



The Role of Emotional Intelligence and Locus of Control on Burnout among Special Education Teachers in Egypt

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Abstract

The main purpose of the present study was investigate the interactive and relative effect of emotional intelligence and locus of control on burnout among Special Education Teachers in Egypt. The study made use of simple random sampling in selecting 280 (160 male, and 120 female) special Education teachers from three special education schools located in Kafr EL Sheikh Governorate. The study sample responded to three valid and reliable instruments; Emotional intelligence scale, The Teacher Burnout Scale, and The Teacher Burnout Scale. Data analysis involved the use of Pearson correlation and multiple regression procedure to investigate predictive capacity of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The results indicated that the two independent variables, when taken together, were effective in predicting Burnout.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Locus of Control, Burnout, special education teachers

Introduction

The major goal of the school at any level is towards attainment of academic excellence by the students. Although there may be other peripheral objectives, emphasis is placed on the achievement of sound education. The extent to which this goal can be actualized depends principally on the workforce--most especially the teaching personnel. They constitute the oil that lubricates the factors of academic performance and educational enterprise as a whole. Teachers, like other employees in various organizations, are crucial in the actualization of the school goals and objectives.

As important as teachers are to the development of a nation, research works (Shirom, 1989; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998; Azeem, 2010) have shown that burnout is a major factor that hinders their efficiency, effectiveness and job involvement. According to Bryne (1991) and Maslach, Jackson and Leiter (1996), the burnout syndrome has three distinct but loosely coupled dimensions: emotional exhaustion (feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted with one's work), depersonalisation (the development of negative and uncaring attitudes towards others), and negatives personal accomplishment (loss of feelings of self-competence and dissatisfaction with one's achievement).

It often start with a feeling of fatigue; physical, mental or emotional. It is a feeling of disconnection and complete loss of interest in the job, self-esteem suffers and feeling about work becomes negative. Burnout results from a long period of stress and stress come from the perception that the resources available to deal with stressors are not adequate (Wood & McCarthy, 2000).

Researchers have become highly interested in the problem of burnout among teachers (Byrne, 1998; Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Billingsley, 2004). Most of the research carried out in European and North American Countries indicated high levels of burnout among primary school teachers (Means & Cain, 2003). In African countries, research studies have shown that teachers experience high level of stress and burnout (Olaitan, 2009). Reglin and Reitzammer (2008) and Tretteman and Punch (2005) found that teachers regardless of what level they teach are exposed to high levels of stress. They suffer burnout in some extreme cases (Seldman & Zager, 2001).

Burnout can have damaging effects on individual's mental and physical health including exhaustion, physical pain, depression, sleep disturbances and even death (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991; Brock & Grady, 2002; Le Fevre, Matheny & Kort, 2003). It can also have negative effects on organisational outcomes such as performance and turnover (Tamini,

2009). Research works have also shown that burnout has negative consequences on teaching-learning processes (Palomera, Fernandez-Berrocal & Brackett, 2008), quality of teaching and students' performance and (Vanderberghe & Huberman, 1999) and student teacher relationship (Yoon, 2002).

As a result of the highlighted negative and harmful influences of burnout on teaching-learning process and outcome, researchers have become interested in identifying factors responsible for burnout among teachers. Factors found include excessive time pressure, poor relationship with colleagues, large classes, lack of human and physical resources, poor opportunities for promotion and lack of participation in decision-making, personality hardiness and job involvement (Azeem, 2010). Furthermore, workload, lack of feedback and autonomy are variables which are consistently related to burnout (Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006; Schaufeli & Banker, 2004). Most studies on burnout have focused largely on the investigation of background variables like marital status, age, years of teaching and gender as predictors of burnout (Byrne, 1991, 1994). Indeed, empirical studies involving psychological factors as predictors of burnout are rare. Thus, little is known about the contribution of emotional intelligence to burnout.

