

RELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AND SCHOOL BURNOUT

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Abstract: Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between school burnout and subjective well-being for students in grade of 9th to 11th. The methodology of this research was descriptive and correlation. The two questionnaires employed here were The Satisfaction with Life Scale with five items of the Diener et al. (1985) and School-Burnout Inventory with nine items and three component - exhaustion at schoolwork (EXH), cynicism toward the meaning of school (CYN), and sense of inadequacy at School (INAD) - measures of school burnout of the Salmela-Aro et al. (2009). The results showed that the high school students described their subjective well-being in relatively good and also in overall marked high scores (agree) on exhaustion at schoolwork, and they were relatively agree with cynicism toward the meaning of school, and sense of inadequacy at school. There was relatively positive correlation between students' subjective well-being and exhaustion at schoolwork, relatively high negative correlation between students' subjective well-being and cynicism toward the meaning of school, and no any significance correlation between students' subjective well-being and sense of inadequacy at School. There were positive correlation between students' subjective well-being and some components of school burnout e.g. SWB with EXH and in the some components of school burnout and subjective well-being there were negative correlation e.g. SWB with CYN, and there were no significance differences between SWB and some component of school burnout e.g. SWB with INDA.

Keywords: Subjective Well-Being; School Burnout; Student

Introduction

Consideration of research studies show the concept of subjective well-being consists of several aspects such as positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction. According to Myers and Diener (1995:11) subjective well-being reflects "a preponderance of positive thoughts and feelings about one's life" and defined subjective well-being as "the relative presence of positive affect, absence of negative affect, and satisfaction with life". Subjective well-

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being is interested in why individuals evaluate their lives in positive ways (Diener, 1984). Yetim (2001) believed that subjective well-being is a field that comprises positive characteristics and measurements. Also, it concentrates on lengthwise affects more than temporary emotional states. The studies show the subjective well-being has two general components: Emotional and cognitive. According to some researchers e.g. Diener, the emotional component consists of positive and negative affects whereas the cognitive component is related with the individual's life satisfaction (Diener, & Larsen, 1993; Diener, & Suh, 1997; Pavot et al., 1991; Schimmack et al., 2002).

In the some resources, the term happiness is commonly operationalized as subjective well-being, which is comprised of three components: frequent positive affect (pleasant feelings and moods), relatively infrequent negative affect - bothersome emotions like guilt and anger-, and high life satisfaction - cognitive, global appraisal of one's contentment with his or her life- (Suldo & Shaffer, 2007). Therefore, subjective well-being is a wellness construct that communicates children's self-appraisal of their own protective factors (e.g., positive emotion, life satisfaction). Empirical studies have uncovered links between students' subjective well-being and their perceptions of academic competence (e.g. Suldo & Shaffer, 2007) as well as satisfaction with their schooling experiences (e.g. Suldo et al., 2008). Given the positive correlations between students' subjective well-being and their attitudes toward teachers and school (e.g. Huebner et al., 2000), enhancing school-based relationships may be an essential way to proactively increase students' social-emotional wellness.

The study of well-being has been divided into two streams of research, respectively: the *hedonic* approach and the *eudaimonic* approach. The *hedonic* approach conceptualizes and defines well-being in terms of happiness and of the presence of pleasure and absence of pain and is reflected in the stream of research on subjective well-being (Bradburn, 1969; Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1985). The eudaimonic approach equates well-being with human potential that, when realized, results in a person's optimal functioning in life (Diener et al., 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2001b) and is reflected in the stream of research on psychological (Ryff, 1989) and social (Keyes, 1998) well-being. One goal of researchers who studied well-being was to define the key features of the well-being construct (Kozma et al., 1991; Kafka & Kozma, 2002) and one issue that they have analyzed was the number of dimensions or components that are needed to characterize people's positive evaluations of their lives. (Negovan, 2010)

