

Occupational Stress, Burnout and Job Satisfaction among Supervisors in North Cyprus

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Abstract *The demands on supervisors both in and out of educational settings introduced by the recent learner-based innovations and combined with increased work load have led many to question the levels of job satisfaction, occupational stress and burnout among supervisors. The goal of this article was to explore the levels of occupational stress, burnout and job satisfaction among supervisors in North Cyprus. The target population of this study was all supervisors working for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in North Cyprus. All 34 supervisors were included in the study. Data were collected through (1) Occupational Environment Scale (Osipow & Spokane, 1983), (2) the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981b) and (3) the Minnesota Work Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weis et al., 1967). The level of job satisfaction of supervisors was found to be high, whereas levels of their occupational stress were found to be moderate. The levels of emotional burnout and personal accomplishment were also found to be moderate but the level of depersonalization was found to be low among the supervisors.*

Keywords *Supervisors; work stress; burnout; job satisfaction*

1. Introduction

During the past 25 years, researchers have paid a great interest in the phenomena of job satisfaction, stress, and burnout. Barrick (1989) argues that the linkage between stress, job satisfaction, and the work environment is critical to the study of burnout. Although studies of efficacy and job satisfaction among teachers and principals provide meaningful data on job satisfaction, little is known about job satisfaction, occupational stress and burnout among supervisors. Stress and burnout in teaching is a worldwide phenomenon. Research studies conducted in Hong Kong (Hui & Chan, 1996), Cyprus (Goker, 2011), New Zealand (Manthei, Gilmore, Tuck & Adair, 1996), the United Kingdom (Griffith, Steptoe & Copley, 1999), Australia (McCormick, 1997), the United States (Abel & Sewell, 1999) and elsewhere, all indicate that teachers are suffering from some degree of occupational stress. One of the most important findings of all of these studies is the fact that the general stress level is very similar (Kyriacou, 2000). Around 25 to 30 per cent, that is one to every four teachers, describe the profession as very to extremely stressful (Chaplain, 1995; Manthei et al., 1996).

However, it might be misleading to assume that findings pertaining to this population can be generalized for all people in all stakeholders in education. A satisfied teacher, with high morale, is likely to get along well with other teachers, will be more accepting of supervisor's directives, will be more committed to achieving organizational goals, and consequently will be more productive.

Supervisors like teachers and principals are the group with the highest risk for burnout, role conflict and job satisfaction. Factors and variables within the context of educational activities seem to be inexhaustible. One such factor that attracted an investigation is 'administrative stress' as it affects supervisors (Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1992; Allison, 1997; Lutton, 1988). Although supervisors also have their responsibility and expected accountability, they have not been studied as extensively. In the few studies on the subject, burn-out was investigated in relation to performance-based accreditation standards, and to the level of administration in education (Barrick, 1989), administration stress, and sex-role orientation (Torelli & Gmelch 1993), to job intensity and role ambiguity (Gmelch, 1994), to stress response (Gmelch & Chan 1995; Lutton, 1988), to external pressures, job overload, bureaucracy, and lack of management (Draper & McMichael, 1996), and to organization stressors and human resource management (Friedman, 1997; Cheng, 1994; Fletcher, 1988; Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987).

2. Literature Review

Results gained from the research studies indicate that job satisfaction is regarded as a positive pleasurable emotional reaction to a person's job experience (Russel et al., 1987; Friedman, 2000; Davis, 1981 and Dawis & Lofquist (1984)

argue that job satisfaction explains what makes people want to come to work and makes them happy about their job or not to quit their jobs. The investigators also note that that job satisfaction could be fundamentally the result of effective behavior management. It is clear that high satisfaction and morale on the part of supervisors are generally viewed as desirable goals for effectiveness of teachers and schools.

There are a number of ways of measuring job satisfaction. According to Stanton et al. (2002), job satisfaction has been measured in several ways, ranging from single item measures (Kunin 1955, Scarpello & Campbell, 1983) to general multi-item measures (Ironson, et al. 1989) to multifaceted, multi-item measures (Smith, Kendall & Hulin 1969, Vroom 1964, Warr & Routledge 1969, Weiss, et al., 1967). Several scales have been utilized to measure job satisfaction such as The MSQ (Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire) (Weiss et al. 1967), The Need Satisfaction Questionnaire (Porter 1961), and the Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman & Oldham 1975). The MSQ has been used in this study as it has been used in a numerous research studies so far.

