

Personality and Occupational Stress Differentials of Female School Teachers in Haryana

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The present study is an attempt to understand personality and occupational stress differentials of high school female teachers in Haryana. For this, 361 high school female teachers were tested with Maslach Burnout Inventory. The subjects were categorized into high and low burnout groups on the basis of test scores and that 128 subjects scored below P_{30} and 117 subjects scored above P_{70} , thus constituted low and high burnout groups, respectively. Selected subjects were further tested with EPQ-R, Jenkins' Activity Survey and occupational stress index. The results differentiated the two groups. The high burnout group scored significantly high on psychoticism, neuroticism, lie scale, type-A behaviour, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization but low on extraversion, occupational stress and personal accomplishment. The low burnout group scored low on psychoticism, neuroticism, lie scale, type-A behaviour and all the three dimensions of burnout viz. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment, but high on extraversion and occupational stress.

Keywords: Occupational Stress, Type-A behaviour, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, Personal Accomplishment.

Since the introduction of construct of burnout by Freudenberger (1974), there has been much confusion about its conceptualization. But today, burnout is being more clearly defined than ever before and there is hardly confusion about its conceptualization. Pines and Aronson (1988) considered burnout as a syndrome of mental, physical and emotional exhaustion due to long term involvement in emotionally demanding situations. Rosenberg and Pace (2006) considered it a syndrome consisting of physical and emotional exhaustion resulting from negative self-concept, negative job attitudes, and loss of concern for clients, but the most commonly used definition, however, is the one propounded by Maslach and Jackson (1981), wherein burnout is a syndrome encompassing emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion

describes the feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work; depersonalization describes an unfeeling and impersonal response towards recipients of one's care and service, and personal accomplishment describes feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people (Maslach & Jackson, 1986).

Burnout has also been described in terms of various models. Multidimensional models (Maslach and Jackson, 1982) have emphasized the multidimensionality of construct. Process models (Cherniss, 1980, Etzion, 1987) have proposed the gradual development of burnout and the impact of unmet expectations and dysfunctional coping strategies. Stage models (Golembiewski, Boudeau, Munzenrider & Luo, 1996; Van Dierendonk, Schaufeli & Bunk, 2001a, 2001b) have explained the sequentiality of three

dimensions. Well-being model (Warr, 1987, 1990) has explained personal accomplishment in terms of competency domain and two other dimensions in affective domain.

Although the multidimensionality of the burnout is widely acknowledged but sometimes it is more convenient to treat burnout as unidimensional variable. Thus, in this regard two important issues i.e. multidimensionality v/s unidimensionality, and dichotomous v/s continuous have come into existence. Multidimensionality of the burnout does not allow for combining the three dimensions into unidimensional variable because one dimension i.e. reduced personal accomplishment is entirely independent from other two dimensions. But there are theoretical and practical reasons to consider burnout as a single construct. For practical reasons, unidimensional approach can be useful in simplifying the results, and to get the overall effect of burnout. Once opted for unidimensional approach, it is important to decide between dichotomous or continuous conceptualization. For the measurement purpose we should treat it as dichotomous variable, but for the purpose of comparison we should treat it as continuous variable. Here, in this study high and low burnout groups have been created on the basis of combined scores of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization by following the recommendations of Golembiewski, Boudeau, Munzenrider and Luo, (1996); Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998); Brenninkmeijer and Van Yperen (1999).

Maslach and Jackson (1981) originally assumed that burnout occurred mainly among human service professionals but the concept of burnout is currently not restricted to the human service sector only. Various occupational environments in which employees currently function demand more of them than did any previous period. Teaching is no exception. Teaching has been

identified as a particular stressful occupation (Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Hodge, Jupp & Taylor, 1994; Rhyal & Singh, 1996; Griva & Jockes, 2003; Kittel & Leynen, 2003). Negative aspects of the job such as disciplinary problems, students' apathy, overcrowded classrooms, involuntary transfer, inadequate salaries, and lack of administrative support are among the stressors that confront teachers (Evers, Tomic & Brouwers, 2005; Kokkinos, Panayiotou & Dazoglou, 2005). As a result of these stressful aspects of teaching, burnout among teachers occurs, expressed in physical (e.g. headaches, peptic ulcers, hypertension, diabetes), psychological (depression, anger, anxiety), and behavioural (e.g. deterioration in work performance, absenteeism) symptoms. Teacher burnout is thought to be one reason for increasing numbers of competent teachers who are leaving the classroom for alternative careers (Cunningham, 1982).

Burnout is difficult to estimate because it occurs as a gradual phenomenon, for which no universally accepted cut off scores exist. Research in Europe suggests that 60% to 70% of the teachers are under frequent stress and that approximately 30% of the teachers show signs of burnout. Moreover, also in comparison with various kinds of 'people work' such as mental and physical health profession, teachers to be at a high risk of burnout. Teachers report more burnout symptoms than workers in other social professions. Kokkinos (2006) found that primary school teachers were high on emotional exhaustion, but depersonalization was higher among secondary school teachers.

