

An Examination of Teacher's Occupational Burnout Levels in terms of Organizational Confidence and Some Other Variables

Çağlar ÇAĞLAR^a

Adıyaman University

Abstract

An effort is made in this research to determine the correlations between primary school teachers' levels of confidence in their organization and their burnout levels and other variables. The research population is composed of teachers teaching in the primary schools located in the city center of Adıyaman in 2009-2010 academic year whereas the sample is made up of 325 teachers teaching at 13 primary schools chosen by using stratified sampling. "Personal information Forms", "a multi-purpose T scale" and "Maslach's Burnout Scale" were used so as to gather the data. Mann Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis H tests as well as Spearman's correlation analysis were employed in the analysis of the data obtained. Consequently, it was found out that the organizational trust level of the primary teachers was medium-level and their burnout levels were medium as well. By analyzing the data significant differences were found in the variables of age, branch and the number of teachers on the dimension of trust; in the variable of marital status in burn out dimension; and in the variables of seniority and age in the dimensions of trust and burn out levels between groups. On examining the correlations between organizational confidence levels and burnout levels, a low negative relation was found.

Key Words

Organizational Trust, Burnout, Primary Schools..

Trust, which is defined as adherence with no fear, hesitation or doubt in Turkish dictionary (Türk Dil Kurumu [TDK], 1998), is one of the factors which assures that social life, which is made up of complex relations one inside another, is sustained in a healthy way (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Societies which are composed of individuals having confidence in each other display higher success in terms of organizational novelties

due to the fact that high levels of trust lead to the emergence of various types of relations. In societies with low confidence levels, however, individuals find themselves in an environment where there is a system of formal rules and regulations forcing them to make bargains, to agree and to take legal actions. In societies with such regulations, oppressive methods forcing individuals to act in accordance with predetermined rules are always on the agenda inevitably (Fukuyama, 1998).

According to Lashinger and Finegan (2005), lack of respect and confidence in a work environment has harmful effects on both the organization and the employee. An employee with no confidence makes fewer contributions to organizational objectives and actions than one with confidence (cited in Tüzün 2007). Confidence is regarded as an important factor for the success of an organization whereas lack of confidence damages the har-

^a PhD. Çağlar Çağlar is currently an Assistant Professor at the Department of Educational Sciences, Education Administration Supervision Planning and Economics. His research interests include organizational behavior. *Correspondence*: Assist. Prof. Çağlar Çağlar, Adıyaman University, Faculty of Education, Department of Education Administration Supervision Planning and Economics, Adıyaman/Turkey. E-mail: ccaglar@adiyaman.edu.tr Phone: +90 416 223 3800.

mony and success in an organization (Adams & Wiswell, 2008).

Organizations' preference for oppressive methods to make the employees adhere to the rules causes the employees not to get job satisfaction and to become indifferent to the organization. Today, when the rapid changes experienced force organizations to change and reform, organizations' coping with the challenge depends on their ability to create an environment in which employees have relations on confidence basis, they are loyal to the organization and have certain amount of job satisfaction rather than an environment in which employees are kept together through oppressive methods. Evidently, an organizational culture based on confidence is very important for educational organizations, where human relations are experienced more often, to cope with uncertainties caused by changes and to innovate themselves.

Organisational Confidence

Organizational confidence is the state of trust on the organization and is based upon organizational roles, relations and experiences, and it consists of the organization members' positive expectations of other members' intention and attitudes (Tüzün, 2007). While Perry and Mankin (2004) were describing the organization trust as the general belief and sureness of the members of the organization against the ability and qualification of the directors Mishara (1996), was describing it as the awareness will of the people in the organization for the aim, norm and values of the organization and being honest and realistic to each other. Thus, confidence forms the foundation of all the intra-organizational relations both horizontally and vertically.

Organizational confidence, which arises in consequence of the consistent relations established between the employees in an organization (Demirel, 2008), has functions in reducing the costs, in igniting cooperation between members, leading to willingness to make extra contributions, facilitating obeying the organizational rules and in minimizing the conflicts (Erdem, 2003).

Organizational confidence may develop in consequence of a set of factors such as clear communication, employees' involvement in the decision-making process, sharing the knowledge and information, and sharing the emotions and expectations in the right way (Gilbert & Tang, 1998).

