

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND JOB BURNOUT AMONG UNIVERSITIES PROFESSORS

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ABSTRACT

The study was designed to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and job burnout among universities professors in Karachi. The sample size was of 100 professors from different universities of Karachi. Participant's age was between 25-50 years. The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT Schutte et al., 1998) and Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) were applied. Linear Regression was used to analyse the data. The result indicated a significant negative association between emotional intelligence and job burnout among universities professors.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Job Burnout, Universities, Professors, Karachi

INTRODUCTION

“Emotional Intelligence involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Teaching profession has historically been viewed as the labor of love and kindness. It has many intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for people entering the pedagogical arena. However, teaching is not without its inherent problems. Problems associated with job related stress remain at the top of many teachers list. In recent years, it has become a global concern, considering that about as many as every third of the teachers surveyed in various studies reported that they regarded teaching as highly stressful (Borg, 1990). The amount and degree of stress a teacher experiences may be related to her negative self-perception, negative life experience, low morale, and the struggle to maintain personal values and standards in the classroom (Worrall & May, 1989). According to Milstein and Farkas (1988), the stressors (e.g. students' misbehaviors and discipline problems, students' poor motivation for work, heavy workload and time pressure, role conflict and role ambiguity, conflicting staff relationships in school management and administration, and pressure and criticism from parents and the wider community) are found to be quite common across settings in the teaching profession.

Teachers do not react identically to these common stressors. Specifically some teachers develop psychological symptoms of varying severity, ranging from mild frustration, anxiety, and irritability to emotional exhaustion as well as psychosomatic and depressive symptoms (Kyriacou & Pratt, 1985). In this connection, burnout is seen as a distinct negative manifestation of chronic stress (Maslach, Jackson, Leiter, 1996).

“Burnout is a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a sense of low personal adjustment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity.” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). As Kyriacou (2001) states, “the stress experienced by a particular teacher will be unique to him or her, and will depend on the

precise complex interaction between his or her personalities, values, skills and circumstances.”

Since the introduction of burnout in 1974 by Freudenberger, lots of studies have been conducted to show its importance in different domains. These studies have examined the devastating effect of this syndrome on productivity, work efficacy, health, and quality of life (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). For instance, Huebner and Huberty (1984) have indicated that a burned out person may suffer from physical problems, such as headache, insomnia, fatigue, drug and alcohol abuse; family and marital conflicts. Maslach and Leiter (2005) have also stated that consequences of burnout can be a decline in job performance, e.g. absenteeism, reluctance to go to work, disappointment with performance, and an extension of work problem into the person’s life.

In the educational arena, burnout has been considered by many researchers as a key indicator that needs to be addressed more adequately (e.g. Evers, Tomic, & Brouwers, 2005; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). To this end many studies have been done to detect the sources of burnout within the teaching profession. For example: age, gender, years of experience, level of education (Ozkanal, 2010); teacher’s attitude towards perceived stressors and personality traits (Schaufeli, 2003) have been found to influence teachers burnout.

Teacher burnout has been defined in a variety of ways throughout the history of the phenomenon (Gold, 1984). Although there is yet to be universally accepted definition for the term, researchers have often chosen to describe and operationalize teacher’s burnout in the same manner meant by Maslach and other scholars (e.r., Gold, 1996; Schwab, Jackson & Schuler, 1986). That is, the three dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment are generally used as the teacher’s burnout.

Burnout might have serious negative repercussions not only on the teacher’s wellbeing but also on the teaching learning processes in which he or she is immersed. Prior studies show that burnout negatively influences student’s performance and quality of teaching, and it might also lead to job dissatisfaction, work alienation, and teachers’ leaving the profession (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999). Therefore, teachers should be helped to manage occupational stress to avoid burnout. Apropos of this issue, a question may be raised as to why some teachers succeed in surmounting high levels of occupational stress, while others cannot meet expectations imposed on them and tend to collapse under the burden of everyday stress, the chronic level of which may render burnout. One reason might be teacher emotional intelligence as personal coping resources.

According to Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler, & Mayer (2000), individuals differ as to their abilities to practice effective control over their emotional lives. Such individual differences are now thought of as difference in emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Oginska-Bulik (2005) held that the ability to effectively deal with emotions and emotional information in the workplace assist employees in addressing occupational stress and retaining psychological health.

Emotional intelligence as a concept entered psychological literature from 1990s that has taken from Thorndike and Gardner and is the result of meaning of emotional and intellectual minds and mutual relationships of intellect and feeling. Emotional intelligence in regard to study is a new component that many researchers interest in its application in different matters. The emotional intelligence theory provide a new view about predicting of success factors in life including work activities and efficient coping against stressful factors as the source of psychical disorders , because many personality characteristics such as sympathy ,

self-tendency. Optimism, self-motivating, controlling of stress, self-consciousness and emotion management paves the way for success in different grounds of life. Emotional intelligence is indicator of social and personality emotional dimensions that often in daily activities is to be considered (Sabouri, Moghadam & Hassan, 1372).

