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PREDICTORS OF BURNOUT AND MENTAL HEALTH IN PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY OF LATVIAN TEACHERS

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Abstract

The issue of burnout and mental health of teachers is urgent in Latvia and requires attention at the level of education institutions and national programmes. In the process of burnout, teachers experience constant irritability, anxiety, decreased ability to focus, various psychosomatic disorders caused by performing professional duties under constant stress; interest towards work and the need for communication is decreased, and social isolation is observed. Predictors of burnout and mental health are currently little studied in Latvia. Since, during their professional activity, a teacher is using significant mental and personal resources, it was necessary to determine the prognostic effect of burnout and mental health. 100 teachers from general education schools in Latvia took part in the study. The Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (MBI-ES) and the Jagdish & Srivastava Mental Health Inventory (MHI) were used. It was found that significant predictors of professional burnout are Group-Oriented Attitude and Integration of Personality. The professional burnout dimensions Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalisation and reduced Personal Accomplishment have the most effect on mental health. The main predictors that promote a decrease of professional burnout in teachers are Group-oriented Attitude and Integration of Personality; whereas Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and lack of Personal Accomplishment have a negative effect on mental health.

Keywords: Burnout, mental health, predictors, teachers.

1. Introduction

The growing prevalence of professional burnout and mental health disorders among teachers in Latvia is concerning. Such disorders are related to the growing requirements for teaching quality, growing amount of professional duties, decrease in the number of schools, unstable social protection and low appreciation of the teachers' work by society (Dombrovskis, Guseva, & Murasovs, 2011). Professional burnout and mental health are interrelated and affect each other. Studies devoted to mental health of teachers have shown a correlation between mental health disorders and burnout (Borrelli, Benevene, Fiorilli, D'Amelio, & Pozzi, 2014; Rey, Extremera, & Pena, 2016).

Burnout manifests as a combination of chronic exhaustion and negative attitude to work, which has a negative effect on mental health and professional performance. In the burnout process, teachers experience chronic fatigue and distance themselves emotionally and cognitively from their direct responsibilities (Bakkera & Costa, 2014, p. 117).

According to American Psychological Association (VandenBos, 2015), burnout is physical, emotional, or mental exhaustion, which is accompanied by a decrease in motivation and performance, as well as a negative attitude towards oneself and others. Negative attitude towards oneself and others leads to lack of self-cconfidence and the feeling of incompetence in the performance of their professional duties.

Burnout can be caused by disturbances in the cooperation process with colleagues, as well as in the communication process with students and their parents. This can lead to inadequate reactions to business and personal relationships (Dombrovskis, Guseva, & Capulis, 2018). One of the burnout factors is psychological and professional pressure, which affects a teacher's motivation (Hoffman, Palladino, & Barnett, 2007, p. 19). The appearance of different psychosomatic symptoms of burnout leads to the loss of self-confidence, the feeling of anxiety and internal tension (Atiyat, 2017, p. 160-161).

Burnout can be characterised as a state of exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Emotional exhaustion is an important indicator of a teacher's burnout, which can lead to depersonalisation and reduction of personal accomplishment (Steiner, 2017).

An important predictor for overcoming burnout in teachers is their mental health. The World Health Organization (2014) defines mental health as a state of wellbeing in which individuals successfully cope with everyday stress. Stressful situations which cause negative emotional reactions and increase the teacher's risk for mental health decline can be compared to the work of medical staff (Bauer et al., 2007; Mérida-López, Extremera, & Rey, 2017, p. 540-541).

Burnout is a serious threat to teachers' mental health (Lauth-Lebens & Lauth, 2016, p. 2) and causes psychosomatic disorders, which affect the level of exhaustion in professional activity (Bauer et al., 2006). Burnout correlates with negative mood and stress of the teacher throughout the working day (Moya-Albiol, Serrano, & Salvador, 2010), which leads to the disturbance of their mental health (Seibt, Spitzer, Druschke, Scheuch, & Hinz, 2013, p.857).

In the burnout process, teachers experience constant irritability, anxiety, decreased ability to focus, memory impairment, insomnia due to mechanical performance of professional duties; interest towards work and the need for communication is decreased; constant fatigue in the mornings, apathy, social

isolation, and indifference to everything is observed (Avanzi et al., 2018; Capone & Petrillo, 2016; Kim, 2016).