Organizational confidence is influential in numerous variables. Confidence within schools has significant effects on facilitating the cooperation (Tshannen-Moran, 2001), developing an open school culture (Hoffmann et al., 1994), encouraging group loyalty, on school leadership and students' achievement (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001), and on (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003) improving school quality (cited in Polat, 2007). In a similar vein, research results have demonstrated that positive correlations are available between organizational confidence and the concepts of teachers' life satisfaction (Yılmaz & Sünbül, 2009), organizational atmosphere (Özdil, 2005), organizational change (Lenz, 2005), and burnout (Ceyanes, 2004).

The level of confidence within school organizations is the outcome of the relations in schools. The confidence at schools is a fact containing the democracy, gains and accountability (Meier, 2002). According to Tshanmen-Moran and Hoy (1998), confidence is an important factor in attaining the success in schools and in establishing a better environment of healthy relations between teachers and between teachers and administrators and of pedagogical efficiency (cited in Ercan, 2006). Research results show that the students and teachers being in the classes in which the level of confidence is high spend more time for learning activities compared to low ones (Baloche, 1998 as cited in Ceyanes, 2004). The applicability of the new management approaches such as the participation of parents in school management, participatory decision making and school-based management and the new instructional approaches such as cooperative learning and project-based learning in school depends on the existence of the feeling of confidence (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Burnout

Burnout, which is defined as the state of losing one's strength, not being able to make efforts by Turkish dictionary (TDK, 1998), is frequently encountered in professions offering help to people and in individuals working in environments of frequent affective demands for long as well as in those who are very eager to serve to people (Çokluk, 2000).

The concept of burnout is defined as an occupational stress stemming from running out of energy, loss of strength and dissatisfied desires which is encountered by those who deal with people

and which leads to emotional burning out (Deliorman, Boz, Yiğit, & Yıldız, 2009). Pines, Elliot and Kafry (1981) define burnout as the physical, emotional and mental exhaustion stemming from emotional pressures caused by intense relations with people (cited in Ayalon, 1989).

Maslach and Jackson (1981) suggest that burnout, which is experienced by those with intense human relations, is a syndrome with three components called emotional burnout, desensitization and decrease in the feeling of success. Emotional burnout is defined as an individual's tiredness and an increase in feeling that he is worn out emotionally, loss of energy, exhaustion and extreme tiredness. While emotional exhaustion increases the depressive feelings and the negative emotions of an individual such as insecure feeling, hopelessness, increasing tension at home, unhappiness, irritability and frustration it decreases the positive feelings (Kayabaşı, 2008). Desensitization describes a state in which an individual becomes indifferent and scornful towards people to be served due to alienation to the occupation (Cordes, Dougherty, & Bulum, 1997). Decrease in personal success, on the other hand, describes states in which an individual goes through the two states and in consequence has difficulty in fulfilling the liabilities, his productive power is reduced and self-reliance is weakened.

Cherniss (1980) regards burnout as a process of three stages named stress, tenseness and defense (cited in Ayalon, 1989). Considering that one of the stress creating factors is the low level of organizational confidence, it may be said that low levels of organizational confidence causes negative effects on the feeling of burning out.

Teaching is described as a job having high risks in terms of coping with daily life problems (Baltaş & Baltaş, 1999). The fact that such problems as teacher-student and school-parents conflicts, discipline problems with students, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate physical conditions, little social support, pressures applied by political and social powers on educational institutions, insufficiency of involvement in the decision-making process are frequently encountered in educational organizations causes teachers to experience more stress than the members of other occupational groups do. Those problems causing the emergence of stress, anxiety and burnout result in low achievement, negative attitudes towards the profession, frequent absence from workplace, desire to quit the job, and dete-

rioration in physical and mental health (Çokluk, 2000). A problematic, anxious and unhappy teacher influences the students in a negative way while a tolerant, calm and supportive teacher has positive influences on the students (Girgin, 2010). The stress and burnout of teachers have significant effects on parents, administrators, students and their parents. These are also either directly or indirectly reflected upon the entire society (Friedman & Farber, 1992 as cited in Çokluk, 2000).

This research aims to determine the level of organizational confidence perceived by primary school teachers in relation to the schools they work and their burnout levels in terms of several variables. Therefore, an effort is made in this study to determine whether the correlations between the levels of organizational confidence perceived by primary school teachers concerning the schools they work and their levels of burnout differ in terms of such variables as gender, marital status, age, branch, seniority and the number of teachers at school.

Numerous research studies handling organizational confidence and burnout separately are available in field literature. However, the number of studies revealing the correlations between the two dimensions is apparently insufficient. Thus, a second purpose of the research is to determine the correlations between the level of organizational confidence and its sub-dimensions and the burnout levels and sub-dimensions; and thus to contribute to fill the gap in the field.