According to Mayer and Salovey (1997) held that emotional intelligence consists of specific competencies that orchestrate skills in perceiving emotions, facilitate thought, understand emotions and manage emotions. Emotional Intelligence is viewed as an ability, which can be measured most accurately on a performance test. To be prepared to set out for a campaign against the harmful repercussions of burnout, the teachers are to be equipped with the means to fight against the so-called stressors, and the major assets for teachers seeking to cope with stress is said to be enjoying high level of emotional intelligence. Gohm et. al(2005) point out emotional intelligence is associated with relatively lower reported stress levels. Even then exists individual differences the heartwarming message is that the individuals' emotional intelligence is prone to betterment. (Alavinia, 2009).

As regards to the relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout, there seems to be a paucity of research. Chang (2009) while highlighting the importance of examining the relationship between the emotional aspects of teachers' lives and burnout has suggested more research to be done in this area. The above literature review enlightens the relationship between emotional intelligence and job burnout. The purpose of the present study is to investigate whether there is any significant relationship between job burnout and emotional intelligence among universities professors. And the hypothesis of the study was made to measure relationship:

1. There is a significant negative association between emotional intelligence and job burnout.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Participants of the current study were a total of 100 professors teaching at different universities of Karachi. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 50 years. At first the population was identified to be chosen from different faculties (Faculty of Arts, Science, Medical Science & Business/Commerce) so that the sample should cover professors of different educational background. After the classification, the sample was collected from the selected Universities according to the convenient sampling procedure. English language was used by the researcher and participants in the research.

Materials

The Demographic Information Questionnaire

It included questions regarding gender, age, teaching experience, qualification, department and name of educational institute.

The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test

The SSEIT includes a 33-item self-report using a 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) scale for responses. Each subtest score is graded and then added together to give the total score for the participant. Schutte and his colleges report a reliability rating of 0.90 for their emotional intelligence scale. The EI score, overall, is fairly reliable for adults and adolescents; however, the Utilizing emotions subscale has shown poor reliability (Ciarrochi, Chan & Bajgar, 2001).

Maslach Burnout Inventory

The scale is a 22-item self-report instrument described in the literature as “the most widely used operationalization to burnout” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The MBI consists of three subscales: Emotional Exhaustion (EE) (9 items), Depersonalization (DP) (5 items), and Personal accomplishment (PA) (8 items). Participants respond on a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from “never” (0) to “every day” (6). High scores on the EE and DP subscales and low scores on the PA subscale are characteristics of burnout.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researchers obtained approval from the different universities professors. All the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and the approximate time needed to complete the questionnaires (approximately 15-20 minutes). All professors were assured that their participation would be anonymous, confidential and voluntary. It was also explained that the results would consist of group data and the individual participants and universities would not be identified. This information was presented in an informed consent form that was handed out with survey questionnaire. Professors were encouraged to contact the investigator if any query or concerns arose as a result of their participation in the study. The participants were allowed to keep the questionnaire with them, filled them out and could submit them within 2 days. Finally, in order to answer the research inquiry, the responses obtained from the questionnaires were tabulated and analysed.

Scoring

After the completion of the questionnaire the results were concluded by doing the scoring of the forms according to the scale of the questionnaire. Regression was calculated.

RESULTS

After calculation, the results indicated that emotional intelligence was significantly associated with job burnout.

Table 1. Table 1: Showing regression values of Emotional Intelligence and Job-Burnout among Universities Professors

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	St. Error of Estimation
1	0.65	0.42	0.42	0.69

The results from Table 1, indicate that the regression coefficients (R) of Emotional intelligence and the job burnout is .65 and the adjusted R square is .42 ($P < 0.05$).

DISCUSSIONS

Today's universities operate in a complex scenario comprised with people from different cultures, generations and genders. Pressure is mounting owing the ever increasing complexity in the work culture. Roles and environment that requires a high level of communication and conflict resolution skills witness chronic stress, which finally leads to burnout.

Burnout is precisely the antithesis of the pleasant, engaged, and meaningful life. The purpose of the present study was to examine the negative linear regression between emotional intelligence and job burnout among university professors. Thus, teachers experiencing

burnout are emotionally exhausted and dominated by negative emotions rather than positive emotions, feel detached or alienated rather than engaged in teaching activities, and have a sense of reduced personal accomplishment rather than a sense of meaning.

