
The Relationship between Professional Burnout and Management Competencies: The Case of Social Pedagogues in Lithuania

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Abstract. In this paper we examine relationships between teacher burnout and their management competencies and address the calls to expand individual-focused burnout theories by including other factors. We focus on educators called “social pedagogues” in Lithuania. Because this profession includes teaching and social work responsibilities, the case Lithuanian social pedagogues can expand theoretical and practical understandings of supporting varied teacher educational roles and responsibilities. 103 randomly selected Lithuanian social pedagogues were asked to complete a burnout and management competency scales. Correlational analyses revealed the existence between burnout and management competencies, particularly impacting burnout in the personal accomplishment dimension. Analyses suggest that the burnout problem may in part be addressed by providing educators with management training.

Keywords: *professional burnout, management competencies, social pedagogues.*

Introduction

Context

To address children’s social and educational needs and access to learning opportunities, Lithuanian Education Law (1991/2016, section 20) specified that the school has

the responsibility to “help parents/guardians ensure the child’s right to education”¹. Teachers, administrators and other school personnel are responsible for providing social and pedagogical assistance, but these responsibilities are particularly directed at social pedagogues, who are tasked with assisting all students, especially when no other school employee can provide the help needed (Social Pedagogy Procedures, 2011). Social pedagogues are educators whose responsibilities interlace two professions: teacher/pedagogue and social worker (Vaitkevičius, 1985).

In providing the social-pedagogical assistance, social pedagogues plan and organize their activities, make decisions, lead or control a child’s social-educational processes, thus utilizing management competencies (Rupšienė & Mažionienė, 2011). Such competencies (Mažionienė, 2014) impact performance effectiveness (Heinsman, 2008; Smither, London & Reilly, 2005), yet teachers/educators are rarely provided with management training.

Researchers demonstrated that social pedagogues often face extra tasks (Čiužas & Leliūgienė, 2011), work overtime (Leliūgienė, Rupšienė, & Baušytė, 2003), and receive low salaries (Merkys, Urmonas, & Bubelienė, 2011), while encountering unpredictable stressors and emotional shocks (Merkys & Bubelienė, 2013). Researchers in Lithuania have called to attention the social pedagogues’ situation, their emotional exhaustion (Bankauskienė, Leliūgienė, & Baršauskienė, 2003; Leliūgienė et al., 2003; Bubnys & Petrošiūtė, 2008), and dangers of developing health problems (Alifanovienė, Vaitkevičienė, & Lučinskaitė, 2012). Žakaitis and Puškorienė (2007) discovered that 56% of the 99 social pedagogues participating in their research had symptoms of low-level burnout, while 23% had strong burnout symptoms.

Since a social pedagogue is a “helping profession” that integrates teaching and social work, to situate the Lithuanian social pedagogue’s profession within the international context, we utilized research on teaching and helping professions. Research on helping professionals’ burnout indicates such undesirable outcomes (Broom et al., 2009) as illness, depression, and fatigue (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001), absenteeism (Knudsen, Ducharme & Roman, 2006), and reduced client satisfaction (Vahey, Aiken, Sloane, Clarke, & Vargas, 2004). Brunsting, Streckovic and Lane (2014) argued that “teacher burnout presents a problem for students’ academic, behavioral, and social struggles” and “the effect of teacher burnout is far-reaching, impacting more than solely the teacher experiencing its effects” (p. 683). Research suggests that burnout may impede ways the social pedagogue provides social and educational assistance in schools, thus failing to meet job responsibilities and expectations set for the profession.

Objectives

While there is research that shows that various factors, including burnout and management competencies, affect job performance, there are few studies that examine relationships between these two factors. Given research on social pedagogues’ and other helping professionals’ burnout, and literature on management in education, we

hypothesized that there is a relationship between social pedagogues' burnout and their management competencies.

The purpose of this correlational study was to determine if there was a relationship between social pedagogues' burnout and their management competencies. If a relationship was determined, we also explored the strength of that relationship.

Theoretical Framework

Maslach (1993) developed a multidimensional theory of burnout, in which she defined job burnout as a "psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job". She identified the three key dimensions of this response: 1) emotional exhaustion – a basic individual stress dimension of burnout that refers to feelings of being overextended and depleted of one's emotional and physical resources, 2) depersonalization – feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job, representing the interpersonal context dimension of burnout; depersonalization also refers to a negative, callous, or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job, and 3) a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment, which represents the self-evaluation dimension of burnout and refers to feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement and productivity at work.

