

Negative Affectivity, Coping Strategies and Burnout among School Teachers

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The present research aimed to investigate the relationship among negative affectivity, coping strategies, and burnout among school teachers. It was also intended to examine the role of gender, type of school, and job experience in relation to variables of the study. A stratified random sample (N = 300) comprising school teachers including both men and women was acquired from schools. Results indicated that negative affectivity was significantly positively related with religious denial coping and burnout; while negatively related with positive coping, active coping and problem focused coping. Regression analysis found negative affectivity and religious denial coping as significant predictors of burnout. Results also indicated that female teachers reflected more negative affectivity, religious denial coping, and burnout; while men exhibited more problem focused coping style. Findings also indicated that teachers with lesser job experience and working in private schools reflected elevated levels of negative affectivity, religious denial coping, and burnout.

Keywords: Negative affectivity, coping strategies, burnout, school teachers.

Negative affectivity apparently is a predictor of negative mood and emotional state of our lives (Lahey, 2009), and individuals exhibiting negative affect suffer from increased level of emotional distress and possess poor abilities to cope with life stressors (Costa & McCrae, 1987, 1992; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). Negative affectivity is associated with pessimistic distress such as tension and nervousness. Costa and McCrae (2000) illustrate that negative affectivity is related with maladjustment, depressive tendencies, anxiety, moodiness, irritability, sadness and emotional instability. Similarly, people who obtain high scores on negative affectivity are negatively related with contentedness and positively related with anxiety (Fauerbach, Lawrence, Schmidt, Munster, & Costa, 2000). Moreover, a person high on negative affectivity may suffer from an inability to adjust in tense situation and environmental uncertainty (Costa & McCrae, 2002).

According to Skinner and Gembeck (2007) coping refers to how people organize, guide, energize and direct behavior, emotion and orientation, or how they fail to do so under conditions of stress. Coping is regarded as behavioral and cognitive exertion utilized by

people to deal with the demands of an individual-environment relationship (Freudenberg, 2005). Coping strategies are broadly divided in to emotion focused and problem focused coping strategies (Lazarus, 1991). Emotion-focused coping involves trying to reduce the negative emotional responses associated with stress such as embarrassment, fear, anxiety, depression, excitement and frustration. This may be the only realistic option when the source of stress is outside the person's control. Problem-focused coping targets the causes of stress in practical ways which tackles the problem or stressful situation that is causing the stress, consequently directly reducing the stress. However, this categorization is not mutually exclusive as people may opt to employ varying strategies under differential circumstances; hence likely to use emotion and problem-focused strategies simultaneously and alternately (Butcher & Mineka, 2003). Moreover, we are completely aware of the fact that our anxieties can be coped by employing numerous rationale and logical coping strategies; however, we are liable to opt the coping styles on personal preferences (Ghosh & Lupin, 2008).

Maslach and Jackson (2004) have defined burnout as a syndrome comprising three dimensions including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Freudenberg (2005) considered burnout as a state of fatigue and frustration brought about by devotion to an occupation, way of life, or relationship that initially failed to produce the expected reward. On the other hand, Montgomery and Rupp (2005) regarded burnout in terms of the emotional exhaustion caused by chronic stress and particularly experienced by people who are in contact with other people professionally. According to Maslach (2003) job burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job.

On the basis of extensive literature (Kokkinos & Davazoglou, 2005) it has been inferred that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are associated with negative affectivity. Other studies also found relation among negative affectivity, extraversion and three components of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Schaufeli & Taris, 2005). Similarly, it is also observed on the basis of meta analysis of 250 studies (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001) that negative affectivity is associated with burnout and negative affectivity is one of the strongest correlate of burnout, specifically with emotional exhaustion. Likewise, Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Munoz, and Carrasco-Ortiz (2005) found that teachers high in negative affectivity and introversion are the ones with the highest burnout levels.

There is fairly extensive evidence on coping and mental health outcomes (Bassett & Lloyd, 2001; Penley & Tomaka, 2002; Pomaki & Anagnostopoulou, 2003). As highlighted by Taylor and Stanton (2007), coping processes can significantly affect the psycho-physical health as efficient coping strategy produces positive results and avoidance strategy can lead to increased distress, illness and mortality. There is ample evidence (Sorgaard, Ryan, Hill, & Dawson, 2007) which has shown that negative affectivity is exceedingly useful in predicting emotion-focused coping style (such as, escape-avoidance, antagonistic

responses, and enthusiastic venting), and in adversely anticipating issue centered adapting (for example, arranging). Penley and Tomaka (2002) reported that negative affectivity has been positively interfaced to both emotional focused coping and passive coping strategy. Negative affectivity has been demonstrated to be the core factor connected with a range of psychopathologies, most prominently different types of anxiety and depression (Jakšić et al., 2012, Kotov et al., 2010; Pomaki & Anagnostopoulou, 2003; Steel et al., 2008). Malouff (2005) indicated in a meta-analysis that high negative affectivity and low extraversion are the major contributing factors of mental illness.

