Preventive coping an important predictor of Personal accomplishments in special education in Albania, according to Burnout Perspective

Senada Duli

Ph.D Candidate, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana, Albania nada_duli@hotmail.com

Abstract

Personal acomplishements refer to evaluate one's work positively. Proactive coping is considered those cognitive and behavioral efforts made to master and tolerate or reduce internal and external demands and conflicts among them. Special education teachers are more prone to experience burnout due to the way the perceive job demands and lack of personal resources to use coping strategies. The aim of this study is to investigate correlations between personal acomplishements and proactive coping categories and to predict which of these correlated variables best predict personal acomplishements as an important construct of burnout. Results showed significant correlations among personal acomplishements, preventing coping and emotional support seeking. Multiple regression analysis was used to predict which variable of proactive coping categories best predict personal acomplishements. Preventive coping was the only variable of proactive coping to predict personal acomplishements and this prediction is statistically significant

Keywords: burnout, proactive coping, preventive coping, personal acomplishements, special education

Introduction

There are many factors influencing teacher burnout. Lack of principals support, overload at work , lack of support resources and too many responsabilities at one time are the major factors increasing the possibility to put the special education teachers at risk of burnout. Teacher experience burnout when the their perceived stress overcomes their resources to cope with in an adequate way leading to exhaustion, cynism and low of personal acomplishements, Williams, Joy, Dikes & Catherine (2015). According to Zarafshan, Hadi, Mohammadi, Reza.A., Ahmadi, Fatemeh, Arsalani, & Akram. (2013), special education teachers experience depression, psychological dysfuntions and role conflict. An important factor of professional burnout is the direct contact with students with special needs and lack of job success. Brunsting, et al., (2014), states that children of exhausted teachers struggle socially and emotionally, so they achieve less goals in individualized education plan, giving a negative impact on their school performance. Sometimes children including in special education system, are more stressed and experience more emotional problems due to the way how the teachers perceive their role, Major, E. A. (2012). A 1981 review by Maslach and Jackson, was found that proffessional burnout is a process accompanied by three group of symptoms:

Proffessional burnout is syndrom associated with a group symptoms such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal acomplishements. The main definition of emotional exhaustion as the main symptom of burnout is the reduced energy level or extreme fatigue. Job stress begins with emotional exhaustion which is the first reaction accompanied life events changes. Depersonalization is associated with negative emotions toward students or collegues. They may feel guilty regarding

their work performance. Reduced self efficacy, is defined as negative self evaluation or minimizing personal acomplishements. Its a self evaluation process, that people use during their work. (as cited in Williams, et al., 2015, pp. 337-339). Coping strategies as Lazarus and Folkman explained, are those cognitive and behavioral efforts, developed for managing external and internal demands judged as exceeding or superpassing the individual own's resources.(as cited in Plana, A., et al, 2003, p.47). These researchers, define proactive coping as those cognitive and behavioral efforts made to master and tolerate or reduce internal and external demands and conflicts among them. Some people accumulate and use resources to prepare themselves for obstacles, so stressors are seen as challenges and they are more motivated to succeed. (as cited in Mackonienė, N. Norvilė, 2012, p. 201). Coping is also defined as an ongoing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage psychological stress to protect psychological wellbeing, Ashkzari, M. K., 2015, (p.114)**.**   In the 1988 Leiter and Maslach model, was suggested that first develop feelings of emotional exhaustion, secondly depersonalization, and thirdly low personal acomplishements. Depersonalization is only a consequence of emotional exhaustion and low feelings of personal acomplishements. Coping strategies emerge from feelings of emotional exhaustion and low personal acomplishements. According to the model of these authors, coping strategies influence emotional exhaustion and personal acomplishements through a reciprocal relationship between these two dimensions. (as cited in Plana, A., et al, 2003, p. 48). Schwarzer, R., & Taubert, S. (2002) stress that:

