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Relationship between burnout with mental health and personality traits among physical education teachers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between burnout with mental health and personality traits among physical education teachers. A total of 250 physical education teachers (140 men and 110 women) between the ages range of 28-49 years old participated in this research. To collect data, all subject filled out a Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), NEO Personality Inventory Revised (NEO-PI-R) and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12). The results of present research showed that mental Health extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness were negatively significant correlations with burnout sub-scales (P<0.05) but neuroticism was positively significant correlation with theme (P<0.05). On the other hand, conscientiousness was not significant with burnout sub-scales (P>0.05). Thus, the strength of the correlations obtained in the present study suggests that mental health and personality traits have a significant role in burnout in physical education teachers.

Key Words: Burnout, Personality Traits, Mental Health, Teachers, Physical Education

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INTRODUCTION

Epidemiologists have long been aware that social and environmental factors can contribute to the incidence of many human diseases [1]. Among this can be noted the burnout. Burnout was first described as a set of symptoms of exhaustion in professionals working in mental care and education [2-3]. Burnout is often define as a psycho-cognitive syndrome and divided to three dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment, which arises in response to chronic stress in jobs where individuals work with people [4-5]. Emotional exhaustion refers to the depletion of psychic energy or the draining of emotional resources. Depersonalization refers to the development of negative, cynical attitudes toward the recipients of one's services. Lack of personal accomplishment is the tendency to evaluate one's own work with recipients negatively, an evaluation that is often accompanied by feelings of insufficiency [7].

Burnout has been recognized as a serious threat, particularly for employees and teachers who work with people and students [6-7]. Maslach et al. (2001) and Alarcon et al. (2009) argued that burnout is a negative emotional reaction to one's job that results from prolonged exposure to a stressful work environment [8-9]. Furthermore, Maslach & Schaufeli (1993) stated that the theorists of burnout described the syndrome as a specific kind of occupational stress

among health care workers that results from demanding and emotionally charged relationships between caregivers and their recipients [10]. Burnout is an important variable not only because it is an indicator of poor employee well-being, but also because it is related to employee attitudes, health, and behavior [8-11]. Thus, in addition to background factors, several organizational and personality factors have been related to burnout. Among this can be noted the mental health and personality traits. Based on WHO definition, mental health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease. It is related to the promotion of well-being, the prevention of mental disorders, and the treatment and rehabilitation of people affected by mental disorders [12]. On the other hand, burnout is sometimes explained as the outcome of transaction between contextual and personality variables [13], personality has been less studied and even ignored for some time, and some recent reports state that relations between burnout and personality have not been large enough to merit further investigation in dispositional context [11]. It has been reported to be related to burnout, mental illness, and morality [14-16]. In longitudinal studies, even when situational variables were controlled for, personality continued to account for a significant portion of the variance in burnout scores, thus, burnout features may differ depending on personality characteristics of individual subjects [17]. Several studies over the past four decades have revealed that adverse job characteristics may have a deep impact on feelings of exhaustion and negative attitudes toward work [18]. Borg & Falzon (1989) stated that even if many teachers are fond of their job and experience little strain, several surveys have documented that up to a third of the teachers consider teaching as highly stressful [19]. Thus, based on the present evidences, the purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between burnout with mental health and personality traits among physical education teachers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was the correlation study decision. Participants included 250 physical education teachers from Tehran city. There were 140 men and 110 women, and their ages ranged from 28-49 years-old.

Instruments

To collect data, all subject filled in a Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), NEO Personality Inventory Revised (NEO-PI-R) and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12). The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was used to determine participants' level of burnout. The MBI consists of three sub-scales: Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal [20]. Maslach & Jackson (1986) and Lahoz & Mason (1989) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients varying from 0.71 to 0.90 [20-21]. The NEO Personality Inventory Revised (NEO-PI-R) was used to measure the personality of employees based on the FFM of personality. This questionnaire divided to five sub-scales included neuroticism, openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. According to Costa and McCrae (1992), the Cronbach coefficient alphas of the five personality traits vary from 0.86 to 0.92 [22].