It is true that the term 'emotional intelligence' was coined relatively recently, but it certainly bears some resemblance and partially overlaps with earlier concepts such as social intelligence (Sternberg & Smith, 1985). Moreover, the construct of emotional intelligence is considered to be theoretically preferable over the earlier construct of social intelligence because it is more focused on affect per se. Furthermore, the concept of 'emotional intelligence' is distinct from predispositions to experience certain kinds of emotions captured by the personality traits of positive and negative affectivity (George, 1996).

Emotional intelligence has been found to impact on psychological health-particularly occupational stress (Ciarrochi, Chan & Bajgar, 2001). Nikolaous and Tsausis (2002) found a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and occupational stress, a similar concept to burnout. Gertis, Derkesen, Verbruggen and Katzko (2005) found a significant relationship between EI and burnout with greatest symptoms of burnout seen in female nurses who had low EI scores. In a study carried out with secondary school teachers in England, it was observed that the teacher's EI predicts level of burnout (Brackett, Palomera & Mojsa, Reyes and Salovey, 2010).

In a study aimed to investigate perceived emotional intelligence (EI) in relation to burnout syndrome and job satisfaction in primary special education teachers from Greece, Platsidou (2010) found that Perceived EI was significantly related to burnout syndrome and job satisfaction, indicating that teachers of high-perceived EI are likely to experience less burnout and greater job satisfaction.

Locus of control is another psychological variable that contributes to burnout among teachers. It is a personality variable that concerns people's generalized expectancies that they can or cannot control reinforcements in their lives (Janssen & Carton, 1999). People who hold expectancies that they control reinforcements are considered to be internals, and people who hold expectancies that outside forces or luck control reinforcements are considered to be externals. Locus of control personality refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events affecting them (Rotter, 1966). Individuals who have an internal locus of control ("internalizers" or "internals") believe that the events in their lives are generally the result of their own behavior and actions. Individuals who have an external locus of control ("externalizers" or "externals"), on the other hand, believe that events in their lives are generally determined by chance, fate or other people. Cummins (1988), and Kobasa and

Puccetti (1983) supported the hypothesis that the relationship between stress and strain is moderated by locus of control personality.

It can be noted that a few studies have examined the predictive capacities of emotional intelligence and locus of control on burnout among school teachers. Nevertheless, none was carried out in Arabic countries, so the present study tries to bridge this gap.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study:

1. What is the combined effect of emotional intelligence and locus of control on burnout among Special Education Teachers in Egypt?
2. What is the relative contribution of emotional intelligence and locus of control to burnout among Special Education Teachers in Egypt?

Method

Participants

A total sample of 280 (160 male, and 120 female) special Education teachers participated in this study. They were those who returned back the scaled after felling in them. Those teachers were from three special education schools located in Kafr EL Sheikh Governorate , namely; AL Fekrya School (For the mentally retarded), Al Nour School (For Blind students) , and the School for the Deaf (For deaf students)

Instruments

Schutte et al. (1998). It is a 33-item scale with a five-point Likert-type scale. As suggested in Salovey and Mayer's theory of emotional intelligence (1990), the instrument has three categories: (a) the appraisal and expression of emotion assessed by 13 items; (b) the regulation of emotion assessed by 10 items; and (c) the utilisation of emotion assessed by 10 items. Participants read each statement and decide whether they 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', are 'undecided', 'agree', or 'strongly agree' with the statement.

Schutte et al. (1998) reported a Cronbach alpha (α) of 0.90 for the internal consistency for adults with mean age of 29.3 (S.D. = 10.2) and $\alpha = 0.78$ for test-retest reliability after a two-week interval on the scale for a smaller group drawn from the sample. Schutte et al. (1998) reported predicted validity of $r(63) = 0.32$ for first year GPA of college students, for discriminant validity they reported $r(41) = -0.06$ for the correlation between the scale and SAT scores, and $r(22) = -0.28$ to 0.54 for subscales of NEO Personality Inventory of scores of college students. This study reported a Cronbach alpha (α) of 0.89 for the internal consistency, almost near to this obtained by the original authors. Also, this study reported $r = 0.73$ for the correlation between the scale and Fathi & Mourad's emotional intelligence scale(2008).