Ample literature has indicated relationship among negative affectivity, coping strategies and burnout (Latzman et al., 2011; Lawrence & Fauerbach, 2003; Lee & Akhtar, 2007). Based on prior studies (Campbell-Rodgers et al., 2006) it has been inferred that coping styles would contribute to negative psychological outcomes such as stress, burnout, depression, and anxiety. Berkel (2009) found that owing to differences in negative affectivity and coping styles; people mostly experience the symptoms of their trauma, tension and depression in varying manner. More elevated amount of stress, anxiety and depression are all linked with avoidance of high-risk, low self-confidence and lack of positive and active coping. On the other hand, reduced psychological distress is dependent on low harm avoidance, high esteem, and problem focused coping.

Higher level of stress, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization have been found to be associated with passive coping strategies such as avoidance and distancing strategies (Austin, Shah, & Muenche, 2005). Furthermore, it is also observed (Chang, 2009) that burnout shares a inverse relationship with problem focused coping and positive relationship with emotion focused coping. Various studies (Lau, Chan, Cheong, & Koo, 2010; Maslach, 2004) have found that passive and denial coping strategies appear to contribute to the level of burnout felt by the teachers. As reported by Lloyd and King (2004) in a wide range of professions withdrawal coping

strategies such as getting away from people has been associated with a high rate of burnout while low burnout has been associated with social coping strategies. Teachers who experience moderate or high level of burnout had lower preventative coping than teachers who reported low symptoms of burnout (Triipken, 2011).

Since, in Pakistan teachers are rendering their services both in government and private schools therefore, the nature of their work-load, responsibilities and benefits differ. Teachers may also teach different academic grades during the same academic year. For example, school teachers work in different capacities as teaching primary and secondary classes; hence, enduring increased work load which subsequently could have an adverse effect on the job performance and burnout. Consequently, coping strategies affects the learning environment and ultimately prevent achievement of the teachers' educational goals. This may lead to disinterest, negligence, bitterness, and absenteeism among teachers, and can result in teachers' burnout or leaving the profession. Additionally, bifurcation of public and private schools is an additional factor in experiencing burnout and corresponding coping styles. It has been pointed out in varying indigenous literature (Munir, 2005) that private school teachers reported more problems of fringe benefits, job security, excessive work load, and lack of organizational support as compared to those working in government schools. Therefore, the broader objectives of the study were to determine the relationship among negative affectivity, coping strategies, and burnout among school teachers. It was also intended to find out the role of various demographic variables (gender, type of school, and varying levels of job experience) in relation to the negative affectivity, coping strategies, and burnout among school teachers.

Hypotheses:

To attain the above mentioned objectives, the following hypotheses were phrased:

1. Negative affectivity positively predicts religious denial coping and burnout; and negatively predicts active, problem focused, and positive coping styles.
2. Religious denial coping positively predicts burnout while active, problem focused and positive coping negatively predicts burnout.
3. Female teachers exhibit more negative affectivity, religious denial coping and burnout as compared to male teachers.
4. Private school teachers will express higher levels of negative affectivity, religious denial coping, and burnout as compared to government school teachers.
5. Teachers with lesser job experience reflect more negative affectivity, religious denial coping and burnout as compared to teachers with extended job experience.

Method

Sample:

A stratified random sample (N = 300) was taken from different schools of Islamabad including primary school teachers of public (n = 159) and private (n = 141) schools, including both male (n = 150) and female (n = 150) school teachers. Age of respondents ranged from 20-60 years (M = 35.5, SD = 17.6). Inclusion criteria were based on the educational qualification of teachers was minimum graduation, teaching primary classes only, and had been employed for the last one year in that particular school. The minimum and maximum job experience of the teachers was from 1 to 30 years (M = 16.27, SD = 6.33).

