

Existential Fulfillment and Burnout among school teachers and human resources managers

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Abstract:

These investigations show significant negative correlations between existential fulfillment and burnout dimensions among teachers and managers of human resources. The results confirm a previous study with a comparable professional group of teachers (Welko 2004). The personal accomplishment in MBI is strongly connected with an experience of meaning in the Existential Scale.

The MBI-dimensions “emotional exhaustion” and “depersonalization” have a higher correlation with the experienced meaning in life amongst teachers than amongst higher managers. This may be an effect of a 10 years longer professional experience of the teacher group than the human resource managers had.

Key words: Existential Fulfillment, Burnout, Teachers, Human Resources Managers, Existence Scale

Short description and some results

Participants

The current study encompasses 69 school teachers from different schools, and 41 human resources (hr) managers. Both groups were dominated by female participants, only four men took part. This corresponds to the real professional situation. In Russia both professions are mainly occupied by women. The average age was 39 years amongst teachers and about 30 years amongst hr managers. The teacher's average length of service was about 17 years, whereas the hr manager's length of service was around 5 years.

Instruments

Burnout was measured by **MBI** (Maslach Burnout Inventory), adapted by Vodopyanova, in a variant for managers and another variant for teachers. MBI consists of three scales measuring burnout dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment.

Personal fulfillment in one's existence was measured by the **Existence Scale**. The questionnaire consists of 46 items and is based on questions relating to the achievement of four steps necessary to reach fulfillment of one's personal life:

Subscale 1 is called “self-distance” (8 items), subscale 2 is called “self-transcendence” (14 items), subscale 3 is called “freedom” (11 items); and subscale 4 is called “responsibility” (13 items). The Russian version of the Existence Scale is standardized on a sample of 600 subjects.

Results

Correlation analyses (group of teachers, N = 69)

	Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal accomplishment	Self-distance	Self-transcendence	Freedom	Responsibility	P	E	Total score
Emotional exhaustion	1	,549(**)	-,414(**)	-,248(*)	-,329(**)	-,314(**)	-,476(**)	-,340(**)	-,443(**)	-,448(**)
Depersonalization	,549(**)	1	-,373(**)	-,383(**)	-,434(**)	-,292(*)	-,423(**)	-,472(**)	-,401(**)	-,494(**)
Personal Accomplishment	-,414(**)	-,373(**)	1	,299(*)	,552(**)	,171	,401(**)	,518(**)	,324(**)	,474(**)
Self-distance	-,248(*)	-,383(**)	,299(*)	1	,516(**)	,323(**)	,477(**)	,798(**)	,449(**)	,700(**)
Self-transcendence	-,329(**)	-,434(**)	,552(**)	,516(**)	1	,486(**)	,414(**)	,928(**)	,498(**)	,800(**)
Freedom	-,314(**)	-,292(*)	,171	,323(**)	,486(**)	1	,620(**)	,483(**)	,889(**)	,791(**)
Responsibility	-,476(**)	-,423(**)	,401(**)	,477(**)	,414(**)	,620(**)	1	,499(**)	,910(**)	,812(**)
P	-,340(**)	-,472(**)	,518(**)	,798(**)	,928(**)	,483(**)	,499(**)	1	,546(**)	,867(**)
E	-,443(**)	-,401(**)	,324(**)	,449(**)	,498(**)	,889(**)	,910(**)	,546(**)	1	,891(**)
Total score	-,448(**)	-,494(**)	,474(**)	,700(**)	,800(**)	,791(**)	,812(**)	,867(**)	,891(**)	1

Correlation analyses (group of hr managers, N = 41)

	Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal accomplishment	Self-distance	Self-transcendence	Freedom	Responsibility	P	E	Total score
Emotional exhaustion	1	,512(**)	-,480(**)	-,025	-,292	-,393(*)	-,487(**)	-,395(*)	-,411(**)	-,467(**)
Depersonalization	,512(**)	1	-,291	-,079	,027	-,181	-,169	-,269	-,194	-,258
Personal Accomplishment	-,480(**)	-,291	1	,081	,337(*)	,506(**)	,490(**)	,454(**)	,522(**)	,572(**)
Self-distance	-,025	-,079	,081	1	,172	,207	,332(*)	,712(**)	,104	,391(*)
Self-transcendence	-,292	,027	,337(*)	,172	1	,519(**)	,396(*)	,520(**)	,421(**)	,530(**)
Responsibility	-,487(**)	-,169	,490(**)	,332(*)	,396(*)	,760(**)	1	,599(**)	,843(**)	,864(**)
P	-,395(*)	-,269	,454(**)	,712(**)	,520(**)	,593(**)	,599(**)	1	,475(**)	,782(**)
E	-,411(**)	-,194	,522(**)	,104	,421(**)	,871(**)	,843(**)	,475(**)	1	,920(**)
Total score	-,467(**)	-,258	,572(**)	,391(*)	,530(**)	,882(**)	,864(**)	,782(**)	,920(**)	1

Discussion

Our investigations reveal significant negative correlations between burnout dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization) and existential fulfillment among a group of school teachers. Personal accomplishment is strongly connected with existential fulfillment.

These results are quite in line with previous studies (Welko 2004). They indicate that it is relevant to regard burnout as a lack of existential fulfillment, as a kind of existential vacuum (Laengle 2003).

In the group of hr managers negative correlations between burnout dimensions and existential fulfillment are weaker. For example depersonalization (MBI) doesn't correlate significantly with any subtest in the existence scale (self-distance, self-transcendence, freedom and responsibility). Emotional exhaustion (MBI) correlates negatively with freedom and responsibility (P- factor) and doesn't correlate with self-distance and self-transcendence, whereas it has significant negative correlations with the P-factor (self-distance and self-transcendence together). This result needs further investigations with enlarged groups of hr managers to be fully explained. It may be explained by a possible lower average professional experience in our group of hr managers with the consequence that may not have a fully developed picture of burnout; and more than this burnout dimensions may be less connected with existential fulfillment in the first stages of burnout.

Higher managers are a new professional group and so far not researched by such types of studies; so these results may not be compared with similar investigations.