The quality of supervision provided by supervisors is negatively affected by problems related to job satisfaction, work-related stress and burnout. In terms of specific job stressors, it appears that there are also certain issues and contextual factors in supervisors' job that cause them more concern, stress and eventually burnout. Management of supervisory process, time pressure, interpersonal demands, lack of professional recognition, the diversity of tasks required by reflective learning environments (Goker, 2006a), bureaucracy, lack of support, the amount of paperwork required and lack of resources provided (Burke, Greenglass, & Schwarzer, 1996; Chan, 1998; Pithers, 1995) could be the sources of stress that systematically predict dimensions of burnout. Heavy work load, long daily working hours, and perception of negative work conditions can also lead to burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981a; Cheng, 1994; Olkinuora et al., 1990). However, due to the recent developments on the school-based management (SBM) structures (Goker, 2006a), work load of supervisors is not as high as it used to be. Because, schools administered under SMB implement peer coaching programs, in which teachers carry out supervisory tasks and produce a high level of instructional effectiveness (Goker, 2006b).

Still demands on supervisors both in and out of educational settings introduced by the recent learner-based innovations and combined with increased work load have led many to question the levels of job satisfaction, occupational stress and burnout among supervisors.

There is a general view that burnout may have a negative impact on the teachers and supervisor themselves leading (Balkin, White & Bodey, 2003; Matheny, Gfroerer & Harris 2000). Burnout is defined as a chronic affective response pattern to stressful work conditions that feature high levels of interpersonal contact. Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) conceptualized burnout as consisting of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion refers to the feeling of being emotionally over-extended, tired and fatigued. Depersonalization refers to the tendency to develop negative, cynical, callous or detached attitudes towards the people with whom one works. The third component is the loss of or reduced feeling of personal accomplishment derived from jobs and employees often evaluate themselves negatively (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001).

Together with burnout, other people and factors may also have an effect on occupational stress, burnout and job satisfaction among supervisors. Therefore, this study was carried out to explore the levels of occupational stress, burnout and job satisfaction of supervisors who work for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in North Cyprus.

3. Method

3.1 Population and Sample

This cross-sectional, descriptive study was carried out in North Cyprus between December 20, 2010 and February 27, 2011. The target population of this study is all 34 supervisors working for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in North Cyprus. 29 out of all 34 supervisors participated in the study. Before conducting the research, supervisors were informed that their identity would be kept confidential and the information obtained would be used for scientific purposes only. Data were collected using the following instruments.

3.2 Instrumentation

Instruments in their original shapes are already standardized having high validity and reliability, however, they were translated into Turkish by the researcher. Adaptation into Turkish and validity-reliability studies were also conducted by Ergin (1992) and Baycan (1985). The questionnaires were also subjected to a pilot run. Data collection was done personally and through mail. The use of both procedures resulted in a response rate 85.29 %.

Occupational Stress. To measure the level of occupational stress, the "Occupational Environment Scale" developed by

Osipow and Spokane (1983) was used. The OEC combined subscales, each containing 5-point subjective rating scale questions ranging from "Most of the Time" to "Rarely or Never." The subscales were combined to create an overall measure of occupational stress. Reliability for the overall scale was $\alpha = .83$.

Burnout. The second instrument used in the study is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) with 22 items and 3 subscales, which was developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981b) to obtain supervisors' level of professional "emotional exhaustion," "depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The MBI's subscales are the emotional exhaustion subscale (EE), which contains items designed to measure the feeling of being emotionally overextended or exhausted by one's work; the depersonalization subscale (DP), which contains items designed to measure the individual's lack of feeling or impersonal response to people; and the personal accomplishment (PA) subscale, which contains items designed to measure the supervisor's feelings of competence and successful achievements in one's work. The scale was reverse scored for both frequency and intensity; therefore, low scores indicated higher levels of burnout. Reliability for the overall scale for this study was $\alpha = .80$.

Job satisfaction. The third instrument used in this study is the Minnesota Work Satisfaction Questionnaire (WSQ), a 20-item tool that elicits internal and external satisfaction factors, which was developed by Weis, Dawis, England, and Lofquist (1967). The Minnesota WSQ is a 5-point Likert scale including general satisfaction (GS), internal satisfaction (IS) and external satisfaction (ES) factors.

All data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 18.0). Descriptive statistics were calculated for personal variables of the supervisors, each independent variable, and the dependent variable in the study. Pearson product moment correlations were computed to describe the strength and direction of the relationships between variables: occupational stress, burnout and, job satisfaction. One-Way ANOVA, Kruskal Wallis Variance Analysis, *t* test and Mann Whitney *U* test were used in the evaluation of relationships between individual and work characteristics and the tools. Cronbach's alpha was used in the determination of reliability coefficients. A *p* value of <0.05 was accepted as statistical significance.

3.3 Demographics

Participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, subject field, years of supervising and administrative experience, education level, as well as their marital status.

4. Findings

55.2 % of the subjects are between 41-50 year-old, 51.7 % of them are male and 48.3 % of them are female. 75.9 % of the subjects used to be primary school teachers before they became supervisors, the rest are teaching other subjects 24.1 %.