Proactive people do not consider situations as harmful, loss or threat. They consider risks or demands as resources to help them toward promotion and personal growth. They see challengies not demands , they see goals attainement not risks. Due to this they increase their quality of functioning (p. 9). According to Schaufeli, et al (1999), Maslach and Jackson showed a three factor structure for the MBI: Maslach Burnout Inventory has 22 items organized in three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal acomplishements. A high degree of burnout is reflected in high scores of the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and in low scores on Personal acomplishement subscale. Based on the research findings of Leiter and Maslach (1988), Schaufeli (1993), proposed a relationship among MBI subscales such that emotional exhaustion is considered as a response to external demands. Individuals distance themselves from others experiencing depersonalization as an reaction of high levels of emotional exhaustion feelings. These feelings of emotional exhaustion have an negative impact on their relationships, minimizing the sense of personal acomplishements. They lose the meaning of their work. (pp. 244-246) In different studies there are evidence about the relationship between exhaustion and depersonalization but have recast the relationship between personal acomplishements and other two component of burnout. According to Schauffeli, et al., (1993), they consider depersonalisation as a function of emotional exhaustion and as a mediate factor between environmental conditions and depersonalization. According to their model, work demands as workload, personal conflict, etc, increase exhaustion which in turns increases depersonalization. Personal acomplishement, as an important construct of burnout develops in parallel with the emotional exhaustion component and they arises as reactions to different aspects to work environments.(pp. 244-246) According to this point of view there is a mild relationship between emotional exhaustion and personal acomplishements and this relationship is increased by the influence of aspects of the work

environments, referring to workload, conflicts and and lack of support, important for professional wellbeing and effective professional functioning. Ashkzari, et al., 2015, suggested that proactive coping is an effective way to deal with stress and work overload to teachers, influencing their self development. (p. 114).

The pupose of this study

This study is only a part of the final phase of the study. The final results will be published in further editions. There were found significant correlations among variables of emotional exhaustion and proactive coping subscales. The aim of this study is to find out levels of professional burnout and proactive coping. A second aim is to investigate significant correlations between personal acomplishements, depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, and which of the proactive coping categories best predicts personal acomplishements.

Research question 1:

Are there significant correlations between personal acomplishements and proactive coping variables?

Research question 2:

Which of the proactive coping variables best predicts personal acomplishements?

1.1 Research Methods

1.1.1 Sample

 A total number of 60 special education teachers were participating in this study, only females. The sample was selected from special education in Tirana, Shkodra and Lezha. This is a part of the final study that will include tha main districts of Albania where special education schools are situated. The way of cluster selection is with convenience. Subjects variate from 5 up to 30 years of works experience.

1.1.2 Instruments

Maslach Burnout Inventory

The items for the Maslach Burnout Inventory were designed to measure hypothesized aspects of the burnout syndrome. The scale is labeled at each point and ranges from 1(a few times a year or less), to 6 (every day). A zero value is given if the respondent has never experienced the feeling or the attitude described (Maslach, Ch & Jackson, S. E, 1981). Items are divided in three subscales; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal acomplishements.

Reliability analysis coefficents are calculated for a sample of 20 subjects. Internal consistency is evaluated by Cronbach Coefficient's alpha. The realibility coefficients for the subscales were: for emotional exhaustion 0.89, for depersonalization 0.90 and for personal acomplishements 0.85.

Proactive Coping Inventory

The Proactive Coping Inventory consists in seven scales and 55 items; one scale with 14 items measures exclusively proactive coping; the other six scales focuses on positive facets of coping that

strengthen coping inçitiative. The other six subscales are reflective coping, strategic planning, preventive coping, instrumental support seeking, emotional support seeking and avoidance coping. Answer scoring ranges from 1 (not at all true), 2 (barely true), 3 (somewhat true), to 4 (completely true). Three items of the proactive coping subscale have reverse scoring, "I like challengies and beating the odds", "I turn obstacles into positive experiences", and "When I have a problem, I usually see my self in a no win situation" (Greenglass, E., Schwarzer, R., Jakubiec, D., Fiksembaum, L &Taubert, S, 1999). It was used alpha Cronbach coefficient for the reliability analysis. The reliability coefficients for Proactive Coping subscales in total is: 0.7.

1. Analysis Results

Results analysis of this quantitative research was conducted by using SPSS version 20. Descriptive analysis was used to calculate frequencies, means and standart deviation. The strength and the direction of the correlations between variables was determined using Pearson correlation.

The sample consists for 60 special education teachers, females. Ages ranked from 26 to 42. Subjects years of works experience in that position ranked between 5to 30 years of work.

The mean scores of the exhaustion is 15. This result show a low level of burnout. Depersonalization has a mean score of 2.9. Subjects report low levels of personalization.