The review of the literature on subjective well-being, subjective well-being is defined "as a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life" (Diener et al 2005:63). Despite the lack of agreement about the number of

dimensions contained by subjective well-being, two main components are generally recognized: a cognitive (satisfaction) and an affective (pleasant affect and low levels of unpleasant affect) component. Leonard (2002:55) defined the quality of school life as “a synthesis of positive experiences, negative experiences, and other feelings related to specific school life domains”. In addition, studies have also investigated the quality of school life among students (Karatzias et al., 2001; Majeed et al., 2002; Mok, & Flynn, 2002; Sari, & Cenkseven, 2008). Seligman (2000) has distinguished between feelings of meaning, pleasure, engagement, and approached subjective well-being in terms of happiness, identifying the following substructure of happiness: “pleasure (or positive emotion); engagement; and meaning” (Seligman et al., 2005:275).

Thus, it can be defined well-being, on the one hand, as school engagement, which refers to a positive, fulfilling, and study-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigor refers to a high level of energy and mental resilience while studying; dedication is a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge; and absorption is concentration and happiness in one's studies (Schaufeli et al., 2002). In contrast, lack of well-being was defined as school burnout, which among students means feeling exhausted because of study demands, having a cynical and detached attitude toward one's studies, and feeling incompetent as a student (Kiuru et al., 2008; Salmela-Aro et al., 2008; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

It can say also well-being provide a basis for many positive outcomes in individuals' lives (Feist et al., 1995; Seifert, 2004; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon & Houser-Mariko, 2001; Tuominen-Soini et al., 2008). For example, according to Numi and Salmela-Aro (2002) school engagement and absence of school burnout may lay the foundation for successful educational decisions and trajectories – if it is assumed that a high degree of well-being leads to the construction of goals that focus on dealing with the demands of the individual's subsequent life situation. Students' subjective well-being is investigated in a variety of contexts. Academic context is an important factor that effect students' subjective well-being (Suldo et al., 2006). However, there is a little or no study investigated the relationship between subjective well-being and burnout. Freduenberger defines burnout as being -“... in a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, a way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward.” (Maslach et al., 2001; Seidman & Zager, 1991). Burnout also defined by Yang and Fam (2005) as psychological processes emerged directly from the dual structure work-worker. School burnout also refers to the burnout syndrome that stem from

schools' and educations' excessive demands on students. Student burnout paves the way to absenteeism, low motivation to courses and high rate of drop-out. In learning process, stress resulted from lessons, high workload or other psychological pressure factors may lead to emotional burn-out, tendency to desensitization, and low feeling of success (Yang & Fam, 2005; McCarthy et al., 1990).

According to Salmela-Aro & Näätänen (2005) school-related burnout is defined as consisting of three conceptually distinct but empirically related dimensions: emotional exhaustion due to school demands, cynical and detached attitude toward school, and feelings of inadequacy as a student.

School tries to provide an important developmental context for adolescents (Eccles, 2004). Previous research has shown that adolescents' perceptions and experiences of school are associated with various adjustment outcomes. Dislike of school is related to internal and external problem behaviors, and to reduced quality of life (Kasen et al., 1990). Although many concepts, such as low academic achievement and motivation, poor self-esteem, school stress and tiredness, and internal and external problem behavior (Byrne et al., 2007; Rudolph et al., 2001; Wentzel et al., 2004) have been used to describe maladjustment at school, only a few studies have been carried out, in particular, on school-related burnout and stress. For example, Byrne et al. (2007) recently described school-related stress, and we have previously described school burnout as a new concept (Kiuru et al., 2008; Salmela-Aro et al., 2008). Following the original theory of work burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2002), school-related exhaustion can be defined as school-related feelings of strain, particularly chronic fatigue resulting from overtaxing schoolwork. School-related cynicism, in turn, is manifested in an indifferent or a distal attitude toward schoolwork in general, a loss of interest in one's academic work, and not seeing it as meaningful. Lack of school-related efficacy refers to diminished feelings of competence as well as less successful achievement, and to lack of accomplishment both in one's schoolwork and in school as a whole (Schaufeli et al., 2002). School burnout overlaps with some earlier concepts. For example, exhaustion, measured in terms of feeling overwhelmed, having difficulty sleeping because of worrying and ruminating, resembles the concepts of stress, tiredness, and anxiety (Bagley, 1993; Byrne et al., 2007; McNamara, 2000). In turn, cynicism and reduced accomplishment, measured in terms of loss of interest, apathy, and feeling disappointed and inadequate (Spruijt-Metz & Spruijt, 1997), resemble depressive symptoms (Ahola & Hakonen, 2007). However, while stress, tiredness, anxiety, and depressive symptoms do not refer to a specific context, school burnout is a context-specific measure, that is, burnout is measured strictly in the school context. In