The special nature of professional burnout and mental health of teachers in Latvia needs to be studied, which is why it is important to define the predictors of professional burnout and mental health and their possible manifestations in a teacher's professional activity.

2. Problem Statement

Until now, predictors of burnout and mental health of teachers in Latvia have been studied fragmentarily; whereas the teacher's profession requires significant professional and personal resources. This is why the present research is directed at defining the predictors of burnout and mental health for sustainable development of a teacher's personality.

3. Research Questions

Is there a correlation between professional burnout and mental health of teachers in Latvia? What are the significant predictors of burnout and mental health in teachers?

4. Purpose of the Study

To study the predictors of professional burnout and mental health in Latvian teachers.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Participants

A total of 100 teachers from urban and rural general education schools in Latvia participated in the study. Their age ranged from 25 to 64 years (Mdn = 43 years); 59 were female, and 41 were male. The teachers' professional experience ranged from 3 to 40 years. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous.

5.2. Methods

Burnout was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES; Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1996) with 22 items presented in the form of statements about personal feelings or attitudes. The items were divided into three burnout dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalisation (DP), and reduced Personal Accomplishment (PA). Emotional exhaustion assesses the feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by work; depersonalisation assesses the impersonal and unfeeling response towards students, and personal accomplishment measures the feelings of competence and achievement in professional activity. Participants score items on a 7-point Likert scale from "never" to "every day". Reliability of the inventory was measured using Cronbach's alpha, which was .94 for EE, .87 for DP, and .81 for PA. The overall reliability coefficient was 0.90.

Mental health was measured using the Mental Health Inventory (MHI; Jagdish & Srivastava, 1996) with 56 items to assess the six dimensions of the mental health: Positive Self-Evaluation (PSE),

Perception of Reality (PR), Integration of Personality (IP), Autonomy (AU), Group-Oriented Attitude (GOA), and Environmental Mastery (EM). Positive self-evaluation includes self-confidence, self-acceptance, self-identification, and realisation of one's potential capabilities. Perception of reality is related to perception free from need distortion, a lack of excessive fantasy and a broad outlook. Integration of personality indicates the balance of mental resources in the individual and includes the ability to understand other people's emotions and to concentrate at work, as well as interest in various activities. Autonomy includes a stable set of internal standards for one's actions, dependence of one's own development on one's own potentialities rather than dependence on other people. Group-oriented attitude is associated with the ability to get along and to work with others, and the ability to find recreation. Environmental mastery includes efficiency in meeting situational requirements, the ability to work and to take responsibility and capacity for adjustment. The items were scored on a 4-point Likert scale from "never" to "always". Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients were .79 for PSE, .76 for PR, .81 for IP, .89 for AU, .82 for GOA, .80 for EM. The overall coefficient was 0.92. Procedure

5.3. Procedure

The teachers participated in the study voluntarily; confidentiality was strictly observed. The teachers were completing the surveys in groups; the research aim was revealed before the beginning of the study. To find out which mental health factors predict professional burnout and which burnout factors are predictors of mental health, a multiple regression analysis was performed. All the mental health factors were tested as possible predictors for burnout in teachers, and the prognostic values of burnout factors were tested to check their effect on mental health.

6. Findings

The study of the relationship between burnout and mental health has shown that burnout negatively correlates with all the mental health factors at a high level of significance $p < .01$. The strongest negative correlation was found between burnout and Group-Oriented Attitude ($r_s = -.67$, $p < .01$), Integration of Personality ($r_s = -.59$, $p < .01$), and Environmental Mastery ($r_s = -.56$, $p < .01$). Whereas the relationship between mental health and burnout factors has shown the significant role of Emotional Exhaustion ($r_s = -.71$, $p < .01$), Depersonalization ($r_s = -.70$, $p < .01$), and reduction of Personal Accomplishment ($r_s = -.64$, $p < .01$) in the increase/decrease of mental health scores with the decrease/increase of burnout scores. To determine burnout and mental health predictors, a multiple regression analysis was performed.