Conceptualizations of burnout distinguish two key burnout factors: 1) *individual*, including demographic variables (age, education, marital status, and others), personal traits, and work related attitudes, and 2) *situational*, such as the job (e.g., job demands and resources), the occupation (e.g., its demands for sensitivity, sympathy and self-control), and the organization (fairness in rewards for work, type of agency) (Maslach, 2003; Savaya, 2014). According to Maslach and colleagues (2001) viewed burnout as a social phenomenon, in which situational factors had a stronger impact. As a result, most research on burnout has focused on situational factors.

In 2001 Maslach et al. stated that the burnout theories needed to take a new direction, one that integrates both individual and situational factors and focuses on the person situated in the job context. This argument was based on their earlier study (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997), which demonstrated that job burnout was related to the incompatibility between a person and his/her work environment, demonstrating that the larger the incongruity, the larger the risk of job burnout. On the contrary, a greater job compatibility leads to a person's more positive and effective engagement in his/her profession.

Developing the burnout theoretical framework into the third direction, which integrates individual and situational factors, demands paying attention to employee competencies affecting job performance and satisfaction. Lawler (1994) identified a fundamental shift in conceptualizing organizational effectiveness. He emphasized a focus on competencies-based conceptualizations of performance, since job-based systems were no longer sufficient to encompass organizational and employee learning and

progress. Numerous definitions of competencies converge in viewing competencies as capabilities, which consist of knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal and behavioral characteristics (Boyatzis, 1982; Búcker & Poutsma, 2010). Management theories also state that management competencies encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to fulfill management functions such as planning, organising, leading and controlling (Želvys, 2001; Seilius, 1998). Viewing management from the competencies perspective makes visible that management competencies integrate individual and situational factors. Therefore, examining a relationship between burnout and management competencies, has a potential to expand the burnout theories into the third direction of integrating individual and situational factors, as called by Maslach and colleagues (2001).

Methodology

Sample

The population of the study were 958 social pedagogues employed in Lithuanian schools during the 2015–2016 academic year. For this study we randomly selected 274 social pedagogues from the whole country. All 274 potential respondents were emailed a request to participate by filling out included questionnaires. The response rate thus far is 38%. The sample for this analysis consists of 103 responses.

Questionnaire

Maslach's Burnout Inventory. The questionnaire included two instruments. One focused on social pedagogues' burnout and the other on their management competencies. To measure burnout we used Maslach's Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey, MBI-ES (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Maslach et al. (2001) stated that this instrument has been translated into many languages to research job burnout. All translated instruments have similar internal consistencies, and their factorial and construct validity resemble the validity of the original instrument. This demonstrates the instrument's reliability and was one of the factors for our choice of this instrument to measure social pedagogue's burnout. Additionally, we chose this instrument because it was already translated, validated, and used by Stočkus (2014) to study teacher burnout in public schools. Drawing on results of his study, Stočkus (2014) stated that the Lithuanian version of the instrument is suitable for measuring teacher and other educators' burnout.

MBI-ES is a twenty-two-item questionnaire asking respondents "how often they experience feelings pointing to burnout (0 = never to 6 = every day)" (Savaya, 2014, p. 1273). The instrument measures three burnout subscales: Emotional Exhaustion (9 items), Depersonalization (5 items) and Personal Accomplishment (8 items). Burnout is indicated by higher scores in Emotional Exhaustion (EE) and Depersonalization (DP) subscales and lower scores in the Personal Accomplishment (PA) subscale. Based on social pedagogues'

responses to the questions, the MBI-ES Cronbach's alpha was at 0.906, indicating that the Lithuanian version of MBI-ES is a reliable measure of social pedagogues' burnout.

Social Pedagogues' Management Competencies (SPMC) scale. Social Pedagogues' Management Competencies (SPMC) scale was created by Mažionienė (2015) to measure management competencies of Lithuanian social pedagogues. The instrument consists of four subscales: Planning (37 items), Organizing (50), Leading (32) and Controlling (46). Each of the subscales includes five aspects of the social pedagogue's work: 1) individual work with students; 2) work with student groups; 3) work with student families; 4) work with school community members; and 5) work with local community and other institutions. SPMC is a 6-point Likert scale, in which 1 represents the lowest and 6 the highest self-evaluation on a given competency. The internal consistency of the scale and its subscales was measured using Cronbach's alpha. The overall instrument resulted in Cronbach's alpha of 0.993, and Cronbach's alphas for the individual subscales ranged from 0.901 to 0.981, indicating an acceptable level of reliability (Burns & Grove, 2005). As a whole, SPMC scale exhibited as good level of reliability.

