwide. Some variables that had been identified as the cause for teacher burnout are class size, overload, and lack of feedback from colleagues and the school administration (Cedoline 1982; Malanowski & Wood 1984). Studies in different cultures show that measures of teacher burnout predict both subjective and objective health as well as teachers’ motivation and job satisfaction.

Abel and Sewell (1999) examined the source of stress and symptoms of burnout among rural and urban school teachers. They used the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-ES) to measure teacher burnout and Sources of Stress Questionnaire (Borg et al. 1991) to measure sources of stress. Multivariate Analyses Of Variance (MANOVA) was used to examine the differences between rural and urban school teachers. The results of this study showed that there was a strong relationship between the sources of stress and dimensions of burnout for rural and urban school teachers. This study found that best predictors of burnout for rural teachers are time pressures and poor working conditions, and the best predictors of burnout for urban school teachers are pupil misbehaviour and poor working conditions.

Teachers’ self concept is also associated with teacher burnout. Teachers with a positive self concept are happier, more productive and more effective in discharging their duties as teachers (Crouse & Kevin 1981) and thus become less inclined to burnout. Villa and Calvete (2001) assessed teacher self concept in relation to burnout. They used cluster random sampling for collecting data. The sample of their study was 278 secondary school teachers from 24 schools. Of those participating, 52% were female and 48% were male. The mean age was 30-40. Villa and Calvete used Teacher Self Concept Evaluation Scale (TSCE) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) for measuring burnout and self concept. The results of this study showed the role of self concept in the relationship between teachers and their environment. Their finding indicates that self concept plays an important role in events, feeling and behaviour. They found that teachers with positive self concept about themselves will experience fewer symptoms of stress and burnout. They also found a positive correlation between teachers self concept subscale and psychological symptoms. Teachers with negative self concept were found to perceive and assess events in such a way that they will feel dissatisfied with their work. In addition, teachers with a positive self concept will tend to
believe that they have the ability to influence their students. In fact it was concluded that people with negative self image are more vulnerable to environment events, particularly those affecting work.

Barut and Kalkan (2002) found that the variables like gender, age, marital status, working time, branch and degree affects burnout. In this regard Burk and Greenglass (1988) examined factors contributing to burnout in women and men teachers. Respondents were 566 men and women employed in school in Canada. Most of the samples of this study were teachers and principals. Mail out questionnaires was used for data collection. A total of 2189 questionnaires were sent out and 833 were returned. Burnout was measured by using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Results of the t test revealed that there was no significant difference in burnout among the teachers. However, the male teachers had a higher score in depersonalization. The results also showed that women teachers reported more psychosomatic symptoms, and they were more depressed than male teachers but they were more satisfied with their jobs. Zabel and Zabel 1984 in Zabel Rizzo (1988) indicated a relationship between age and burnout. Generally, older teachers who had more experience were less burnout than younger teachers, with less experience.

2. Method

2.1 Sample

Questionnaires were distributed to 200 teachers, all of whom were selected from a teacher training centre in Mashhad, Iran. Only 154 questionnaires were returned four of which could not be scored because they were incomplete. As such, the remaining 150 senior teachers from the training centre were the participants in this study. There were equal numbers of male and female teachers in this study (75 male and 75 female). A majority of the participants’ age ranged from 31-40 years (51.3%); 53% had no children and 50% had an income of 101,000 Tomans.

2.2 Instruments

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach & Jackson 1981, 1986) is the most common instrument used for assessing burnout. Originally, it was designed to be used in human service organizations, but the instrument has subsequently been modified to allow for the assessment of burnout in other settings. The original MBI was composed of 47 items. Subsequent research reduced the number of items to 25 and in the final form there are 22 items. The 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 .90; depersonalization .79; personal accomplishment .71.