The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) is widely used internationally and locally to measure mental health status [23]. The GHQ-12 is a dimensional indicator of common mental disorder form which summed score is produced and higher scores indicated poorer mental health [12].

The collected data was analyzed by descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential (Pearson's correlation test) statistical tests with SPSS Version 15.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of burnout, personality traits and general health variables.

Table1. Mean and standard deviation of the variables used in this research

Variables	M	SD
Exhaustion	19.45	10.12
Depersonalization	4.73	3.34
Personal Accomplishment	32.18	10.34
Extraversion	14.12	4.50
Openness to Experience	13.34	4.45
Conscientiousness	16.54	4.04
Agreeableness	16.36	5.44
Neuroticism	11.76	3.54
General Health	24.50	4.50

In addition, the correlation among all variables that used in this research presented in table 2.

Table2. Correlation among studied variables

Variables	Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
Extraversion	**-0.35***	**-0.25**	**-0.24**
Openness to Experience	**-0.49***	**-0.34***	**0.47***
Conscientiousness	**-0.23**	**-0.21**	**0.24**
Agreeableness	**-0.37***	**-0.31***	**-0.31***
Neuroticism	**0.43***	**0.36***	**0.32***
General Health	**-0.38***	**-0.30***	**-0.35***

** Significant level at the P<0.05*

DISCUSSION

Although the small sample size does not allow strong conclusion, but despite of this, we found significant and meaningful correlations between burnout sub-scales with mental health and five-factor personality traits. Thus, the strength of the correlations obtained in the present study suggests that mental health and personality traits have a significant role in burnout. There are several possible mechanisms through which personality may influence the extent to which work place experiences influence stress outcomes, although the present study does not examine them directly. [33-38] These mechanisms include the role that personality plays in the choice of settings and working conditions, the role of personality on the appraisal of and reactions to settings and the role of personality in coping with distress experienced at work [3,33,34].

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between burnout with mental health and personality traits among physical education teachers. The analysis of Pearson Correlations in this research showed that mental health negatively related to burnout subscales. These results were consistence with findings of Hudek et al. (2006). These authors reported the negative correlation between burnout and mental health [3]. Furthermore, results showed that neuroticism is positively correlated to emotional exhaustion. These results were consistence with findings of Schaufeli & Enzmann (1998) Zellars & Perrewe (2001) and Mills & Huebner (1998) [24-26]. Also, Grundy (2000) reported that, Neuroticism predicted approximately 21% of the variance in emotional exhaustion, 9% of the variance in depersonalisation, and almost 7% of the variance in personal accomplishment [27]. Furthermore, the results showed that extraversion was negative relationship with burnout sub-scales scores. Hudek et al. (2006), Cano-Garcia et al. (2005), Storm & Rothmann (2003) and Zellars & Perrewe (2001) reported that extraversion was negatively related to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment [3,25,28,29]. On the contrary, the results of this research were inconsistence with finding of Bühler and Land (2003). These researchers reported that extraversion is positively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. These authors suggest that these results might be due to the weighting of the sub-dimension “excitement seeking” of the extraversion scale, which was, in some previous research, also shown to be positively related with emotional exhaustion [30]. It seems plausible that individuals seeking excitement and deliberately taking risks have a greater tendency to become emotionally exhausted.

Based on present research found that agreeableness was negatively related to the levels of burnout. Several studies confirm negative relations between agreeableness and depersonalization [24,25,28]. Finally, the findings of this study showed that openness to experience was negatively correlated to burnout sub-scales. It has been suggested that openness to experience are inclined to be curious, imaginative, empathetic, creative, original, artistic, aesthetically responsive and flexible. Some studies have found that openness is related to lower emotional exhaustion [24] and depersonalization [3] but others have not found correlations between them [31].

Costa & McCrae (1992) believed that extraversion is characterized by a tendency to be self-confident, dominant, active, and excitement seeking. Also, extraverts show positive emotions, higher frequency and intensity of personal interactions, and a higher need for stimulation. In addition, extraversion is, in general, associated with a tendency to be optimistic and a tendency to reappraise problems positively [22]. However, Zellarset al. (2000) in their study found that among the five big personality traits only neuroticism significantly predicted emotional exhaustion [32].

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