Burnout – Mental Health

To determine which independent *Mental Health* variables (PSE, PR, IP, AU, GOA, EM) have the biggest impact in the prediction of the dependent variable *Burnout*, the 'Enter' method was used. Independent variables are indicators of burnout in teachers. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 01. Predictors of teachers' burnout

Variables	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients β	t	p
	B	Standard Error			
(Constant)	151.42	14.43		10.52	.00
Positive self-evaluation	-.17	.55	-.05	-.32	.71
Perception of reality	.05	.61	.02	.09	.83
Integration of personality	-.94	.42	-.34	-2.32	.03
Autonomy	.61	.72	.08	.86	.34
Group-oriented attitude	-1.69	.54	-.41	-3.29	.01
Environmental mastery	-.26	.53	-.09	-.54	.51

* Dependent variable: *Burnout*

Table 1 shows that two negative predictors of burnout have been found. The most significant predictor is Group-Oriented Attitude GOA (β= -.41, p< .01). The next significant predictor is Integration of Personality IP (β= -.34, p< .03). The negative sign by standardised coefficient β indicates a decrease in burnout with the increase in Group-Oriented Attitude and Integration of Personality. The impact of the other variables on burnout is not significant.

R-square=.47 shows that 47% of burnout variability is determined by the effect of mental health factors. Adjusted R-square= .41. Standard error of estimate is 10.03. ANOVA result shows that the model is significant: $F_{(6.81)}$= 12.85; p< .001. The prognostic factors discovered agree with the correlation analysis results.

Based on these results, we can conclude that the ability to get along with others, work in a team, and to recover after emotional and physical load at work decreases the burnout process and promotes high personal and professional accomplishment. Emotional resilience of teachers and creating supportive relationships with others promotes the overcoming of burnout, effective management of conflict situations, and effective cooperation with learners. The efficiency of class management can be viewed as a significant predictor of teacher burnout. Social support for teachers offsets the effect on the burnout process (Ozdemir, 2007, p. 755). Mental health is also a general predictor of burnout (Zhang et al., 2014, p. 128).

Mental Health – Burnout

To determine which independent *Burnout* variables (EE, DE, PA) have the biggest impact in the prediction of mental health, the 'Enter' method was used. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 02. Predictors of teachers' mental health

Variables	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients β	t	p
	B	Standard Error			
(Constant)	153.75	10.57		14.33	.00
Emotional exhaustion	-.49	.13	-.33	-2.67	.01
Depersonalisation	-.81	.21	-.30	-2.71	.01
Reduced personal accomplishment	-.85	.24	-.27	-3.19	.01

* Dependent variable: *Mental Health*

Table 2 shows that all three burnout factors are significant predictors of mental health. The most significant predictors are Emotional Exhaustion EE (β= -.33, p< .01) and Depersonalization DP (β= -.30, p= .01). The next predictor is reduced Personal Accomplishment PA (β= -.27, p< .01). The negative sign by standardised coefficient β indicates a decrease in mental health scores with the increase of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduction of personal accomplishment.

R-square= .58 shows that 58% of mental health variability is determined by the effect of burnout factors. Adjusted R-square= .56. Standard error of estimate is 10.89. ANOVA result shows that the model is significant: $F(3,89)=44.56$; p<.001. The predictors found fully agree with the correlation analysis results.

The results obtained indicate a decline in mental health with the increase of emotional tension, personal high expectations and requirements to oneself. Professional stress, personal and professional difficulties that arise at work from time to time require teachers to adapt to the changing working conditions, which causes psychological and emotional stress and promotes a decline in mental health. Research results show that the feeling of competence, skills for overcoming obstacles, ability to ask for help, to take care of oneself and create a favourable environment and supportive relationships with colleagues increase emotional resilience of teachers and decrease burnout (Arnup & Bowles, 2016, p. 239). Teachers with mental health problems tend to be fatigued, tired, and exhausted (Seibt et al., 2013, p. 866). Burnout is a predictor of mental health disorders. It is known that teachers tend to accumulate negative emotions, which directly affects their mental health (Jiang, Du, & Dong, 2017, p. 3389).

7. Conclusion

The results of the present study show that mental health can have a significant negative prognostic effect on professional burnout. Whereas burnout not only affects mental health of teachers and depletes their internal resources, but also affects work performance, decreases job satisfaction and professional loyalty.

Taking into account the public importance of the teacher's profession, mental health and burnout in teachers require attention at the level of education institutions as well as national programmes. This is why a prevention programme for mental health and burnout in teachers is required. The data presented in the present study can be used for improving mental health and preventing burnout in teachers.

For now, there is no definite answer to the questions about the main catalyst for burnout and the main factor for mental health disorders. However, the assessment of mental health of teachers and early intervention are important for decreasing burnout and improving their mental health.

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