A set of questionnaires for career self concept was developed for measuring career self concept in two dimensions, feeling of professional competence (10 items) and feeling of professional satisfaction (5 items) based on sections from a modified version of Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS) Friedman and Farber (1992). The first part, is feeling of professional competence includes, teaching, grading and helping students with both educational and personal issues (Cronbach Alpha .79).

3. Results and Discussion

Test analyses were done in order to assess differences in career self concept and burnout based on gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>41.32</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>-3.30</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>54.97</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*P<.05

Table 1 shows the result of t-test analysis for the difference in burnout between male and female teachers. It is indicated in the table that male teachers showed more burnout than female teachers (148) = -3.30, p<.05)

| Table 2. Summary of t test of career self concept between male and female teachers |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Gender                        | N   | Mean | SD    | df    | t      | Sig  |
| Career Self Concept           |     |      |       |       |        |      |
| Female                        | 75  | 57.33| 7.76  | 148   | 3.161  | .002* |
| Male                          | 75  | 53.26| 7.99  |       |        |       |

*P<.05

Table 2 shows the difference in career self concept based on gender. The result, t (148) = 3.161, p<.05, indicates that there is a significant difference in career self concept between male and female teachers. As demonstrated in the table, female subjects showed higher career self concept than male subjects.

| Table 3. Correlation between burnout and self concept of teachers |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Variable           | Burnout         | Career Self Concept |
|                    |                 | -.480**           |

*P<0.01

Table 3 shows the relationship between burnout and career self concept. As can be seen from the table, there is significant negative relationship between self concept and burnout.

| Table 4. Relationship between burnout sub-dimensions and career self Concept |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                            | 1                           | 2                           | 3                           | 4                           |
| 1. Emotional exhaustion (EE)| 1                           |                             |                             |                             |
| 2. Depersonalization (D)   | .714**                      | 1                           |                             |                             |
| 3. Personal Accomplishment (PA)| .422**                  | .505**                      | 1                           |                             |
| 4. Career Self Concept (CSC)| -.378**                    | -.334**                     | .412**                      | 1                           |

*P< 0.01
As seen in Table 4, there is a positive relationship between emotional exhaustion and the other sub dimensions of teacher’s burnout and negative relation with career self concept, in the level of .001. In light of this finding, it can be said that higher emotional exhaustion level lead to lower career self concept (r= -.378). On the other hand, a positive relationship was found between personal accomplishment perception and career self concept (r=.412) (p<.001). The increase in perception of accomplishment among the teachers lead to a increased in career self concept. Moreover negative relationship was found between depersonalization and career self concept (r=−.334, p<.001).

The result of this study shows that burnout among male teachers is higher than among female teachers. In this regard, Schwab and Iwanicki (1982) found that male teachers reported more frequency and intense feeling of depersonalization towards their students compared to female teachers. This finding is consistent with the findings of prior researchers such as Crous and Kevin (1981). They mentioned that teachers with positive career self concept are more productive, happier and more effective in their duties. Molloy and Pierce (1990) also reported that male teachers perceived themselves as less self confident than female teachers. In regard to the result of this study, Iranians are generally very conservative people. Being conservative, teaching is a profession favoured for women because teaching is regarded as a female domain since nurturing and taking care of children had always been considered as women’s responsibilities.

This study also found a negative correlation between burnout and career self concept among Iranian sample. This finding supports findings of researches by (Howard 1981; Nasir, 2003). Howard’s (1981) and Nasir’s (2003) found that their research samples with high burnout have low self concept. High burnout, lead to feeling of worthlessness, unmotivated, dissatisfaction with work and consequently lead to decrease in career self concept.

4.Conclusion

The current research examined the demonstrated relationship between burnout and career self concept. Result from this analysis indicated that there is a significant relationship between burnout and career self concept. These results should be helpful for future research on teachers’ burnout as well as in guiding administrators as they begin to plan strategies for burnout syndrome in their job environment. Since having a high level of self concept helps in the recovery of burnout, more attention should be paid to this aspect.

References

Teacher Educator, 24, 13-21.