2-Teacher Locus of control Scale: Locus of control scores were obtained by using The Rose & Medway Teacher Locus of control Scale (Rose & Medway, 1981), which is a 28- item forced – choice scale with internal consistency. The item requires teachers to endorse an option indicating either internal or external control of various classroom events. Half of the items describe positive or success situations, and the other half describe negative or failure situations. Separate scores are provided for beliefs in internal responsibility for student success (1+) and failure (1-) . One point is awarded for each internal alternative. Separate scores are obtained for success and failure situations, because teachers' attributions of causality have been shown to depend on the nature of classroom and performance outcomes .

Higher scores indicate higher internality or greater tendency to accept personal responsibility for classroom events.

3- *The Teacher Burnout Scale* (TBS), which was adapted by Freidman (2003) from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), was used to assess levels of teacher burnout. The 14-item self-report scale includes three subscales: exhaustion, unaccomplishment, and depersonalization. Responses for this scale were reported using a 6-point scale ranging from “never” (1) to “always” (6) (Freidman). Items such as “I feel emotionally drained from my work” assess emotional exhaustion. Feelings of unaccomplishment are recorded using statements in the vein of “I feel I’m positively influencing other people’s lives through my work.” Depersonalization is measured through the use of items such as “I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects” (Byrne, 1991; Freidman). Alpha reliabilities for the adapted TBS subscales range between 0.79 and 0.90; 0.90 for exhaustion, 0.82 for unaccomplishment and 0.70 for depersonalization (Freidman). The total scale Cronbach’s alpha from the first wave of data collection was 0.89. Descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation, and Regression Analysis were used to analyse data.

Results

The results of various analyses have been presented in separate headings.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the Mean and standard deviations of all the observed variables. Descriptive statistics was worked out to know the pattern of score distribution. A perusal of table 1 reveals that the mean score on emotional intelligence variable is 128.16 with the standard deviation of 2.8. The mean score on Locus of control is 65.43 with the SD of 5.7 and on Burnout the mean score was 31.32 with the SD of 7.4. It shows that the scores on burnout variable ranged Average and Normal. Similarly on Locus of control and Emotional Intelligence variables the score ranges average and above average but normal.

Table 1 –Mean and Std. Deviation

Variable	Mean	SD
Emotional Intelligence	128.16	2.8
Locus of control	65.43	5.7
Burnout	31.32	7.4

Correlations

Correlations among all the 3 variables were computed through Pearson’s Product Movement method. It was aimed at examining the degree of association between the measures of Burnout , Locus of control and Emotional Intelligence. A careful inspection of inter-correlation matrix (Table - 2) reveals that the relationship between emotional intelligence and locus of control was positive but not significant at 0.05 level ($r = 0.126, P > 0.05$). However, the results revealed significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout ($r = -.280, P < 0.05$) and locus of control and burnout ($r = -.520, P < 0.05$).

Table 2 – Inter- Correlation Matrix

Variables	Emotional intelligence	Locus of control	Burnout
Emotional intelligence	1		
Locus of control	0.126	1	
Burnout	- 0.280*	-520*	1

* *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.*

Regression Analysis

Table 3 shows the analysis of the combined effect of emotional intelligence and locus of control on burnout among Special education teachers in Egypt . Linear regression analysis test was conducted. Using the independent variables (Emotional Intelligence and Locus of Control) to predict burnout yielded a coefficient of multiple regression (R) of 0.498 and a multiple regression square (R²) of 0.25. The means 25% of the variance in burnout is accounted for by the independent variables (EI and Locus of Control). Results in Table 3 further reveal that the analysis of variance of the multiple regression data yielded an F-ratio of 49.046 which is significant at 0.05 level. This clearly demonstrates that all the independent variables taken together significantly predicted teachers' burnout.