Instruments:

Neuroticism Subscale of NEO-FFI. Negative affectivity was assessed by the Neuroticism subscale of NEO-FFI (McCrae & Costa, 2004). The subscale consisted of 12 items; and was rated on 5-point rating scale that is strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The possible score ranged from 12 to 60. High score indicates more dominance of neuroticism. In the present study alpha of .82 was achieved for Neuroticism subscale.

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach & Jackson, 1996). It was used to measure the level of burnout. It comprised of 22 items

Table 1. Correlation Matrix for all the Study Variables (N = 300)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Negative Affectivity	-	-.25**	-.24**	-.19**	.33***	.31***
2 Active Coping		-	.22**	.17**	-.12*	-.20**
3 Positive Coping			-	.21**	-.54**	-.34**
4 Problem Focused Coping				-	-.18**	-.35**
5 Religious Denial Coping					-	.28***
6 Burnout						-

*p < .05, **p < .01

and has three subscales that were Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment. Responses were obtained on 6-point rating scale that is Never (1) to Always (6). The score range on MBI was 35-70 and 46.5 was the cutoff score. Higher levels of burnout were reflected through high scores on subscales of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and low scores on Personal Accomplishment. In the present study alpha of .82 was achieved for total MBI and .79, .72, and .76 were acquired for the subscales of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment, respectively.

Brief Cope Inventory. The scale was originally developed by Carver (1989) was used to assess the coping strategies. It consisted of 28 items categorized into four subscales: Active Coping (10 items), Religious Denial Coping (4 items), Positive Coping (7 items), and Problem Focused Coping (7 items). Items were arranged on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (I haven't been doing this at all) to 4 = (I've been doing this a lot) and possible score ranged from 8 - 24. In the present study alpha reliability of .84 was achieved for Brief Cope Inventory and for subscales of Active Coping (.80), Religious Denial Coping (.70), Positive Coping (.76), Problem Focused Coping (.72), respectively.

Procedure:

In order to collect data for the present study official permission was acquired from directorate education of Islamabad as well as from the heads of schools. The concerned teachers were informed about the purpose of data collection.

The participants were approached during school hours. They were assured and guaranteed that data collected would be used for research purpose only. Having informed consent, they were provided with the questionnaire. Along with the written instructions, verbal explanations were also narrated. The participants were asked to read each statement carefully and mark their responses within given response categories. Later respondents were graciously thanked for their contribution and support.

Results

Pearson Product Moment Correlation was tabulated to determine relationship among variables. Regression analysis was also conducted to determine the predictive role of variables. To investigate group differences t-test and one way ANOVA was carried out.

Table 1 shows the correlation among negative affectivity, coping strategies and burnout. Results indicated that negative affectivity was significantly positively related with religious denial coping and burnout. Conversely, negative affectivity was significantly negatively associated with active coping, positive coping and problem focused coping. Moreover, religious denial coping was significantly positively related with burnout. The results supported the first and second hypotheses; that is negative affectivity positively predicts religious denial coping and burnout; and negatively predicts active, problem focused, and positive coping styles. Moreover, religious denial coping positively predicts burnout while active, problem focused and positive coping negatively predicts burnout.

Table 1 also provides evidence of construct

validity of Brief Cope Inventory that is active coping, problem focused coping, positive coping were significantly positively linked with each other and significantly negatively related with religious denial coping.

Table 2. Multiple Regression Analyses Showing Predictors of Burnout (N = 300)

Predictors	B	SE	β	t	p
Gender	0.48	1.94	.01	.24	.80
Age	1.98	3.03	.06	.65	.51
Education	2.96	2.97	.09	.99	.32
Negative Affectivity	0.70	0.07	.53	8.99	.00
Active Coping	-8.24	5.12	-1.37	1.61	.10
Positive Coping	-8.74	5.28	-.53	1.65	.10
Problem Focused Coping	-0.81	0.32	-.14	2.53	.01
Religious Denial Coping	0.45	.11	.27	4.00	.00

Results of multiple regression analyses revealed that R was .60 and R² was .35 with adjusted R² of .33. The beta values are presented in Table 2 showed that negative affectivity, problem focused coping, and religious denial coping total together contribute significant amount of variance 33% in burnout $F(8, 298) = 13.71, p < .001$. Results also showed that negative affectivity has explained the greatest variance in burnout ($\beta = .53, t = 8.99, p < .001$) followed by religious denial total which

contributed ($\beta = .27, t = 4.00, p < .01$) for burnout.

