

WORK RELATED BURNOUT AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STYLE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The mental health of teachers is extremely important for the quality of the teaching and learning process. The literature points out that only a mentally healthy teacher can fully dedicate himself to work, participate in student activities and make the maximum effort to contribute to the student's mental health, both by his activity and by example. The unpredictability of the teacher's work is reflected in the fact that each school year represents a new, unique experience. With the progress of science and technology, as well as with social changes, these challenges are multiplying. Excessive and long-term stress at work leads to burnout syndrome, which negatively affects the mental and physical health of teachers and leaves harmful consequences for the teaching process itself. We can evaluate the teaching process through the behaviour of teachers whose responsibility is establishing order in the classroom, engaging students in the learning and teaching process, and establishing cooperation with them. The term that summarizes all these activities is called classroom management. The creation of a positive and stimulating atmosphere for learning and teaching is one of the basic indicators of good classroom management. If a teacher is exposed to excessive stress, it reduces the quality of his teaching in two ways. First, it reduces job satisfaction, affecting the time and effort invested in teaching. Second, the communication with students is not satisfactory. The purpose of the research was to establish burnout level of elementary school teachers and to investigate a relationship between the degree of burnout and the dominant style of classroom management. The professional burnout scale (MBI-NL-ES, Schaufeli, Daamen and Van Mierlo, 1994, developed according to the MBI-ES, Maslach and Jackson, 1986) was used to assess the burnout syndrome in a sample of 300 teachers. The professional burnout scale consists of three subscales, which measure three dimensions of burnout – emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement. To assess the classroom management style, the Inventory for Self-Assessment of the Classroom Management Style of Teachers (Đigić, Stojiljković, Janjić, 2011) was used, including interactionist, intervening and non-intervening management styles. The results show that the burnout level is related to the dominant classroom management style. Considering the results, the highlighted topics are the sources of stress in the teaching profession, as well as the variety of strategies teachers are using to overcome stressful situations. The concern of the entire educational system for the mental health of teachers is highlighted as an important topic for future research.

Keywords: *teachers, burnout at work, classroom management style*

INTRODUCTION

A mismatch between job requirements and individual abilities can cause a feeling of unused potential or insufficient competency for a job. The consequence is the same in both cases - stress. If an individual is exposed to that negative feeling for too long, it leads to mental and physical exhaustion, resulting in a syndrome known as burnout syndrome, characterized by poor work efficiency and productivity. Kristina Maslach [8] defines burnout as a multidimensional stress syndrome consisting of mental fatigue (emotional exhaustion), negative perceptions and feelings towards co-workers and a sense of minimized personal achievement.

Teacher stress is defined as an unpleasant emotional state because of the long-term, increasing, or new pressures that an individual (teacher) perceives as greater than their coping capabilities [10].

Authors [1] list various sources of stress teachers face in work conditions, functional promotion, the pressure of deadlines, conflicts with work colleagues, and the feeling that society underestimates the importance of the profession. Moreover, he states that stress in the teaching profession is also caused by students who have a bad attitude towards school, who lack motivation for work and progress, class disruptiveness, frequent reforms in education, lack of professional support, etc.

If a teacher is exposed to excessive stress, it reduces the quality of his teaching in two ways. Firstly, it reduces job satisfaction, affecting the time and effort invested in teaching. Secondly, it reduces the quality of communication with students. An effective teacher takes care of a positive atmosphere in the classroom, encourages students, and ensures the quality of teaching. Under the influence of stress, the quality of communication decreases or even completely disappears, especially if the teacher does not know how to deal with stress [10].

While studying the teacher as one of the important factors of successful education, the focus was on the personal qualities of the teacher, followed by the teacher's roles and competencies to successfully perform a complex job.

A concept that unified the role of a teacher appeared towards the end of the last century, called classroom management. According to Brophy [2], effective classroom management involves creating a positive classroom atmosphere based on the principles of a learning community. Đigić [4] defines it as creating a stimulating and safe environment.