the present study, we examined whether the three theoretically-derived dimensions of school burnout i.e., exhaustion because of school demands, cynical and detached attitude toward one's school, and feelings of inadequacy as a student (Salmela-Aro & Näätänen, 2005; Schaufeli et al., 2002) can be described as separate constructs representing a single overall construct of school burnout in the school context. (Salmela-Aro, 2009)

Maslach et al. (2001) believed although burnout has generally been regarded as a work related disorder, it may also be useful in the school context. School is a setting in which students work: Students attend classes and do assignments in order to pass exams and acquire a degree (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Hence, the concept of burnout can reasonably be extended to the school context (Kiuru et al., 2008) and a valid and reliable instrument is needed. Burnout in the work context, Maslach et al. (2001) is defined as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, cynicism or depersonalization, and reduced professional efficacy. Exhaustion refers to feelings of strain, particularly chronic fatigue resulting from overtaxing work. Cynicism consists of an indifferent or a distal attitude toward work, in general, and the people with whom one works; losing interest in one's work; and not seeing work as meaningful. Lack of professional efficacy refers to diminished feelings of competence, as well as less successful achievement and accomplishment both in one's job and in the organization.

In recent years, the number of studies about burnout has increased spectacularly and the study of burnout has been extended to almost every job, and even to non-occupational samples, for example students (Balogun et al., 1996; Chang et al., 2000; Fimian et al., 1989; Gold et al., 1989; McCarthy, Prety, & Catano, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Yang, 2004). These studies evaluated "school burnout" in students, using a slightly modified version of the MBI-GS. It is important to determine the sources, reinforcement, and psychological effects over students for both student health and functions of educational system (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Student burnout research is usually carried out on university students (Bernhard, 2007; Meier & Schmeck, 1985; Fimian et al., 1989). There are a little or no studies on the burnout syndrome for both primary and secondary school students (Ertugut & Soysekerci, 2010). Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between school burnout and subjective well-being for students in 9th to 11th. Next, the researcher further investigated how students' subjective well-being and school burnout differ in terms of students' background, such as sex, age, and grade.

Research Methodology

The methodology of this research was descriptive and correlation. The two questionnaires employed here were The Satisfaction with Life Scale with five items of the Diener et al. (1985) and School-Burnout Inventory with nine items and three component - exhaustion at schoolwork (EXH), cynicism toward the meaning of school (CYN), and sense of inadequacy at School (INAD) - measures of school burnout of the Salmela-Aro et al. (2009). Internal consistency reliability was estimated by Cronbach's alphas. For "The Satisfaction with Life Scale" an alpha of .87 and for "School-Burnout Inventory" an alpha of .75 was obtained. The population of this study was all high schools students in grade of 9 to 11 at the Zahedan city in Iran. Of 9624 students (boy 5340 and girl 4284) 374 samples (boy 190 and girl 184) aged 14-19 with use of table sample size of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was selected. Of 374 samples 145 students were in 9th grade, 125 students in 10th grade, and 103 students in 11th grade. SPSS 15 was used to produce mean, standard deviations, Multiple regression, and Pearson product moment correlation (r).

Results

1. Relationship between school burnout and subjective well-being

The figures at table 1 shows that the high school students described their subjective well-being in relatively good ($M=23.83$, $SD=7.57$) and also in overall marked high scores (agree) on exhaustion at schoolwork, and they were relatively agree with cynicism toward the meaning of school, and sense of inadequacy at school.