Results presented in Table 3 showed significant gender differences on negative affectivity, coping strategies, and burnout. It has been found that female teachers reflected more negative affectivity, religious denial coping and burnout as compared to male teachers; thereby supporting the third hypothesis. On the other hand, male teachers reflected more problem focused coping strategies than female teachers. However, non significant gender differences were found on positive coping and active coping.

Table 4 showed differences in relation to burnout, personality traits, and coping strategies among private and public school teachers. The results provide support for the hypothesis that is private school teachers expressed higher levels of negative affectivity, religious denial coping, and burnout as compared to government school teachers. Similarly, government school teachers showed more use of active coping strategy as compared to private school teachers. On the other hand, there were non-significant differences on positive coping and problem focused coping.

Results of ANOVA indicated group differences in relation to negative affectivity, coping strategies and burnout along varying levels of job experience. Job experience of the teachers ranged from 1-30 years; therefore, it was categorized in three groups (Group 1= 1-10 years, Group 2 = 10.1- 20 years, Group 3 = 20.1-30 years). Results indicated that teachers with lesser job experience showed higher levels of negative affectivity ($F = 5.81, df$

Table 3. Gender Differences on Negative Affectivity, Coping Strategies, and Burnout (N =300)

Variables	Male (n = 150)		Female (n = 150)		t	p	95 % CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Negative Affectivity	35.32	5.68	40.28	7.92	3.72	.01	-2.64	4.64	.38
Active Coping	24.65	4.37	22.14	4.36	.97	.32	-4.99	1.48	.11
Positive Coping	17.86	3.57	17.97	3.30	.28	.77	-9.8	.85	.03
Problem Focused Coping	22.79	4.00	18.72	4.08	4.43	.01	-.66	.89	.40
Religious Denial Coping	8.10	2.29	14.78	2.27	3.98	.02	-.45	.57	.36
Burnout	56.14	9.45	64.70	8.88	5.08	.00	-1.24	1.77	.42

Table 4 : Group Differences across Type of School on Negative Affectivity, Coping Strategies, and Burnout (N=300)

Variables	Male (n = 150)		Female (n = 150)		t	p	95 % CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Negative Affectivity	34.43	5.62	39.33	4.70	3.21	.00	-.23	4.6	.38
Active Coping	26.49	5.75	21.37	4.77	2.24	.02	-.28	2.11	.32
Positive Coping	18.56	9.71	18.93	4.27	1.27	.43	.13	.55	.04
Problem Focused Coping	18.18	3.92	17.67	3.54	1.15	.20	-1.2	1.28	.13
Religious Denial Coping	10.11	3.82	15.71	4.08	2.91	.00	-.27	1.22	.40
Burnout	59.64	8.88	66.55	9.45	4.66	.00	-5.16	1.77	.46

= 298, $p < .01$), religious denial coping ($F = 7.38$, $df = 298$, $p < .001$), and burnout ($F = 6.04$, $df = 298$, $p < .001$), as compared to teachers with extended job experience; hence supporting the fifth hypothesis. However, results indicated non significant group differences on active coping ($F = 1.11$, $df = 298$, $p > .05$), problem focused coping ($F = 1.71$, $df = 298$, $p > .05$), and positive coping ($F = 1.77$, $df = 298$, $p > .05$).

Discussion

Results indicated that negative affectivity was significantly positively related with burnout. Earlier evidence (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001) have also observed that negative affectivity has been associated with and predicted burnout among teachers. Similarly, it has been found that negative affectivity and occupational burnout are positively related with each other (Burke & Greenglass, 1996). Moreover, Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Munoz, and Carrasco-Ortiz (2005) reported that the teachers high in negative affectivity also express more burnout. Schaufeli and Enzmann (2000) inferred from meta analysis that negative affectivity is one of the strongest correlate of burnout. Results indicated that negative affectivity was significantly positively related with religious denial coping while; it was negatively related with active coping, problem focused and positive coping. Previous researches (Austin, Shah, & Muenche, 2005) have observed that religious denial coping is associated with higher level of negative coping. Another study (Chang, 2009) indicated that problem focused coping is negatively related with negative affectivity whereas religious denial

coping has been positively linked with negative affectivity. Moreover, researchers have found that certain coping strategies (such as religious denial and passive coping) appear to contribute to the level of burnout felt by the teachers (Chan, 1998).

