COPING MECHANISMS AND JOB BURNOUT AMONG PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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Abstract

The study investigated coping mechanisms and job burnout among pre-primary school teachers. The study was a true experimental research. The sample comprised of 100 pre-primary school teachers from Govt. and private schools of Zirakpur. Two government and two private pre-primary schools chosen for the study using stratified random sampling technique. Descriptive survey method was employed to collect the data. Maslach Burnout Inventory constructed by Maslach and Jackson (2002) and Ways of Coping Questionnaire constructed by Lazaru and Folkman (Revised Version) 2000 were used to collect data. The result of study revealed a clear significant difference in the mean scores of coping mechanisms and job burnout among pre-primary school teachers with reference to gender and type of management.

Keywords: coping mechanism, job burnout, Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization

Introduction

Teaching in today's society is very demanding and stressful. Work-related stress can result in teacher burnout. This, in turn, may affect the health and happiness of the teachers. Stress is described with the help of a situation when a potentially threatening event is encountered, a reflexive, cognitive balancing act ensues, weighing the perceived demands of the event against one's perceived ability to deal with them, Events perceived as potential threats trigger the stress response; a series of physiological and psychological changes that occur when coping capacities are seriously challenged.

Burnout takes place gradually. Over a period of time if workplace demands supersede an individual's resources to adequately deal with them, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishments may occur. If an individual continue to experience work-related stress, eventually their ability to cope with that stress is depleted, resulting in burnout. In examining the syndrome of burnout, it is imperative to take into account the concept of stress. Although stress and burnout are analogous, they are not one in the same. It is important to note that stress may

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lead to burnout, but burnout may not be the result of stress alone; however, burnout is the result of unmediated stress, a stressful situation when an individual believes there is no "out," no buffers, no support system, no adequate rewards (Adams, 2001).

Coping Mechanisms

Teachers interviewed for this study reported that the teaching profession is stressful, with 72% describing the profession as extremely or very stressful. This study recognizes and investigates the stressors that affect primary school teachers, and identifies the coping behaviors that are used in response to these stressors. A mixed method design was used to assess stress and coping behaviors among current primary school teachers. Two quantitative focus groups provided insight into stress and coping behaviors through the perspectives of current primary school teachers at a specific school

In this study, the term "Coping" refers to 'constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing. While an individual experiences both cognitive processes, each one will generate a theoretical model which then be used to select cognitive and behavioral strategies which are defined as problem-solving coping and emotional-solving coping When the individual acknowledges the stressful situation as changeable, problem-focused coping is often used and when the situation is beyond his or her competencies to control the situation, emotion-focused coping is used.

Job burnout

Burnout is a psychological term used for experience of long term exhaustion and diminishing interest in the work place. Burnout is said to be caused by stress, yet is often used as a synonym for stress. Burnout is said to afflict only human service professionals, but has also been used to describe students, blue-collar workers, sportsmen and indeed, practically everyone. It appears in America as if each week, the media identifies yet another group of workers as burned out. The human service professionals, especially, have integrated the concept of burnout within their collective self image as workers.

Burnout is though more than a 'hot topic'. It is a serious issue that affects the welfare of not only millions of human service workers but of their tens of millions of clients as well. Burnout, unlike stress, is the more 'popular' current concern. But aversive working conditions may produce a variety of

stressful reactions of which burnout is but one, though severe form. There are many stress reactions of non-burnout variety and there should not be confused with burnout. Burnout is the result not of stress per se, but of unmediated stress-of not being able to cope with the stress, having no outlet for it, no buffer, no support system, no compensation. Inability to cope may make the individual unable to maintain the enthusiasm, care and commitment he initially brought to the job and then the process of burnout begins.

Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. The past 25 years of research has established the complexity of the construct, and places the individual stress experience within a larger organizational context of people's relation to their work. Recently, the work on burnout has expanded internationally and has led to new conceptual models. The focus on engagement, the positive antithesis of burnout, promises to yield new perspectives on the interventions to alleviate burnout. The social focus of burnout, the solid research basis concerning the syndrome, and its specific ties to the work domain make a distinct and valuable contribution to people's health and well-being

Review of literature

According to Gupta and Dang (1993), the term burnout refers to a "state of emotional exhaustion caused by excessive psychological and emotional demands made on people helping people" (p. 630). Mishra (1996) defined emotional exhaustion as feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted of one's emotional resources: when an individual feels exhausted, drained, and worn out, both emotionally and physically.