Previous research on the topic confirmed its positive contribution to education, which is reflected in the reduction of undesirable student behaviour as

well as enabling the smooth teaching process [4]. If we look at the teacher as the organizer of the teaching process, we notice two dimensions of his behaviour: a) integrative behaviour - encouraging group members to strive for common goals, respecting each member of the group, and b) directive behaviour – pointed towards the task, including the application of specific means to achieve all learning goals and coordinate teaching activities [13]. Đigić [4] believes that good classroom management in only one aspect or one dimension is not enough to achieve high learning achievements.

This research is based on the concept of classroom management by Martin and Baldwin [6], where three key dimensions are distinguished: teaching, personality and discipline. The personality dimension characterizes the teacher's approach to the student's personality, the contribution to the development of that personality, as well as the ability to motivate the student. Moreover, this dimension refers to building a positive psychological atmosphere in the classroom. The teaching dimension refers to the teacher's capacity to create an effective learning environment. It includes components such as working materials, equipment, time and space in which learning takes place, as well as the work methods, the methods of giving instructions, and the organization of the learning content. The dimension of discipline includes the actions of teachers to maintain the discipline in the class contributing to the creation of a positive learning atmosphere. Based on how much teachers share power and control with their students in the classroom led to the differentiation of three different classroom management styles. The intervening management style, with its foundations in behaviourist theory, is based on the understanding that human is a product of external factors, and it is specific for teachers who strive to establish power and control within the classroom. The non-intervening management style is the complete opposite of the previous one. The main characteristic of this style is to leave control over the classroom to the students, trusting that students are self-determining beings and should be allowed to be guided by their inner drivers. We recognize this style in Summerhill school principles. Considering the organization of the education system, as well as the cultural characteristics of the people living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is not much room left for the non-intervening style of classroom management to dominate, and it has proven to be the least effective. The interactionist classroom management style is in the middle of these two extremes, where the control over the classroom is distributed between students and teachers. Teachers who apply this style show a high degree of respect for students' personalities, initiatives, and ideas, provide freedom of choice, and include students in the decision-making process, but they also guide them and set necessary boundaries. This style has its foundation in humanistic psychology. In previous research, this style has proven to be the most successful.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The goal of this research was to determine if there is a connection between the burnout level and the dominant classroom management style. The sample

included teachers working in primary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The research was conducted on a random sample of 300 teachers in 2019.

Instruments

The professional burnout scale (MBI-NL-ES, Schaufeli, Daamen and Van Mierlo, 1994, developed according to the MBI-ES, Maslach and Jackson, 1986) was used to assess burnout syndrome. The scale consists of three subscales, which measure three dimensions of burnout at work – emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal achievement.

Emotional exhaustion refers to the reduction of emotional reserves. It is manifested by a strong feeling of fatigue and loss of emotional energy. When such a condition becomes chronic, teachers are no longer able to perform their duties, to be precise, they are not able to dedicate themselves to students. *Depersonalization* indicates the development of negative attitudes (or cynicism) towards people with whom one cooperates. It represents the internal, interpersonal context of the burnout syndrome and manifests itself through negative behaviour towards students, colleagues, parents and superiors. *Personal achievement* refers to an individual's sense of professional competence. Low perception of personal achievement indicates a decrease in the feeling of professional competence, and it is reflected through a negative expression of self-evaluation, which can lead to a loss of self-esteem and depression, possibly causing a complete decline in the quality of teaching. The reliability of the subscales examining the burnout syndrome at work was checked. The emotional exhaustion and personal achievement subscales have an internal consistency coefficient above 0.70, while the depersonalization scale showed low reliability of 0.53.

