

# **BURNOUT, LOCUS OF CONTROL AND JOB SATISFACTION. A STUDY ON HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS**

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**Abstract:** *The aim of the current study is to identify the relation between the burnout syndrome, locus of control, job satisfaction and age. To establish the relationships, 113 Romanian high school teachers completed a three part-questionnaire which comprised: Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, Job Satisfaction Survey, Work Locus of Control Scale, and factual data. Burnout is significantly associated with externality and dissatisfaction; the internal employees tend to be more satisfied at work than the external ones. There is no link between burnout and age.*

**Key words:** *Romanian high school teachers, burnout syndrome, locus of control, job satisfaction, age.*

## **1. Introduction**

Professional life is both a means of achieving one's professional goals and fulfilling their individual potential and a source of stress and dissatisfaction at times. Burnout is a major problem for public service specialists. There is a significant relationship between the job requirements and emotional exhaustion. The Burnout syndrome is a psychological concept which became widely known around 1970. Maslach and Jackson (1986) initially came up with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment as dimensions of the construct. Later, Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach and Jackson (1996) considered exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy to better fit as the dimensions of burnout.

Demerouti & Bakker (2007) pleaded for two dimensions of burnout : exhaustion and disengagement. From their perspective, exhaustion is broader than Maslach & Jackson (1986) defined it; its operationalization covers not only affective aspects of exhaustion but also physical and cognitive aspects; on the other hand disengagement refers to distancing oneself from one's work in general, as object and content too (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007).

Taris, Le Blanc, Schaufeli, and Schreurs (2005) believe that exhaustion and cynicism might be considered the core symptoms of burnout, whereas Jackson (1996) considered that exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy might instead be interpreted as an antecedent or as a consequence of burnout.

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The people affected by this syndrome experience intense negative feelings, joined by both emotional and physical exhaustion. The consequences are visible in the professional and personal life alike. The professional burnout phenomenon starts with eustress manifestations. The people who are predisposed to professional burnout are passionate about what they are doing, they invest everything in their job, feeling enthusiastic, determined and euphoric. The negative effect that can result is a total outrunning of motivation, the lack of professional sense with everything eventually resulting in a monotonous process, with no perceived benefit (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007).

In the study of organizational behaviour, job satisfaction is one of the most widely researched job attitudes (Judge & Church, 2000). At the same time, satisfaction is a result of the employees' perceptions related to the degree in which the work that they perform provides them with the feeling of importance or of the feelings of an employee towards previous experiences, current expectations and future alternatives. From the perspective of the three-factor model of attitude (Rosenberg, & Hovland, 1960), job satisfaction has two emotional, cognitive, and behavioural components. The employees' job satisfaction can be analysed from two perspectives: firstly, as global satisfaction which refers to the overall feelings about their job (Mueller & Kim, 2008) and secondly, as facets of job satisfaction: the feelings regarding specific job aspects, such as salary, promotion opportunity, autonomy, work hierarchy (reporting structure), growth opportunities, working conditions and the quality of relationships with one's co-workers and supervisor, feedback or task significance (Mueller & Kim, 2008). This second perspective allows the organisations to identify the specific aspects of a job that require improvement (Kerber & Campbell, 1987).

Rotter (1966) introduced the 'locus of control' in psychology and defined it as the generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. On the one hand, people who have internal locus of control believe that their own actions determine the obtained rewards. On the other hand, people with a strong external locus of control tend to consider that reinforcements or outcomes in life are controlled by other forces.

The locus of control in the workplace in particular seems to be linked to employee well-being (Spector, 1988; Spector & O'Connell, 1994); more precisely, researchers suggest that internality is associated with positive well-being (Spector, Cooper, Sanchez, O'Driscoll, & Sparks, 2002). Subjective well-being is causally related to job satisfaction (Judge, & Hulin, 1993), which is a good enough reason to bring forward the idea that internality is associated with job satisfaction as well.

## 2. Hypotheses

Concerning the relation between burnout, locus of control and job satisfaction, we anticipate that:

H1. There is an association between burnout and internality.

H2. There is a negative association between burnout and job satisfaction.

H3. There are associations between the locus of control and job satisfaction, and its dimensions.

H4. Burnout is supposedly associated with age and length in service as a teacher

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants

The respondents gave their agreement for inclusion before they participated in the study. The participants were 113 teachers from the pre-university system (109 female). The mean age was 37.75 (SD = 10.2,  $X_{min} = 20$ ,  $X_{max} = 59$ ).

#### 3.2. Design

For this study, we used a correlational design and the questionnaires were administered during class time. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

#### 3.3. Measures

We used the following questionnaires:

- 1) The Romanian version of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou, & Kantas, 2003) comprising 16 items, scale which measures the two dimensions, with fair Cronbach's Alfa coefficients: exhaustion  $\alpha = .74$ , disengagement  $\alpha = .79$ , comparable to the values reported in numerous other studies (Reis, Xanthopoulou, & Tsaousis, 2015). Cronbach's Alpha for the entire scale is .89. Answers were given on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*).
- 2) The Romanian version of the Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1985), comprising 28 items, four for each dimension: Pay, Promotion, Supervision, Operating conditions, Co-workers, Nature of work, Communication. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the seven scales range between .52 (for the Promotion scale) and .82 (for the Supervision scale). In the present research, Cronbach's Alpha for the entire scale is .89.
- 3) The Romanian version of the Work locus of control (Spector, 1985), comprising 16 items, rates people on a continuum between external (low scores) and internal (high scores). In the present research, Cronbach's Alpha for the entire scale is .83; the value reported by Spector for the American population is .86