According to Demerouti et al. (2001), this model suggests that working conditions can be categorized as job demands or job resources. Job demands are defined by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) as "those physical, social or organizational aspect of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs" (p. 312).

Kahn and Byosiere (1992) developed the Pupil Behavior Patter Scale (PBP) to explore the relationship between student behavior and teacher burnout. In this study, teachers rated their students' behavior using the PBP. Friedman also measured burnout using an adapted version of the MBI-ES. He concluded that disrespectful student behavior was a direct predictor of burnout as measured by the MBI-ES dimensions of emotional exhaustion and diminished personal accomplishments.

In Hastings and Bham's (2003) study, teachers completed a demographic questionnaire, the PBP, and

the MBI-ES. The results were similar to Kahn and Byosiere (1992) in that student disrespect predicted both teacher emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

Wiley (2000) reported that burnout was the result of demands placed on an individual teacher. How a teacher responds to the overwhelming demands placed upon him is an individual matter.

Uetz (1993) found ombudsmen experienced lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than other care-giving professionals (teachers, social worriers, etc.), and enjoyed a higher degree of personal accomplishment.

Saguaro, Perez, Gonzalez and Cemneno (2003) noted that prevalence of worker burnout and possible psychiatric illness was high, and the two variables were related. A large percentage of participants perceived that work related pressure diminished the quality of the care provided.

According to Shejwal (1984), when faced with a given event, an individual initiates a process of appraisal regardless of whether the situation is stressful or favorable, depending on the individual and the situation. Then, the individual takes the next step which is a process of secondary appraisal.

Bhattacharya, Ghosh and Dasgupta (2003) found that stagnated Indian Readers perceived their organizational climate as more congenial, and experienced more amount of organizational role stress in comparison to no stagnated Readers. Over and above, those stagnated Readers used not only poor amount of coping strategy but also depicted a characteristic profile of poor health status.

Austin et al. (2003) found that job experience and confronted coping predicted psychiatric morbidity while job experience, distancing, and positive reappraisal predicted post traumatic morbidity. Rescue workers with longer job experience were at a higher risk for developing psychiatric and post traumatic distress.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives were formulated for the proposed study:

1. To study relationship between job burnout and coping mechanisms among pre-primary school teachers.

2. To study difference between the following with reference to job burnout among pre-primary school teachers.

   a. Gender (Male and Female)

   b. Management of school (Government and Private)

3. To study difference between the following with reference to coping mechanisms among pre-primary school teachers.

    a. Gender (Male and Female)

    b. Management of school (Government and Private

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between job burnout and coping mechanisms among pre-primary school teachers.

2. There is no significant difference between male and female pre-primary school teachers with reference to job burnout and coping mechanisms.

3. There is no significant difference between private and government pre-primary school teachers with reference to job burnout and coping mechanisms.

Sample

1. Only two government pre-primary schools and two private pre-primary schools in Zirakpur were included in the study.

2. Only 100 primary schools teachers were included in the study.

3. Aged teachers (Above 50 yrs of age) were excluded from the study

Tools

1. Maslach Burnout Inventory constructed by Maslach and Jackson (2002).

2. Ways of Coping Questionnaire constructed by Lazaru and Folkman (Revised Version) 2000.

Results

Table 1

Correlation coefficients between coping strategies and areas of job burnout

Coping strategies		Components of job burnout		
		Emotional exhaustion	Deperson-alization	Personal accomplishment
Emotion-focused	Cor.	.182	.164	.010
	P	.001	.001	.782
Problem-focused	Cor.	.031	.005	.184
	P	.381	.880	.001

Note: N=100; df=95; Significant at 0.05 level

According to Table 1 Emotional exhaustion score of job burnout was found to be significantly and

positively correlated to emotion-focused coping (r=.182; p=.001), But it was not correlated to problem-focused significantly.

In the case of depersonalization, it was found to be significantly and positively correlated to emotion-focused coping (r=.164; p=.001), and problem-focused was not significantly related to depersonalization.

Personal accomplishment scores of job burnout was found to be significantly and positively correlated to problem-focused coping (r=.184; p=.001).

Thus, are 1hypotheses stating "There is no significant relationship between job burnout and coping mechanisms among pre-primary school teachers" has been rejected.