Table 1

Mean and Std. D. of students' subjective well-being and components of school burnout (N=374)

Variables		Mean	Std.D.
Subjective well-being (SWB)		23.8342	7.56876
School burnout (SB):			
	Exhaustion at schoolwork (EXH)	17.2941	2.96524
	Cynicism toward the meaning of school (CYN)	10.5882	3.04241
	Sense of inadequacy at School (INDA)	7.0080	2.17405

There was relatively positive correlation between students' subjective well-being and exhaustion at schoolwork, relatively high negative correlation between students' subjective well-being and cynicism toward the meaning of

school, and no any significance correlation between students' subjective well-being and sense of inadequacy at School.(Table 2)

Table 2

Correlation between students' subjective well-being and components of school burnout (N=374)

Variables		Subjective well-being (SWB)
Subjective well-being (SWB)		1
School burnout (SB):		-
	Exhaustion at schoolwork (EXH)	.130(*)
	Cynicism toward the meaning of school (CYN)	-.300(**)
	Sense of inadequacy at School (INDA)	.024

*P < .05

**P < .001

In addition multiple regression results indicated that the sub-dimensions of the high school burnout scale explained high school student subjective well-being significantly $R=.378$; $R^2=.143$; $F(3, 370)=20.584$; $p<.001$). In the regression equation, first, loss of interest in school explained high school students' subjective well-being positively ($\beta= .194$; $p<.001$). Second, burnout emanated from the cynicism toward the meaning of school also explained high school students' subjective well-being negatively ($\beta= -.382$; $p<.001$), and the third burnout components explained high school students' subjective well-being positively ($\beta= .144$; $p<.05$). Therefore sub-dimensions of high school burnout scale together explained a total of 14.3 % of the variance in the subjective well-being for the students in this study.

2. students' subjective well-being and school burnout of students' background, such as sex, age, and grade

As shown in tables 3 to 5, there were positive correlation between students' subjective well-being and some components of school burnout e.g. SWB with EXH and in the some components of school burnout and subjective well-being there were negative correlation e.g. SWB with CYN, and there were no significance differences between SWB and some component of school burnout e.g. SWB with INDA.

The results also showed that the sub-dimensions of high school burnout scale related to boys together explained a total of 19.5% of the variance in the subjective well-being for the students in this study and this rate for girls was

9%. This result for age groups were 26% for students in ages 14-15, for students in 16-17 age group 14.5%, and for 18-19 age group 45%. The sub-dimensions of high school burnout scale related to 9th grade together explained a total of 26% of the variance in the subjective well-being for the students in this study and this rate for 10th and 11th grades was 29% and 27% respectively.

Table 3

Correlation between students' subjective well-being and components of school burnout by gender (N=374)

Variables		Subjective well-being (SWB)	
		Boy n=190	Girl n=184
Subjective well-being (SWB)		1	1
School burnout (SB):		-	-
	Exhaustion at schoolwork (EXH)	.183(*)	.046
	Cynicism toward the meaning of school (CYN)	-.353(**)	-.227(**)
	Sense of inadequacy at School (INDA)	.003	.032

*P < .01 **P < .001

Table 4

Correlation between students' subjective well-being and components of school burnout by age (N=374)

Variables		Subjective well-being (SWB)		
		14-15 (n=145)	16-17 (n=200)	18-19 (n=29)
Subjective well-being (SWB)		1	1	1
School burnout (SB):		-	-	-
	Exhaustion at schoolwork (EXH)	.231(**)	.159(*)	-.532(**)
	Cynicism toward the meaning of school (CYN)	-.430(**)	-.197(**)	-.018
	Sense of inadequacy at School (INDA)	.037	.094	-.206

*P < .01 **P < .001

Table 5

Correlation between students' subjective well-being and components of school burnout by grade (N=374)