The Classroom Management Inventory, written by Gordana Đigić and Snežana Stojiljković (2009), was used to examine classroom management styles. The theoretical basis of the developed Self-Assessment Inventory is the model of Martin & Boldvin, 1993, which distinguishes three styles of classroom management: intervening, interactional, and non-intervening. Within non-interventionist classroom management style, the teacher has minimal control because approach is based on the belief that person has their own needs that tend to express and accomplish them. Intervening classroom management style is based on the belief that the external environment (people and facilities) affects human development in a certain way, therefore that the teacher tends to achieve complete control. interactionist classroom management style is focused on what an individual does in order to change the environment, as well as how the environment affects the individual. In this case, control over the situation in the classroom is shared between teacher and students. The questionnaire formulates 30 description items for each of the three styles of classroom management. The descriptions of teachers' professional behavior are related to 10 different teaching situations and three descriptions are formulated for each of these situations - one

for each style. Reliability was determined by Cronbach alpha coefficient. The Cronbach coefficient for the intervening style is $\alpha = .722$, for the interactionist $\alpha = .861$, and for the nonintervening $\alpha = .787$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First, we examined the correlation of the burnout level with measures of expressiveness of classroom management styles and afterwards with measures of expressiveness of teachers' styles within each dimension separately. Given that the depersonalization subscale did not show sufficiently high reliability, we did not consider the results obtained on this subscale. Instead, we used the degree of emotional exhaustion and the degree of personal achievement as indicators of the burnout level.

Table 1. Correlations of classroom management styles (total scores) with the burnout level in teachers

Classroom Style Management	Emotional exhaustion	Personal achievement	Depersonalization
<i>Intervening management style</i>	-.041 (.241)	.088 (.063)	.160 (.003)
<i>Interactionist management style</i>	-.435** (.000)	.582** (.000)	-.141 (.007)
<i>Non-intervening management style</i>	.305** (.000)	-.271** (.000)	.379 (.000)

Based on the results (Table 1), the degree of emotional exhaustion shows a significant correlation with the interactionist style ($r=0.000$) and the non-intervening classroom management style ($r=0.000$). The correlation with the interactionist style is negative, while with the non-intervening classroom management style, the correlation flows in a positive direction.

The sense of personal achievement also shows a significant correlation at the 0.01 significance level with the interactionist ($r=0.000$) and non-interventionist classroom management style ($r=0.000$) at the 0.01 significance level. The correlation is positive with the interactionist management style, while it is negative with the non-interventionist management style.

Table 2. Correlations of classroom management styles (teaching dimension) with the burnout level in teachers

Classroom Style Management	Emotional exhaustion	Personal achievement	Depersonalization
<i>Intervening management style</i>	-.010 (.432)	.078 (.088)	.231 (.000)
<i>Interactionist management style</i>	-.314** (.000)	.502** (.000)	-.055 (.169)
<i>Non-intervening management style</i>	.209** (.000)	-.135** (.010)	.386 (.000)

Table 3. Correlations of classroom management styles (personality dimension) with the burnout level in teachers

Classroom Style Management	Emotional exhaustion	Personal achievement	Depersonalization
<i>Intervening management style</i>	-0.03 (.476)	.045 (.217)	.150 (.005)
<i>Interactionist management style</i>	-.432** (.000)	.371** (.000)	-.250 (.000)
<i>Non-intervening management style</i>	.388** (.000)	-.273** (.010)	.347 (.000)

Table 4. Correlations of classroom management styles (discipline dimension) with the burnout level in teachers

Classroom Style Management	Emotional exhaustion	Personal achievement	Depersonalization
<i>Intervening management style</i>	-.0083 (.077)	.128* (.013)	-.077 (.091)
<i>Interactionist management style</i>	-.417** (.000)	.517** (.000)	-.171 (.001)
<i>Non-intervening management style</i>	.257** (.000)	-.260** (.010)	.284 (.000)

When observing the correlations within the individual dimensions of class management (teaching, discipline, personality), the situation is very similar.

The degree of emotional exhaustion shows a slight deviation in the teaching dimension (Table 2) within the interactionist style. Namely, the level of significance is the same ($r=0.000$), but the correlation coefficient is lower and shows a low correlation, while the dimensions of personality (Table 3) and discipline (Table 4) show a correlation of medium intensity. The direction of the correlation is negative.