Method

This is a descriptive study based on review model. Whereas the research population is composed of 1860 teachers teaching in center primary schools located in the city center of Adiyaman in 2009-2010 academic year, the sample is made up of 325 teachers teaching at 13 primary schools chosen by using stratified sampling method. In this study, to measure teachers' feelings of organizational trust "Omnibus T Scale" which was developed by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003) and the validity and reliability was adapted to Turkish by Özer, Demirtaş, Üstüner and Cömert (2006), was used. To measure burnout "Maslach Burnout Inventory" developed by Maslach and Jackson (1985) and adapted to Turkish by Ergin (1992) was used. Mann Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H, and Spearman's Correlations test were used to analyze the data.

Results

Significant differences were found in organizational confidence and burnout levels in terms of gender, in the dimensions of total confidence [$\chi^2 = 4.60; p < .05$] and total burnout [$\chi^2 = 4.56; p < .05$], in the sub-dimensions of confidence in students and protective parents [$\chi^2 = 7.18; p < .05$], in the sub-dimension of emotional burnout [$\chi^2 = 4.87; p < .05$], in terms of marital status on the dimension of total burnout [$\chi^2 = 6.396; p < .05$], in the sub-dimension of emotional burnout [$\chi^2 = 4.352; p < .05$], in terms of age in the sub-dimension of confidence in students and protective parent [$\chi^2 = 32.154; p < .05$], in terms of branch in the sub-dimension of confidence in students and protective parents [$\chi^2 = 15.914; p < .05$], in terms of seniority on the dimension of total burnout [$\chi^2 = 16.967; p < .05$] and in the sub-dimension of confidence in students and protective parents, in terms of the number of teachers in school in the sub-dimension of confidence in the school principal [$\chi^2 = 7.851; p < .05$] whereas no significant differences were found between groups in other dimensions. A low negative relation was found between the level of organizational confidence and burnout levels [$r = -.22; p < .01$].

Discussion

On examining the data, it was found that a significant difference was available between male and female teachers in the dimensions of total confidence and total burnout, as well as in the sub-dimensions of confidence in students and protective parents, and emotional burnout. It was also found that male teachers' level of confidence was higher than that of female teachers' on the dimension of total confidence and in the sub-dimension of confidence in students and protective parents while female teachers' burnout level was higher than that of male teachers' on the dimension of total burnout and on the dimension of emotional burnout. This result with the dimension of confidence and the sub dimension of confidence in students and parents confirms the findings of Özer et al. (2006), Ercan (2006) and, Polat and Celep (2008). Male teachers' high level of confidence might have been stemmed from the gender of institution administrators, which was determinant of the formation of organizational confidence. The fact that the principals were male in schools of research led to closer relations between principals and male teachers and more formal and distant relations between principals and female teachers, as a reflection of tradi-

tional male-female relations; and this case resulted in male teachers with higher levels of confidence and female teachers with lower levels of confidence (Polat, 2007). The low level of female teachers' confidence on the dimension of confidence in students and protective parents may indicate that female teachers had more problems than male teachers did in communicating with students and protective parents. Whereas, Çokluk-Bökeoğlu (2001) and Özdil (2005) stated that there were no significant differences between genders. The finding that female teachers suffered more from burnout than male teachers on the dimension of total burnout in terms of gender and on the sub-dimension of emotional burnout may be interpreted as the fact that they were more emotional and they had more responsibilities at home outside the school, and thus they experienced more burnout than their male colleagues. The finding that female teachers suffered more from burnout than male teachers on the dimension of emotional burnout was parallel to the works of Tümkaya (1996), Babaoğlu (2007), Ergin (1992), Özer (1998), Akçamete, Kaner, and Sucuoğlu, (2001), Girgin (1995), Sucuoğlu and Kuloğlu-Aksaz (1996) and Kayabaşı (2008). The female teachers are more emotional and they have more responsibilities at home outside the school, (Maslach & Jackson, 1985) and thus they may experience more burnout than their male colleagues. While Çokluk (1999), Kırılmaz, Çelen, and Sarp (2003), Dolunay (2001), Gündüz (2004), Cemaloğlu and Şahin (2007), Ensari and Tuzcuoğlu (1996) specified that there was no significant relationship between gender and burnout level Avşaroğlu, Deniz, and Kahraman (2005) stated that male teachers experienced higher burnout. On analyzing the data in terms of marital status, it was found that there were significant differences on the dimension of total burnout and on the sub-dimension of emotional burnout. On both dimensions single teachers' level of burnout was higher than that of married ones. While the results of the research were parallel to the research results of Cemaloğlu and Şahin (2007), Babaoğlu (2007), Ensari and Tuzcuoğlu (1996), Ergin (1992), Torun (1995), Özer (1998), Örmən (1993), Tümkaya (1996), İzgar (2001), Tuğrul and Çelik (2002) it contradicted with the results of Kayabaşı (2008). This could be attributed to single teachers' life styles. The fact that married teachers' had more regular life styles than single ones, and that family life made individuals more flexible, more responsible and more experienced in front of problems, and it offered social support to individuals could

be the reason for their experiencing less burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1985).