Results of multiple regression analyses showed that negative affectivity has the greatest influence on burnout followed by religious denial in explain variance in burnout. Pines and her colleagues (Etzion & Pines, 1986; Pines et al., 1981) found that active coping efforts (such as confronting the problem) have been associated with lower levels of burnout, while inactive efforts (such as avoidance or denial) are associated with higher levels of burnout. Rowe (2000) found that escape/avoidance and confrontational coping are predictive of burnout. Planned problem-solving and positive reappraisals are negatively related to burnout. Similarly, Teague (1992) found that those who utilized more emotion-oriented coping styles reported increased amount of burnout. A meta-analytic review revealed that those who are burned out cope with stressful events in a rather passive, defensive way, whereas active and confronting coping is associated with less burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 2000). According to Rowe (2000), individuals using positive strategies are more able to cope with stressors effectively, felt greater sense of personal accomplishment, and less emotionally exhausted. Similarly, Maslach and Jackson (2001) reported that high levels of burnout are associated with ineffective coping strategies (e.g., emotion oriented coping) and

low degrees of burnout with more constructive coping strategies (e.g., active and problem focused coping).

Results also support the hypothesis indicating that female teachers reflected more negative affectivity, religious denial coping and burnout as compared to male teachers. On the other hand, male teachers reflected more problem focused coping strategies than female teachers. McCrea and Costa (2001) reported that women have been found to score higher than men on neuroticism. Earlier empirical studies designed to investigate the relation of coping efforts and burnout (Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1981; Penley & Tomaka, 2002) yielded consistent findings by showing women exhibited more burnout and passive coping styles as compared to men. Similarly, others (Burke & Greenglass, 1989; Pines et al., 1981) found that men makes more use of active coping efforts, such as confronting the problem, associated with lower levels of burnout, and inactive efforts such as avoidance were associated with higher levels of burnout.

Findings of the present study also indicated that private school teachers reflected augmented levels of negative affectivity, religious denial coping, and burnout as compared to government school teachers. Prior studies also support this evidence for instance; Pomaki and Anagnostopoulou (2003) found that Greek secondary school teachers working in public sector reported lower levels of burnout. Moreover, Tatar and Horenczyk (2003) found that Israeli teachers working in primary private schools were more burned out than their counterparts in secondary schools. Another indigenous study (Munir, 2005) also reported that public school teachers expressed more organizational commitment and lesser burnout and turnover intentions as compared to those working in private schools.

Results indicated that teachers with lesser job experience showed higher levels of negative affectivity, religious denial coping and burnout as compared to teachers with lesser job experience. These findings are quite in line with prior literature; for instance, Bian and Fan (2006)

found younger teachers tend to show greater burnout syndromes than their older colleagues with less than 10 year experiences. Moreover, employees with lesser work experience significantly reflected more burnout in emotional exhaustion than those working with over 20 year of experiences. Similarly, empirical evidences (Kokkinos & Davazoglou, 2005; Lau et al., 2005) also indicated that teachers with less teaching experience showed higher level of burnout. Mendes (2003) also supported that with more experience, teachers are better at identifying emotions which helps cope with stress.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the relationship among negative affectivity, coping strategies and burnout among school teachers. Another purpose of the study was to determine the role of various demographics like gender, type of school, and job experience. Findings of the present study found that negative affectivity was significantly positively related with religious denial coping and burnout. Results also indicated significant gender differences in negative affectivity, religious denial coping, problem focused coping and burnout. Findings also indicated significant differences along varying levels of job. It has been found that teachers with lesser job experience reflected elevated levels of negative affectivity, religious denial coping and burnout as compared to their counterparts. Similar pattern of elevated levels of negative affectivity, religious denial coping and burnout was also observed among private school teachers.

Limitations and Suggestions

Few potentials drawbacks are inherited in the present study. For instance respondents were taken from different schools of Islamabad only, which would have restricted the generalizability of the results. Secondly, findings were interpreted on the basis of gender, job experience, and type of school, it would be more appropriate to include other related demographics such as marital status, age, education and grades being taught, thus enhancing the understanding about the constructs. Finally, qualitative studies can be done to get an image of school teachers. These

investigations may provide more understanding of significant impact of other factors.

Implications

This study has important implications such as the present findings provide basis for future explorations to determine the interplay of emotional states, coping styles and experiential levels of burnout among teachers. The current study is quite insightful to understand the role of negative affectivity, burnout and coping strategies among school teachers; thereby facilitating the occupational psychologists to develop interventions for minimizing negative work related outcomes. The study indicates that various demographic characteristics, e.g., type of school; class of teaching, gender, job experience may play vital role in optimizing the level of work load among school teachers. Moreover, findings of the present study could help in designing programs and strategies to enhance teachers' efficacy and performance at workplace.

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