When looking at the sense of personal achievement according to the dimensions within each style, there is a statistical significance ($r=0.013$) with the discipline dimension (Table 4) within the intervening classroom management style. The correlation coefficient is positive. Within the interactionist style, the feeling of personal achievement shows a low connection with the dimension of personality (Table 3), while with the dimension of teaching (Table 2) and discipline (Table 4), it shows a connection of medium intensity. Statistical significance is the same in all three dimensions ($r=0.000$).

The correlation with the non-intervening classroom management style and the sense of personal achievement shows slight deviations when it comes to the teaching dimension (Table 2). The statistical significance is slightly lower ($r=0.010$) compared to the other two dimensions (0.000), and it has a lower intensity, compared to the dimensions of personality (Table 3) and discipline (Table 4). The direction of the correlation is negative.

Explaining the non-intervening style according to the dimensions, we can say that within the *teaching dimension* of teachers, dominated by this style, it is characterized by a frontal form of work without paying attention to the students reactions. Within the *personality dimension*, teachers are characterized by disinterest and a formal attitude reduced exclusively to working on the teaching material, without any introductory, relaxing conversation and interest in the needs of the students. Moreover, when faced with a lack of discipline in the class, teachers do not react but continue with the lesson, shifting the responsibility to the students if the required material is not well mastered [5].

Research has shown that teacher work engagement is negatively related to burnout syndrome, which means that a teacher who is less engaged at work shows a greater burnout syndrome [9]. Therefore, the lack of motivation, energy and persistence and the reduction of work capacity to a minimum, where the teacher only formally performs his work without taking into account the needs, interests and capacities of the students, leads to a greater degree of emotional exhaustion and a low sense of personal achievement. In summary, the results of this research showed that teachers dominated by a non-intervention style of classroom management have a higher risk of burnout at work.

Teachers dominated by the interactionist style of classroom management respect the student's personality, are polite in their communication and consider the needs of the students. They try to use different methods and activities in their work to engage and motivate all students during classes. Moreover, when faced with indiscipline in class, they use their own and the students' capacities to solve the problem and return the students to the working atmosphere as soon as possible [5].

Studies exploring the teacher's self-efficiency show that teachers who involve students in teaching activities and solve the difficulties they encounter

during the teaching process have a higher degree of self-efficacy [11]. This type of teacher is similar to the teacher with a dominant interactionist classroom management style. The efficiency of the interactions style compared to others confirms the research of Đigić [4], concluding that, by checking the effectiveness of classroom management styles according to this division, the interactionist style is singled out as the most effective. In this classroom management style, in addition to the students, the teachers are also satisfied with the class atmosphere. Moreover, it proved to be stimulating because the students achieved better learning results. Other research has shown that teachers with a high degree of self-efficacy show a lower degree of burnout at work [3].

CONCLUSIONS

Considering that the burnout level determines the available capacities of teachers and that teachers with a high degree of burnout have greater difficulties in maintaining control in the classroom and establishing quality interpersonal relationships with students, this research started from the hypothesis that there is a connection between the burnout variable and class management variables.

Based on the results, we can conclude that there is a relationship between burnout level and the teacher's classroom management style. Teachers with a high burnout level (high emotional exhaustion and low sense of personal accomplishment) show a tendency towards a non-interventionist management style, while teachers with a lower burnout level (low emotional exhaustion and a high sense of personal achievement) show a tendency towards an interactionist management style. The correlation between the intervening style and the burnout level was not statistically significant.

We conclude that teachers who are dominated by an interactionist management style have a lower risk of burnout.

In many previous studies, classroom management is one of the key factors responsible for effective teaching [7], as well as very important for the achievement of desired academic achievements of students [12]. This research has shown that it is one of the factors that affect the mental health of teachers, which is extremely important for the quality of the learning and teaching process.

The implication of this research is the education of teachers in the field of classroom management and emphasis on the application of the interactionist style both for the mental health of teachers and for the improvement of the educational process in general.

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