On analyzing the data in terms of age, it may be stated that as the age rise the level of confidence in students and protective parents also rise on the sub-dimension of confidence in students and protective parents. The probability of younger teachers to encounter more problems in communicating effectively with students and protective parents may be said to cause a decrease in their level of confidence.

The analysis of the data on the basis of branch variable showed that primary school teachers' level of confidence was higher than that of social sciences and science teachers' on the sub-dimension of confidence in students and protective parents. However Özer et al. (2006), Çokluk-Bökeoğlu and Yılmaz (2008) and Ercan (2006) reported that in their studies there were no differentiations according to the branch variable. This finding may be said to be the consequence of the fact that primary school teachers came together with students and their parents more often than social sciences or science teachers did and thus they established more relations with them.

On analyzing the data in terms of seniority, a significant difference was found on the dimension of total burnout and on the sub-dimension of confidence in students and protective parents. It was discovered that as the working year increased the burnout level decreased on the dimension of total burnout. This result support the works of Ensari and Tuzcuoğlu (1996), Girgin (1995, 2010), Özer (1998), Dolunay and Piyal (2003). However, Kayabaşı (2008), Avşaroğlu et al. (2005) stated that there was no difference between the groups according to the seniority variable. The fall in the burnout level in parallel to the increase in seniority may be said to be connected with teachers' expectations and experience. Increase in their seniority leads to their accepting the current situation and to developing more realistic expectations. The decrease in expectations also results in a decrease in the burnout level. The increased seniority causes an increase in occupational experience. Teachers learn how to cope with burning out through experience (Konert, 1997). On the sub-dimension of confidence in students and protective parents, it was found that the level of confidence increased as the seniority increased. Having a relationship between the seniority and the sub-dimensions of confidence in students and their parents is supporting the research results of Polat and Celep (2008) but it is contra-

dicting with the research results of Özer et al. (2006) and Çokluk-Bökeoğlu and Yılmaz (2008). The lower level of confidence for teachers with lower seniority may be the result of encountering more problems than the other teachers did in communicating with students and protective parents. Due to an increase in communication skills and occupational experience in parallel to the increase in seniority, teachers with more experience may be said to encounter fewer problems in communicating with students and protective parents; which will have a positive influence in the level of confidence.

The analysis of the data on the basis of number of teachers at school revealed that, on the sub-dimension of confidence in the school principal, the confidence in the principal decreased as the number of teachers at school increased. This result supports the works of Özer et al. (2006) and Ercan (2006). The lower number of teachers at school assured closer relations between the principal and the teachers and better familiarity and higher confidence. This case may be said to have an influence in raising the confidence in the principal.

When analyzing the total scores of organizational trust and burnout scales, it was seen that teachers' perceptions of organizational trust was a medium level and their burnout level was similarly medium-level according to them.

On examining the correlations between the sub-dimensions of organizational confidence and the sub-dimensions of burnout levels, it was found that there was a significant but low negative correlation between such sub-dimensions as confidence in colleagues, confidence in students and protective parents and confidence in the principal in terms of organizational confidence and such sub-dimensions as emotional burnout and desensitization in terms of burnout levels; a significant yet low negative correlation was also found with the sub-dimension of personal achievement. In general, as the level of organizational confidence increased, the level of teachers' emotional burnout and desensitization fell; yet the feeling of personal achievement and the level of confidence increased. Setting out from that relation, it could be said that the factors increasing the level of organizational confidence concerning the schools have an influence in reducing the burnout level.

Establishing the organizational confidence in schools and raising the level of confidence is very important so that teachers encounter the feeling of burning out less often. Organizational confidence is formed in a long term and changes very slowly.

Therefore, building a state of confidence requires a long-term effort in schools. Forming a culture of open organization possessing effective communication channels by the school administration and sustaining it will function as a starting point for creating organizational confidence, which may take a long time.

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