Variables	Subjective well-being (SWB)		
	9 th (n=146)	10 th (n= 125)	11 th (n=103)
Subjective well-being (SWB)	1	1	1
School burnout (SB):	-	-	-
Exhaustion at schoolwork (EXH)	.225(**)	.106	.051
Cynicism toward the meaning of school (CYN)	-.430(**)	.066	-.335(**)
Sense of inadequacy at School (INDA)	.038	.474(**)	-.206

*P < .01 **P < .001

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that the high school students described their subjective well-being in relatively good and also in overall marked high scores (agree) on exhaustion at schoolwork, and they were relatively agree with cynicism toward the meaning of school, and sense of inadequacy at school. There was relatively positive correlation between students' subjective well-being and exhaustion at schoolwork, relatively high negative correlation between students' subjective well-being and cynicism toward the meaning of school, and no any significance correlation between students' subjective well-being and sense of inadequacy at School. There were positive correlation between students' subjective well-being and some components of school burnout e.g. SWB with EXH and in the some components of school burnout and subjective well-being there were negative correlation e.g. SWB with CYN, and there were no significance differences between SWB and some component of school burnout e.g. SWB with INDA.

In Sum, burnout is a serious academic issue which increases the scope of research in the area of academic and student related stress or burnout. Students stress may be correlated with their socio economic back grounds, familial conditions, teaching styles of teachers, school climate, parental involvement and many other personality characteristics. An intervention program may be developed to reduce increases academic stress to relieve them from severe emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and inefficacy. There is a number of researches in the area of work related burnout, especially on teacher burnout, burnout among nurses, doctors, managers etc. but very few studies were identified on academic burnout of students. Most of the studies on academic

burnout concentrate on college students. It should be extended to high school students also. Students who are in the age of adolescence experience severe stress in industrial societies. Future researches in the area of student stress may be oriented towards the problems of burnout among adolescence (Noushad, 2008). According to Demerouti et al. (2001) Burnout is generally regarded as a work-related disorder, but it may be considered relevant in the school context as well. After all, school is a context in which the students work; they attend classes and complete assignments in order to pass exams and to acquire a degree. As in the work context, high perceived demands and lack of perceived resources form the breeding ground for burnout.

Vasalampi et al. (2009) in the review of previous research revealed gender differences in some variables studied, such as school adjustment and maladjustment. For example, although girls have been found to be more engaged in school (Berndt & Miller, 1990; Ryan, 2001) and attribute greater importance to academic achievement (Murberg & Bru, 2004), they also experience higher level of stress (Ge et al., 1994), internalized symptoms (Leadbeater et al., 1995; Pomerantz et al., 2002), and school burnout (Kiuru et al., 2008; Salmela-Aro et al., 2008). Boys, in turn, show a higher level of external problem behavior (Leadbeater et al., 1995).

In the some research, the results for school burnout showed that among girls goal progress in their achievement-related goal was related to a low level of school burnout. However, goal progress did not contribute to school burnout among boys. These results may be due to the fact that girls are typically more motivated toward achievement of their education-related goals (Dwyer & Johnson, 1997; Pomerantz et al., 2002) and attribute greater importance to academic achievement than do boys (Murberg & Bru, 2004). Girls also fear academic failure more than boys do, and this tendency may lead to their low level of school burnout if the goal is not attained (Sheldon, 2002). The other reason for the result may be that girls experience internalizing problems, like burnout, more often than boys, whereas boys exhibit externalizing problems more than girls (Leadbeater et al., 1995; Nolen-Hoeksema, & Girgus, 1994; Pomerantz et al., 2002). Maslach et al., (1996) conceptualized burnout as a three-dimensional concept consisting of exhaustion, cynicism and reduced personal efficacy. However, the first dimension – exhaustion – was found to be the main dimension of burnout in most studies (Shirom, 1989; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Pines and Aronson (1981, 1988) defined burnout as physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. Their unidimensional definition focuses on exhaustion and applies both to work and to non work situations. We too expected that the exhaustion

dimension would take the lead as the most sensitive to change over the short respite that we intended to explore among students (Vasalampi et al., 2009).

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