Numerous antecedents of burnout have been investigated including biographical and personality characteristics, work related attitudes, work and organizational characteristics. Recent work on burnout indicates that both the individual and environment play contributing roles

(Schaufeli, Maslach & Marek, 1993). According to Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998), personality characteristics of employees are related to burnout. Furthermore, personality characteristics of employees can moderate the effect of stressful situations on burnout such that certain traits may buffer or enhance negative outcomes (Rioli & Savicki, 2003; Readeke & Smith, 2004; Van Dierendonck, 2005). Thus, personality and situational variables interact in complex ways. Over the past 50 years, research has converged on the existence of structural components (traits) of personality. Some studies have been focused on relationship between personality characteristics and burnout (Mills & Huebner, 1998; Grundy, 2000; Zellars, Perrew & Hochwarter, 2000; Van Dierendonck, Grassen & Visser, 2005). Most of the studies found that neuroticism was positively related to burnout (Deary, Blenkin, Agius, Endler, Zealley & Wood, 1996; Mills & Huebner, 1998; Kokkinos, 2005). Grundy (2000) found that after controlling for age, neuroticism predicted approximately 21% of variance in emotional exhaustion, 9% of variance in depersonalization, and almost 7% variance in personal accomplishment. Negative association has been found between extraversion and burnout. External locus of control, avoidant coping style, low self-esteem, and type-A behavior has been positively related to burnout.

Occupational or job stress has been widely studied in relation to burnout. Occupational stress is a complex phenomenon consisting of two broad categories of stressors: (a) job characteristics, and (b) organizational characteristics. Certain variables of job stress i.e. role ambiguity, group or political pressures, responsibility, under participation, powerlessness, low status, poor interpersonal relationships, and lack of social and administrative support have been found to be significant correlates of burnout (Raedeke

& Smith, 2004; Rupert & Morgan, 2005). Person experiencing burnout becomes increasingly ineffective, his sense of personal accomplishment plummets. He realizes he is becoming cold and indifferent, that he's "just not himself" and his sense of fulfillment in work is gone (Alan Shelton, 2007).

Keeping in view the above mentioned indications, the present research was designed to understand the personality and occupational stress differentials of high and low burnout female school teachers in Haryana.

Method

Sample:

A sample of 361 high school female teachers from various high and senior secondary schools of Haryana was randomly drawn from the population. Only regular teachers with experience above 5 years, ranging in age from 35 to 50 years with mean age of 42.5 years and those who volunteered to participate were included in the sample. To realize the main objective of the study, selected subjects were further divided into high and low burnout groups. Subjects having the scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization scales of MBI below P_{30} constituted the low burnout group consisting of 128 subjects. And the subjects scoring above P_{70} constituted the high burnout group that consisted of 117 subjects. The high and low burnout groups on the basis of combining scores of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization has been formed in the light of recommendation of Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) and Brenninkmeijer and Van Yperen (1999). The third dimension i.e. personal accomplishment is contrary in spirit. In low burnout group means and standard deviations of three subscales of burnout are 4.99 and 1.98 for emotional exhaustion, 1.49 and 1.51 for depersonalization, and 42.78 and 2.27 for personal accomplishment. In case of high burnout group mean and SD of

emotional exhaustion are 10.51 and 3.52; of depersonalization 5.34 and 3.08; and of personal accomplishment 40.89 and 4.04. For total burnout group means and SDs for three subscales of burnout are 7.48 and 3.42 for emotional exhaustion, 3.21 and 2.76 for depersonalization, and 41.84 and 0.366 for personal accomplishment.

Tools:

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-1986) is a paper pencil test consisting of 22 items and all the items are written in the form of statements about personal feelings or attitudes. Some of the items are positively worded and some negatively. For giving response, subjects are to evaluate the statements on 7-point scale ranging from 0 to 6 (0= never, 1= a few times a year or less, 2= once a month or less, 3=a few times a month, 4=once a week, 5=a few times a week, 6= every day) It consists of three sub-scales: i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, & personal accomplishment. Emotional Exhaustion describes the feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work; Depersonalization describes an unfeeling and impersonal response towards recipients of one's care and service; Personal Accomplishment describes feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people (Maslach and Jackson, 1986). Maslach and Jackson (1980) and Lahoz and Mason (1989) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients varying from .71 to .90. Test-retest reliabilities vary from .60 to .82. Three scores were obtained to represent three dimensions.

Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised (EPQ-R-1976) is an outgrowth of various Eysenck's earlier personality questionnaires. The EPQ-R consists of 90 items in all measuring extraversion-introversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, and lie behaviour. Out of 90 items, 69 related to psychoticism (25), extroversion (21), and neuroticism (23) respectively. Remaining 21

items constitute the lie scale which is an index of dependability of subject's response. The test-retest reliabilities for P, E, N, and L carried out with a time interval of one month have been found ranging from .78 to .84. The scale has been found to have an adequate internal consistency and reliability as reported in manual (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1976). Four scores were obtained in the present study to represent P, E, N, and L scale.

Jenkins Activity Survey (JAS-1979) has been constructed by Jenkins, Zyanski & Rosenman (1979) and is a self-reporting multiple-choice questionnaire. The scale consists of 52 items designed to measure the type-A behaviour pattern found to be strongly associated with the risk of coronary heart disease. The survey can be used to obtain the scores for type-A, B, and C patterns. In the present study 21 items of survey were retained and scored for type-A behaviour pattern.

Occupational Stress Index (OSI-1981) developed and standardized by Shrivastva and Singh (1981), is a useful tool to assess the occupational stress of employees. It consists of 46 statements each with 5 response alternatives. The index assesses the perceived stress of the employees arising from twelve dimensions of their job life i.e. role overload, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressures, responsibility, powerlessness, under participation, poor peer relations at work, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions, and unpredictability. Index of homogeneity and internal validity of individual items of scale have been determined in terms of biserial coefficients which range from .36 to .59. Split half reliability has been reported to be .93 and Cronbach's alpha coefficients equaling to .90.

Results and Discussion

To realize the main objective of the study, the obtained data were analyzed by applying descriptive statistics i.e. means,

standard deviations, and t-ratios. The obtained results are reported in table-1. The perusal of table-1 reveals that high burnout female teachers have scored significantly high on three scales of personality i.e. psychoticism (Mean=5.38, SD=2.23), neuroticism (Mean=8.11, SD=3.50), and lie scale (Mean=8.98, SD=4.05) whereas low on extroversion (M=13.45, SD=3.51) than the low burnout group. It posits that female teachers characterized as aggressive, egocentric, impersonal, impulsive, unsympathetic, dogmatic, tough-minded, tense, anxious, irrational, moody, emotional, low in self-esteem, hypochondriatic, introverted, motivated to show goodness and to behave in socially desirable manner tend to be develop high level of burnout in their respective occupational setting.

On the measure of type-behaviour, the high burnout female teachers have obtained significantly higher scores (Mean=203.07, SD=37.11) than their counterpart low burnout teachers. It depicts that high burnout female

teachers tend to be over competitive, striving for achievement, hyper- alert, restless, under pressure of time, and challenges of responsibility. Unexpectedly, an interesting finding has been obtained regarding the occupational stress differential of high and low burnout female teachers.

High burnout teachers have scored significantly low on scale of occupational stress (Mean=162.20, SD=10.46). Though occupational stress index can provide 12 scores for different dimensions but in the present study only single score has been taken up to represent the overall extent of occupational stress. This finding is definitely inconsistent with the majority of earlier findings (Sonnentage, Brodbeck, Heinbokel & Stolte, 1994; Rani, 1998) which have reported the high level of occupational stress in high burnout employees. It is not explainable in the light of existing literature, so for further verification large scale investigation is required.

Table I Mean, SD and t-values of High and Low Burnout Groups on Measures of Personality and Occupational Stress

| Sr.No. | Variables | High Burnout Group | | Low Burnout Group | | t-ratios |
|--------|---------------------|--------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|----------|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | |
| 1. | Psychoticism | 5.38 | 2.23 | 4.30 | 1.99 | 3.985** |
| 2. | Neuroticism | 8.11 | 3.50 | 7.20 | 2.67 | 2.272* |
| 3. | Extraversion | 13.45 | 3.51 | 14.38 | 3.77 | -1.999* |
| 4. | Lie Scale | 8.98 | 4.05 | 7.73 | 3.97 | 2.435* |
| 5. | Type-A Behaviour | 203.07 | 37.11 | 192.75 | 40.18 | 2.089* |
| 6. | Occupational Stress | 162.20 | 10.46 | 166.34 | 8.39 | -3.397** |

** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

High burnout subjects have scored significantly high on all the three dimensions of burnout i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. It suggests that high burnout female teachers are characterized as having depletion of emotional resources feeling of being 'empty' or 'worn out'; negative

and cynical attitude towards the recipient of their service (students); and negative evaluation of their own accomplishment at work. Like earlier findings, (Hodge, Jupp & Taylor, 1994) in the present study, it has been found that subjects having high level of emotional exhaustion are also high on depersonalization.

The findings of the present study have revealed significant information about some personal dispositions of high and low burnout high school female teachers working in Haryana. These findings suggest that teachers should be frequently screened for their occupational stress and burnout, and if needed, be counseled to cope with the threat of burnout and occupational stress.

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