Data Analysis

We utilized SPSS 17 to conduct statistical analyses of the responses. We computed new variables on the base of variables from both scales and all their subscales and performed the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, with $p > 0.05$ results in all cases. To analyze relationships among new variables Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients (r) were calculated. The Personal Accomplishment (PA) component must be interpreted in reverse order from Emotional Exhaustion (EE) and Personalization (DP) components.

Results

Results are presented in Table 1. Correlational analyses indicated a negative ($r = -0.272$) but statistically significant relationship ($p = 0.005$) between social pedagogues' burnout and their management competencies. The higher management competencies scores indicated lower burnout, while higher burnout scores indicated lower management competencies. The same tendency was identified in the social pedagogues' burnout relationship with their *planning* competencies ($r = -0.354$; $p = 0.000$), *organizing* competencies ($r = -0.300$; $p = 0.002$), *leading* competencies ($r = -0.294$; $p = 0.003$), and *controlling* competencies ($r = -0.252$; $p = 0.010$). Therefore, we conclude that the higher burnout is related to weaker planning, organizing, leading, and controlling competencies, while higher scores in these management competencies relate to lower burnout. As indicated in Table 1, the planning competency has the strongest correlation, though all management competencies have relatively weak relationships with burnout.

Table 1

Correlations between the MBI-ES scale and subscales and the SPMC scale and subscales

Scales and subscales	MBI-ES scale		MBI-ES <i>Emotional exhaustion (EE)</i> subscale		MBI-ES <i>Depersonalization (DP)</i> subscale		MBI-ES <i>Professional accomplishment (PA)</i> subscale	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
SPMC <i>planning</i> competencies subscale	-0.354	0.000	-0.238	0.015	-0.201	0.042	0.479	0.000
SPMC <i>organizing</i> competencies subscale	-0.300	0.002	-0.165	0.096	-0.218	0.027	0.437	0.000
SPMC <i>leading</i> competencies subscale	-0.294	0.003	-0.170	0.087	-0.156	0.116	0.455	0.000
SPMC <i>controlling</i> competencies subscale	-0.252	0.010	-0.161	0.104	-0.140	0.158	0.356	0.000
SPMC scale	-0.272	0.005	-0.140	0.159	-0.156	0.117	0.444	0.000

A more detailed correlational analysis indicated that only one of the three MBI-ES subscales significantly correlates with SPMC scale – the *Personal Accomplishment (PA)* subscale ($r = 0.444$; $p = 0,000$), while correlation of the two other MBI-ES subscales (*Emotional Exhaustion* and *Depersonalization*) with the SPMC scale is not statistically significant. This indicates that management competencies are primarily related to only one of the burnout dimensions – that of Personal Accomplishment. Low scores on Personal Accomplishment subscale indicate lower management competencies, while higher Personal Accomplishment scores indicate higher management competencies. Correlational analysis also revealed there is a relationship between the MBI-ES *Personal Accomplishment (PA)* subscale and all of the SPMC subscales: *Planning* ($r = 0.479$; $p = 0.000$), *Organizing* ($r = 0.437$; $p = 0.000$), *Leading* ($r = 0.455$; $p = 0.000$), and *Controlling* ($r = 0.356$; $p = 0.000$). These relationships indicate that higher personal accomplishment is positively related to higher planning, organizing, leading, and controlling management competencies.

Further correlational analyses indicated additional relationships between two MBI-ES subscales (EE and DP) and some of the SPMC subscales. A negative relationship exists between the MBI-ES *Emotional Exhaustion (EE)* subscale and the SPMC *Planning* subscale ($r = -0.238$; $p = 0.015$). This indicates that weaker planning competencies relate to higher emotional exhaustion, whereas higher planning competencies relate to lower

emotional exhaustion scores. Additionally, analyses also revealed a statistically significant negative relationship between the MBI-ES *Depersonalization (DP)* subscale and the SPMC *Planning* competencies subscale ($r = -0.201$; $p = 0.042$) as well as with the SPMC *Organizing* competencies subscale ($r = -0.218$; $p = 0.027$). These results demonstrate that social pedagogues' better planning and organizing competencies relate to lower depersonalization levels, and vice versa.

In summary, results indicated that there is a relationship between social pedagogues' burnout and their management competencies, with higher competencies relating to lower burnout scores. This relationship is particularly strong in the Personal Accomplishment burnout subscale, indicating that management competencies may help educators feel more effective and accomplished in their jobs.