### 4. Results

#### 4.1. Descriptive statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables.

Table 1

*Maximum minimum, means, and standard deviations of the data*

| <b>Variables</b>        | <b>Min</b> | <b>Max</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Standard dev.</b> |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|----------------------|
| <b>Locus of control</b> | 1.81       | 5.88       | 3.54        | .83                  |
| <b>Assertiveness</b>    | .20        | 1.00       | .78         | .18                  |
| <b>Burnout</b>          | 1.13       | 3.88       | 2.49        | .50                  |
| exhaustion              | 1.13       | 4.00       | 2.63        | .55                  |
| disengagement           | 1.00       | 3.75       | 2.35        | .51                  |

Table 1 (cont.)

| Variables               | Min  | Max   | Mean   | Standard dev. |
|-------------------------|------|-------|--------|---------------|
| <b>Job satisfaction</b> | 90   | 177   | 138.95 | 11.5          |
| payment                 | 3.25 | 15.75 | 6.51   | 3.24          |
| promotion               | 3.25 | 19.50 | 8.91   | 3.17          |
| supervision             | 3.25 | 19.50 | 13.37  | 4.44          |
| operating conditions    | 3.25 | 15.25 | 8.24   | 2.32          |
| co-workers              | 5.25 | 19.50 | 13.82  | 3.08          |
| nature of work          | 7.25 | 19.50 | 15.08  | 2.70          |
| communication           | 3.50 | 19.50 | 11.87  | 3.79          |

## 4.2 Hypothesis testing

H1. Regarding the assumption that there is an association between burnout and internality, the data sustain the hypothesis. Thus, the internal locus of control was negatively related to emotional exhaustion ( $r = -.51$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and disengagement ( $r = -.61$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and with the overall score of burnout ( $r = -.60$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These results were consistent with previous results (Partlak Günüşen, Ustü, & Erdem, 2014).

H2. There is a strong negative association between some dimensions of job satisfaction and burnout and its components (tab. 2).

*Pearson correlation coefficients between burnout and job satisfaction* Table 2

|               | Pay    | Promotion | Supervision | Operating conditions | Co-workers | Nature of work | Communication |
|---------------|--------|-----------|-------------|----------------------|------------|----------------|---------------|
| Burnout       | -.41** | -.40**    | -.31**      | -.26**               | -.46**     | -.57**         | -.50**        |
| Exhaustion    | -.37** | -.36**    | -.32**      | -.22**               | -.48**     | -.60**         | -.53**        |
| Disengagement | -.38** | -.39**    | -.27**      | -.26**               | -.38**     | -.47**         | -.41**        |

\*\*  $p < .01$

The highest values are registered with the correlation coefficients between burnout and the nature of work, fact which sustains the initial approach of burnout as a condition of those who work with the public.

H3. The results (tab. 3) show that internal employees are significantly more satisfied on certain dimensions as compared to the external employees.

*Pearson correlation coefficients between internality and job satisfaction* Table 3

|                    | Pay   | Promotion | Supervision | Operating conditions | Co-workers | Nature of work | Communication |
|--------------------|-------|-----------|-------------|----------------------|------------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Internality</b> | .34** | .41**     | .44**       | .14**                | .37**      | .43**          | .48**         |

\*\*  $p < .01$

These results are consistent with previous results (Chen, & Silverthorne, 2008; Kamdrön, 2015) that showed that the job satisfaction was associated with the internality in very diverse spheres of work.

H4. The results do not confirm a relation between burnout and age, length in service as a teacher respectively. Previous research examining the relation between age and burnout has found that there was a significant negative correlation between age and both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, according to the Maslach model (Randal, 2007; Peckham, 2015).

## 5. Conclusions-Discussion

The anticipated connections between burnout, job satisfaction and internality received support from the results, which are consistent with previous researches. The externality is strongly associated with exhaustion and disengagement; it is likely that the people who feel that they have little control over events do not find the necessary resources to effectively deal with the job requirements and thus come to feel overwhelmed.

High levels of burnout are associated with dissatisfaction, confirming the findings of Khamisa, Oldenburg, Peltzer, and Ilic (2015) on a sample of nurses or Ogresta, Rusac, and Zorec (2008). Employees with internal locus of control are more satisfied with their job. Of all the dimensions of job satisfaction, communication is best associated with internality. It is possible that for the people with internal locus of control, asking for and giving information is a means of regulating their activity, of identifying solutions to the work-related problems which they confront.

For this study sample, the age is not connected to the burnout level, as previous researches found (Randal, 2007; Peckham, 2015). This could be a consequence of the fact that the coping strategies developed by the teachers during their career become ineffective once the teachers become older, considering the fact that in Romania, the teacher's position in class is more and more vulnerable. The democratization of the student-teacher relationship leads to tensions and conflicts, to which the teachers fall victims at times. The use of a convenience sample is a limitation of this research, reason good enough to continue the researches on more numerous random samples from more diverse education cycles.

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