Personal acomplishements have a mean score of 40. They report high levels of personal acomplishements, being included in the low category of burnout.

Results show a mean score of 47 for proactive coping subscale.

In reflective coping subscale the mean is 36. In strategic palnning respondents have a mean score of 13.9. Preventing coping subscale has a mean score of 30. Results show in instrumental seeking subscales a mean score of 24. 12 is the mean score for emotional seeking subscale. And 6 is the mean score for avoidance coping subscale.

1.1 Correlations among variables

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	Personal acomplishements	1									
2.	Depersonalization	-.985**	1								
3.	Emotional exhaustion	-.897**	.917**	1							
4.	Proactive coping	.298	-.287	-.143	1						
5.	Reflective coping	.094	-.159	-.048	.485*	1					
6.	Strategic planning	.445	-.529*	-.553*	.375	.567**	1				
7.	Preventing planning	.656**	-.683**	-.654**	.302	.609**	.640**	1			
8.	Instrumental support	-.179	.155	.297	.514*	.542*	.439	-.043	1		
9.	Emotional support	.628**	-.624**	-.696**	.011	.164	.265	.464*	-.215	1	
10.	Avoidance coping	-.040	.173	.058	-.476*	-.728**	-.449*	-.278	-631**	-.121	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1

Tables show significant negative correlations between emotional exhaustion and strategic planning, preventive planning and emotional support. Depersonalization also correlates negatively with strategic planning, preventive coping, and emotional support. There is a negative correlation

between depersonalization and proactive coping in general. High scores of depersonalization received low scores in variables of strategic planning, preventive planning and emotional support.

Personal acomplishements as the third dimension of professional burnout was examined in correlation with burnout categories and proactive coping variables. Results show a strong negative correlation between personal acomplishements and depersonalization and emotional exhaustion respectively, -.985 and -.897. There is a strong positive correlation with preventive coping .656 and emotional support seeking .628. Personal acomplishements correlates negatively with burnout in total -.803 but results show no correlation with proactive coping scale in total. These correlations are significant at 0.01 level.

Partial correlation was also executed maintaining in control years of work experience. Results show no significant correlations between variables when control for years of work experience.

There is also no significant correlation between Proactive Coping and Burnout in total using years of experience s a control variable.

Prediction of the variables

Predictor variables	Beta	t	P	Adj R^2	Total variance
Personal acomplishement					
1.Preventive coping	.465	2.248	.043	.497	49.7
2.Emotional support seeking	.412	1.992	.068	.497	49.7

Table 2

It was used multiple linear regression analysis to predict wich of the variables explain better personal acomplishements (method enter was used). Personal acomplishements is correlated with preventive coping and emotional support seeking. Adj. R^2=49.7. 49.7 % of the total variance is explained by these two variables. These results are statistically significant at 0.05 level, p<0.05. Table 2 shows that only preventive planning best predicts personal acomplishement and this prediction is statistically significant. For preventing planning β= .465 , t= 2.248, p<0.05. for emotional support seeking β=.412, t=1.992, p>0.05. the second predictor is emotional support seeking, but this prediction is not statistically significant, p>0.05. Higher levels of personal acomplishements are linked to preventive coping. The best predictor for personal acomplishements is preventive coping for a total of 49.7% of the variance.

2. Discussion

The first aim of this study was to find out significant correlation between personal acomplishements and proactive coping subscales. Personal acomplishements best correlate with preventive coping and emotional support seeking. Special education teachers were scoring high in personal acomplishements because of their ability to use preventive coping strategies at their work. They feel fullfield at their work because of the ability to prevent stressful situations before stress occurs. Personal acomplishements also correlated positively with emotional support seeking. Special

education teachers who seek continuously emotional support are less prone to experience emotional exhaustion and more alike to feel attainement of personal and professional goals.

Also there were found significant correlations between burnout categories and years of experience at work. It was found a strong positive correlation between years of experience and emotional exhaustion. Increasing years of experience at work subjects reported more emotional exhaustion. These correlations may be explained by increasing the sense of responsibility during years, acumulutating more stress, using less coping strategies during their work and experience feelings of tiredness and facing every day for years almost the same problems and difficulties.