Discussion

In this study we sought to address Maslach and colleague's (2001) call to expand burnout theories by integrating relationships between individual and situational burnout dimensions. In using two instruments, we demonstrated that burnout, especially the personal accomplishment dimension, is directly related to the management competencies of planning, organizing, leading and controlling. Results from this study contribute to expanding the theoretical framework of burnout as related to management competencies. Moreover, findings suggest that social pedagogues and other educators may benefit from training in management competencies. Such training would help social pedagogues maintain their job effectiveness and satisfaction, thus serving the children entrusted in their care.

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Profesinio perdegimo ir vadybinių kompetencijų ryšys: Lietuvos socialinių pedagogų atvejis

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Santrauka

Ch. Maslach, W. B. Schaufeli'o ir M. P. Leiterio (2001) raginimas plėtoti perdegimo teoriją atliekant naujus tyrimus, kurie pagilintų perdegimo priežasčių supratimą, paskatino mokslininkus visame pasaulyje vykdyti profesinio perdegimo tyrimus ir ieškoti profesinio perdegimo ryšio su įvairiais individualiais ir situaciniais perdegimo veiksniais. Tačiau individualių ir situacinių veiksnių integracijos aspektas lyg šiol yra tyrimų silpnoji grandis. Tai paskatino mus sutelkti dėmesį būtent į šią perdegimo priežasčių sferą. Plėtojant perdegimo teoriją ir siekiant paaiškinti profesinį perdegimą naujais veiksniais, kurie integruoja individualius bei situacinius aspektus,

šiam straipsnyje nagrinėjamas edukatorių perdegimo ir jų vadybinių kompetencijų ryšys, nes pastarosios apima individualius ir situacinius profesinės veiklos aspektus. Dėmesys telkiamas į edukatorius, kurie Lietuvoje vadinami socialiniais pedagogais. 103 atsitiktinai parinkti Lietuvos socialiniai pedagogai buvo pakviesti užpildyti perdegimo ir vadybinių kompetencijų klausimynus. Koreliacinė analizė atskleidė, kad egzistuoja vadybinių kompetencijų ryšys su profesiniu perdegimu, ypač su šio perdegimo asmeninių pasiekimų komponentu. Koreliacinė analizė parodė neigiamą, bet statistiškai reikšmingą socialinių pedagogų profesinio perdegimo ir vadybinių kompetencijų ryšį ($r = -0,272$; $p = 0,005$): žemesni perdegimo įverčiai buvo labiau susiję su aukštesniais vadybinių kompetencijų įverčiais. Ta pati silpna tendencija buvo nustatyta detaliau analizuojant socialinių pedagogų profesinio perdegimo ryšį su visais vadybinių kompetencijų komponentais: *planavimo* ($r = -0,354$; $p = 0,000$), *organizavimo* ($r = -0,300$; $p = 0,002$), *vadovavimo* ($r = -0,294$; $p = 0,003$) ir *kontrolės* ($r = -0,252$; $p = 0,010$). Todėl galima teigti, kad didesnis profesinis perdegimas labiau susijęs su silpnesnėmis vadovavimo, organizavimo, vadovavimo ir kontrolės kompetencijomis. Palyginti stipresnė ši sąsaja su planavimo kompetencija – profesinis perdegimas dažniau būdingas tiems specialistams, kurių planavimo kompetencijos yra silpnesnės.

Tyrimo rezultatai padeda praplėsti teorinį supratimą apie profesinio perdegimo veiksmus, ypač individualių ir situacinių veiksnių integracijos sferoje. Paaiškėjo, kad vadybinės kompetencijos, atspindinčios individualius ir situacinius profesinės veiklos aspektus, yra susijusios su profesiniu perdegimu ir gali daryti įtaką profesiniam perdegimui. Nustatyta neigiama profesinio perdegimo ir vadybinių kompetencijų koreliacija svarbi ir praktiniu požiūriu. Atsižvelgiant į tyrimo rezultatus ir siekiant sumažinti socialinių pedagogų bei kitų edukatorių profesinį perdegimą tikslinga padėti šiems profesionalams plėtoti vadybines kompetencijas. Tikėtina, jog vadybinių kompetencijų plėtojimas padės jiems jausti didesnę pasitenkinimą darbu bei dirbti efektyviau. Kartu jie labiau prisidės prie sėkmingos vaikų bei suaugusiųjų socializacijos.

Esminiai žodžiai: *profesinis perdegimas, vadybinės kompetencijos, socialiniai pedagogai.*

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