Table 3- Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis between the Predictor Variables (EI and locus of control) and the Outcome Measure (Burnout)

Multiple R (Adjusted) = 0.498					
Multiple R² (Adjusted) = 0.248					
Stand error estimate = 25.06					
Source of variation	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P
Regression	2	61599.829	30799.914	49.046	<.05
Residual	277	186510.1	627.980		
Total	279	248109.9			

Results displayed in Table 4 above reveal that each of the independent variables made significant contributions to the prediction of burnout among secondary school teachers. The results indicated that the following beta weights which represented the relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction were observed. Emotional intelligence (b = -0.124, t = 2.462; P <.05) and Locus of Control (b = -0.473, t = 9.379; P <.05). Although the two variables made significant relative contributions to the prediction of burnout, locus of control is a better predictor.

Table 4. Relative Contribution of the Independent Variables to the Prediction of Burnout

Predictor	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised coefficients	T-Ratio	
	B	SEB	Beta		
EI	-.160	.065	-.124	2.462	.014*
Burnout	-1.283	.137	-.473	9.379	.000*

Discussion

The results revealed that emotional intelligence and locus of control either collectively or separately are potent predictors of burnout among special education teachers in Egypt . The magnitude of the relationship between the independent variables in predicting burnout among special education teachers in Egypt is reflected in the values of coefficient of multiple regression (= 0.498) and in multiple R-squared adjusted (0.248) as shown in Table 3. The F-ratio value of 49.046 which is significant at 0.05 level further attested to the fact that the predictive capacity of the independent variable could not be attributed to chance factor. This finding agreed with Mendes (2003) who examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher burnout on 49 credentialed secondary teachers and found that

emotional intelligence correlated with burnout. In the same vein, Ismail, et al. (2010) found that emotional intelligence significantly correlated with occupational stress of academic employees. The finding of Chan (2006) is consistent with the outcome of this study. The present study further corroborates the assertion of Platsidou (2009) and Bracket et al. (2010) that emotion regulation ability and burnout are significantly related.

This result is not surprising. By the nature of the construct of emotional intelligence, it is expected that the understanding of one's and other people's emotions, and one's ability to regulate and manage them will have a buffering effect on work related burnout. Thus, a teacher that is emotionally intelligent would have the ability to understand and manage moods and emotions in himself and in others thereby contributing to the effectiveness of controlling prolonged stress resulting to job burnout. Such teacher would possess an array of cognitive skills, capabilities and competencies that influences his ability to cope with environmental demands, challenges and pressures. The findings of the present study corroborate the assertion of Ciarrochi et al (2001) that an objective measure of emotion management skills is associated with a tendency to maintain an experimentally induced positive mood which has obvious implications for preventing burnout.

The result that Locus of Control is a significant predictor burnout among special education teachers in Egypt could be explained from the fact that internal locus of control individuals generally engage in activities that would improve their present condition, striving for achievement, work hard to develop their knowledge, skills and abilities. They are always inquisitive and try to figure out why things turn out the way they did. They also take note of information they could use to create positive outcomes in the future. This finding is supported by Gan, Shang & Zhang (2007) who found a significant relationship between external control and burnout.

Implication of Findings

A number of implications have emerged from the results of the present study. First, when burnout arises in the school, preventive strategies could include the enhancement of teachers' emotional intelligence and locus of control. For instance, helping teachers to acquire emotional intelligence competencies (e.g. perception, appraisal and expression of emotion, emotional facilitation of thinking, understanding and analyzing emotion and employing emotional knowledge) may have a buffering effect on their burnout. Similarly, furthermore, the belief one has about the cause of his fortune or misfortune (locus of control) is a major factor predicting burnout among special education teachers in Egypt.

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