Another aim of this study was to investigate which of the proactive coping variables correlated with personal acomplishements, best predicts personal acomplieshements. Multiple regression analysis show that only preventive coping and emotional support seeking best predict personal acomplishements, but only preventive coping is statistically significant for this prediction. Using preventive strategies at their work is a good prediction to experience high levels of personal acopmplishements. This is meaningful referring to how special education teachers cope with stressful situations. If they score high in personal acomplishements, they do not experience high levels of emotional exhaustion because results show that emotional exhaustion correlates negatively with personal acomplishements. So, they do not feel exhausted during their work due to the preventive coping strategies they use before stressful situations occur. Preventive coping seems to be a good predictor of goals achievement increasing the sense of personal acomplishements.

This is one of the first efforts to study professional burnout and proactive coping to special education teachers in Albania. There are various limitations. This study is only a part of the general research study applied in all special education schools in Albania. Data collected are not yet totally representative, but they are an important baseline to explain different concerns regarding burnout and proactive coping issues. As is well explained in various studies burnout syndrome inventory is used only for research studies purposes, and it is not a clinical evaluation.

Conclusion

There were found significant correlations between burnout subscales and proactive coping subscales. Partial correlation didn't show significant correlations between burnout subscales and proactive coping subscales maintaining in control years of work experience. Results show significant negative correlations among personal acomplishements, depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. Personal acomplishements correlated positively with preventive coping and emotional support seeking.

Multiple regression analysis was executed to investigate which of the proactive coping variables predict personal acomplishements. Results showed that only preventive coping predicts personal acopmlishements and this prediction is statistically significant at $p<0.05$ level.

REFERENCES

1. Brunsting, N.C., Streckovic, M., & Lane. K. L. (2014). *Special Education Teacher Burnout: A Synthesis of Research from 1979 to 2013.* Journal of Education & treatment of children, 37. file:///C:/Users/Senada/Downloads/2014_Brunsting%20Sreckovic%20Lane_ETC.pdf

2. Greenglass, E., Schwarzer, R., Jakubiec, D., Fiksembaum, L & Taubert, S. 1999, *The Proactive Coping Inventory (PCI): A Multidimensional Research Instrument.* (Online), Avaliable: http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/health/poland.htm (July 12-14, 1999).

3. Mackoniene, R., & Norvile, N. (2012). *Burnout, Job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and proactive coping among Lithuanian school psychologists*, TILTAI, 3, 199-210. http://journals.ku.lt/index.php/tiltai/article/view/425/396

4. Major, A.E (2012). *Job Design for Special Education Teachers, Current issues in education*, 15, 1-9. http://cie.asu.edu/ojs/index.php/cieatasu/article/viewFile/900/333.

5. Maslach, Ch. & Jackson, S. E. (1981). *The measurement of experienced burnout*. Journal of Occupational Behaviour, 2, 99-113. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/job.4030020205/epdf

6. Maslach, Ch., Schaufeli, W. B, & Leiter. M.P. (2008). *Job burnout*, Carrier development international, 14, 204-220. http://www.burnout.nl/docs/35-jaar-burnout-wetenschap-research-onderzoek-1973-2008.pdf.

7. Plana, A. B., Fabregat, A. A., & Gassio, J.B. (2003). *Burnout syndrome and coping strategies: A structural relations model*, Psychology in Spain, 7, 46-55. http://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/mjss/article/viewFile/7316/7005

8. Schaufeli, W.B., Maslach, Ch., & Marek, T. (1993). *Professional burnout , recents development in theory and research.* Philadelphia, USA: Tylor & Francis.

9. Schwarzer, R., & Taubert, S. (2002). *Tenacious goal pursuits and striving toward personal growth: Proactive coping.* In E. Freudenberg (Ed.), Beyond coping: Meeting goals, visions and challenges, 19-35. http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~health/materials/s_taubert_proactive.pdf

10. Williams, Joy, Dikes, & Catherine. (2015). *The Implications of Demographic Variables as Related to Burnout among a Sample of Special Education Teachers*, The new England Publishing Company, 135, 337-345. https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-406162566/the-implications-of-demographic-variables-as-related.

11. Zarafshan, Hadi, Mohammadi, Reza.A., Ahmadi, Fatemeh, Arsalani, & Akram. (2013). *Job Burnout among Iranian Elementary School Teachers of Students with Autism: A Comparative Study,* Iranian Journal of Psychiatry, 8, 20-27. http://ijps.tums.ac.ir/index.php/ijps/article/view/477/343