With regard to emotional intelligence, our hypothesis seems to be confirmed. Result exhibited a significant negative association between emotional intelligence and job burnout. According to Mortiboys (2005), teachers with high EQ can recognize their students' emotions, develop positive attitudes towards them, and feel they are competent to help their learners. Therefore, it is fair to say that they are less susceptible to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. This finding also supports Chang's (2009) claims that teachers need a variety of emotional resources to avoid burnout. As it was shown in this study, almost all constructs of emotional intelligence: stress management, adaptability, general mood, intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies were related to burnout. As it was mentioned earlier, teacher burnout is the result of on-going teacher stress (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Therefore, a professor who knows how to manage and control the stressors will not be in danger of burnout. Of course, a professor with high adaptability can adjust oneself to working situations and apply helpful solutions quite easily. Such a person is not vulnerable to depersonalization or emotional exhaustion. And also, people with high general mood are happy and optimistic; these two features can pave the way for more personal accomplishments in life. Intrapersonal competency includes emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-regard, self-actualization and independence (Bar-On, 1997). And, interpersonal competency is related to empathy and social responsibility. All these features can help professors to raise their feelings of personal accomplishment, making them less susceptible to depersonalization or emotional exhaustion.

Those who score high on emotional intelligence skills are more likely to cope effectively with environmental demands and pressures connected to occupational stress and health outcomes than those who enjoy less EI (Mendez, 2002). Emotional intelligent individuals can cope better with life's challenges and control their emotions more efficiently (Taylor, 2001).

Researchers have become highly interested in the problem of burnout among teachers (Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998). Most of the research carried out in European and North American Countries indicating 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) 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).

Teaching is one of the most stressful occupations (Johnson et al., 2005; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1977). Frequently identified sources of stress and decreased job satisfaction include the following:

- a. Inadequate salary and perceived low status of the profession (Carlson & Thompson, 1995; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978)
- b. Role conflict and ambiguity (Dunham, 1992)
- c. Time pressure (Chan, 1998)
- d. Student misbehavior (Turk, Meeks, & Turk, 1982)
- e. Relationships with supervisors (Litt & Turk, 1985)
- f. Large class size (Burke & Greenglass, 1994).

Teachers also experience intense, emotion-laden interactions on a daily basis and have a great number of emotional demands compared to most other professionals (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). The stress and emotional demands associated with the teaching profession can lead to emotional and physical exhaustion, cynical attitudes about teaching, reduced feelings of personal accomplishment, and lower job satisfaction (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999). Studies that connected teacher burnout with emotional intelligence (Chan, 2006) and with successful intelligence or triarchic abilities (Chan, 2007) exemplified this emphasis. With a similar view, Kelchtermans and Strittmatter (1999), for example, have commented that the symptoms of burnout would be reduced when teachers experience professional growth, self-efficacy, and perceived success in their career progression. Indeed, this shift of emphasis is consistent with the reasoning that it is more productive to focus on job engagement to promote vigor, involvement, and self-efficacy rather than on burnout to reduce emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and the lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach, 2003)

Emotional intelligence helps the teachers to learn more about their students, which enables them to be more sensitive to their needs. The teachers with high emotional intelligence may understand their students better, which is what they want and what they prefer. They can also notice the difficulties of their students and guide them to transcend their difficulties. Ghanizadeh Moafian (2009) pointed out that teachers with high emotional intelligence were more successful in teaching their students.

The degree to which teachers emotionally respond to stressful events and how satisfied they are as a consequence, as well as how they cope with stress, has a strong influence on the level of burnout they experience. The level of support that the teachers receive from family and colleagues was also shown to be important in dealing with stressful situations (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005).

Judgments made by teachers regarding the behavior of their students and other teaching tasks also contributed to the experiencing of unpleasant emotions, which in turn led to burnout (Chang, 2009).

In this research results showed that emotional intelligence is very important factor for prediction of teachers' psychological well-being, and also the correlation of the emotional intelligence and burnout is significant. Then this personality variable should be considered in the selection of teaching staff.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, one can conclude that the ability to effectively deal with emotions and emotional information in the universities assists professors in controlling burnout. Furthermore, the belief one has about the cause of his fortune or misfortune (locus of control) is a major factor predicting burnout among professors.

The implication is that if professors are given adequate training and exposed to enabling environment to develop high level of emotional intelligence burnout would be reduced if not completely eliminated among them. In order to ameliorate the problem of job burnout among teachers and to alleviate their psychological pressures the Ministries of Education in collaboration with each university should have a well-planned training programme. Social and emotional learning should be introduced to professors in universities.

Ministries of Education on their part should incorporate selection procedures that involve the use of psychological tests to select individuals with high level of emotional intelligence and psychological well-being.

Finally, conscious efforts should be made to integrate emotional intelligence into the seminars organised for professors.

Limitations

This research has certain limitations due to which its result cannot be generalized.

1. If sample size would be larger than generalization of result would be better.
2. More richness in result can be added if sample is further categorise into may be age or gender.
3. Also time of the study can play an important indicator as for example beginning of the semester, mid-semester or the end of the semester as teaching burden varies accordingly and thus the stress level.
4. The issue requires further investigation such as longitudinal studies are needed to evaluate the possibility of a causal relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout.
5. An important aspect as personality attributes, traits or characteristics may also be taken into consideration. These variables might have some reflection with burnout.

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