Table 2

Mean scores of male and female teachers working in pre-primary school on various components of job burnout scale and results of independent samples 't' test

Components of Burnout	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	't' value	P Value
Emotional exhaustion	Male	50	18.61	11.26	.176	.860
	Female	50	18.41	13.20		
Deperson alization	Male	50	11.72	6.87	2.545	.011
	Female	50	10.02	7.02		
Personal accomplishment	Male	50	35.14	9.58	2.599	.010
	Female	50	32.63	10.40		

df=98; Significant at 0.05 level

According to table 2, male and female teachers' scores are significantly different in depersonalization (t=2.545; p=.011) and personal accomplishment (t= 2.599; p=.010) components. In both components (depersonalization and personal accomplishment) male teachers have higher mean scores than female teachers.

In emotional exhaustion there is no significant difference between male and female teachers' mean scores. In this context, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between male and female pre-primary school teachers with reference to job burnout in depersonalization and personal accomplishment is rejected.

Table 3

Mean scores of male and female teachers working in pre-primary school on coping strategies and

results of independent samples 't' test

Coping strategies	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	't' value	P value
Emotion-focused	Male	50	40.37	11.34	7.672	
	Female	50	31.71	12.04		.001
Problem-focused	Male	50	9.96	4.21		
	Female	50	7.61	2.99	3.015	.001

df=98; Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3 reveals that emotion-focused (t=7.672; p=.001) and problem- focused strategies (t=3.015; p=.001) are significantly different among male and female teachers. In emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies, male teachers had higher mean score than female teachers. In this context, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between male and female pre-primary school teachers with reference to coping strategies is rejected.

The results of current study indicate that in Emotion-focused and Problem- focused male teachers had higher mean score than female teachers. There were significant difference between male and female teachers' scores on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and coping strategies among pre-primary school teachers. Thus, hypothesis stating "There is no significant difference between male and female pre-primary school teachers with reference to job burnout and coping mechanisms" has also been rejected.

Table 4

Mean scores of teachers working in private and government pre-primary school on various components of job burnout and results of independent samples 't' test

Components of	Type of School	N	Mean	S.D	't' Value	P Value
Emotional exhaustion	Government	50	17.37	11.777	2.308	.021
	Private	50	20.13	12.895		
Deperson alization	Government	50	10.28	6.427		
	Private	50	11.61	7.681	1.948	.052
Personal accomplishment	Government	50	33.39	9.161	1.053	.293
	Private	50	34.43	11.292		

df=98; Significant at 0.05 level

According to table 4, only emotional exhaustion (t=2.308; p=.021) is significantly different among

government and private school teachers. In this component private teachers have higher mean score than government teachers.

Results of other components have no significant different between government and private teachers. In this context, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between private and government pre-primary school teachers with reference to job burnout has been accepted except the component emotional exhaustion,

Table 5

Mean scores of teachers working in private and government pre-primary school on coping strategies and results of independent samples 't' test

Coping strategies	Type of School	N	Mean	S.D	't' value	P Value
Emotion-focused	Government	50	35.04	13.08	4.208	.121
	Private	50	36.93	11.49		
Problem-focused	Government	50	36.20	11.85	2.880	.004
	Private	50	39.40	10.60		

df=98; Significant at 0.05 level

According to table 5, problem-focused coping strategy (t=2.880; p=.004) among government and private teachers had significant difference. Mean scores of private school teachers were higher than government school teachers. In this context, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between private and government pre-primary school teachers with reference to coping strategies, in problem-focused is rejected.

These results are concurrent with the findings of Kabir (2008), Raschke (1985); Abel (1999); Hammen and Mayo (1982), which indicated that the degree of stress which teachers experience is positively related to the degree which he/she perceives as a lack of control over a potentially threatening situation, Such as inability to meet the demands of students and a lack of adequate coping mechanisms.

Thus, hypothesis 3 stating "There is no significant difference between private and government pre-primary school teachers with reference to job burnout and coping mechanisms" has been rejected.

Conclusion:

Data analysis of the study supported the first hypothesis, indicating that job burnout and coping

strategies are significantly correlated. This is consistent with most of the past research.

There were no significant difference between male and female teachers' scores on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and coping strategies among pre-primary school teachers.

Male pre-primary school teachers had higher mean scores than female teachers in depersonalization and lake of personal accomplishment. Emotion-focused and problem-focused were significantly different among male and female teachers.

Two of job burnout components had significant difference between government and private teachers that were emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. But in coping strategies, type of school was not a significant factor. In pre-primary schools, government and private school teachers had significant difference in job burnout and coping   strategies.

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