Table 1. Summary of Participants' Profile

Particulars	Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	15	51.7
	Female	14	48.3
Age Group	31-40 years	1	3.4
	41-50 years	16	55.2
	51 and above	12	41.4
Subject field	Primary school teaching	22	75.9
	Other subject field teaching	7	24.1
Marital Status	Married	29	100
Experience in Supervision	5 years or less	18	62.1
	6-10 years	10	34.5
	11-15 years	1	3.4
Highest Qualification	B.A	15	51.7
	M.A	10	34.5
	PhD	4	13.8
Administrative Experience	No experience	14	48.3
	As school vice principal	3	34.5
	As school principal	5	17.2

All subjects are married. 96.6 % of the subjects have less than ten-year experience. 51.7 % of them hold B.A degrees while the rest hold postgraduate degrees. 48.3 % of them have no administrative experience and 51.7 % of them have administrative experience as school principal or vice principal (Table 1).

Table 2 Supervisors' Occupational Environment Scale, Maslach Burnout Inventory and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire Reliability Coefficients (*N*: 29)

Subscales	α
Occupational Environment Scale	0.83
Maslach Burnout Inventory	0.80
Emotional exhaustion	0.89
Depersonalization	0.77
Personal accomplishment	0.74
Work Satisfaction Questionnaire	
General satisfaction	0.93
Internal satisfaction	0.94
External satisfaction	0.77

As demonstrated in Table 2, the reliability coefficient for the Occupational Environment Scale for the supervisors was found to be $\alpha = 0.83$. The reliability coefficient for the Maslach Burnout Inventory was $\alpha = 0.80$, and the burnout subscales' reliability coefficients were Emotional Exhaustion $\alpha = 0.85$, Depersonalization $\alpha = 0.78$, and Personal Accomplishment $\alpha = 0.74$. The reliability coefficient for the Minnesota Work Satisfaction Questionnaire's subscales were: general work satisfaction $\alpha = 0.93$, internal satisfaction $\alpha = 0.94$ and external satisfaction $\alpha = 0.77$.

Table 3 Supervisors' Occupational Environment Scale, Maslach Burnout Inventory and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire Mean Scores (*N*: 29)

Subscales	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Occupational Environment Scale	34.9	7.43	19	63
Maslach Burnout Inventory				
Emotional exhaustion	23.5	3.9	7	14
Depersonalization	16.5	1.6	3	20
Personal accomplishment	24.4	3.7	5	18
Work Satisfaction Questionnaire				
General satisfaction	3.3	0.7	0.7	4.8
Internal satisfaction	3.1	0.9	0.8	4.5
External satisfaction	3.0	0.8	0.6	6.5

The supervisors' mean occupational stress score was 34.9 ± 7.4 (at a moderate level). The mean scores for the burnout subscales were found to be 23.5 ± 3.9 for emotional exhaustion (at a moderate level), 16.5 ± 1.6 for depersonalization (at a low level), and 24.4 ± 3.7 for personal accomplishment (at a moderate level). The work satisfaction subscales' mean scores were found to be 3.3 ± 0.7 for general satisfaction (at a high level), 3.1 ± 0.9 for internal satisfaction (at a high level) and 3.0 ± 0.8 for external satisfaction (at a high level) (Table 3).

Table 4 Correlation and Level of Significance of Occupational Stress, Job Satisfaction and Three Burnout Components with Each Other

Subscales	OS (r)	EE (r)	DP (r)	PA (r)	GS	IS
EE	0.54 ^a	1.0				
DP	0.37 ^a	0.65 ^a	1.0			
PA	-0.05 ^a	-0.16 ^a	-0.25 ^a	1.0		
GS	-0.43 ^a	-0.37 ^a	-0.18 ^a	-0.04 ^a		
IS	-0.36 ^a	-0.33 ^a	-0.16 ^a	-0.07 ^a	0.93 ^a	
ES	-0.46 ^a	-0.36 ^a	-0.21 ^a	0.06 ^a	0.89 ^a	0.68 ^a

OS: occupational stress; EE: emotional exhaustion; DP: depersonalization; PA: personal accomplishment; GS: general satisfaction; IS: internal satisfaction; ES: external satisfaction

^a Significant correlation at the level of 0.01 ($p < 0.01$) in Pearson Correlation Analysis.

As displayed in Table 4, five dependent variables were found to be significantly correlated with each other. In the correlation analysis the OES showed negative correlation with JS and PA, but positive correlation with EE and DP. However, EE was negatively correlated with PA and JS, but positively correlated with DP. DP was negatively correlated with PA and JS. The correlation between JS and PA was negative.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the level of job satisfaction of supervisors was found to be high, whereas levels of their occupational stress were found to be moderate. The levels of emotional burnout and personal accomplishment were also found to be moderate but the level of depersonalization was found to be low among the supervisors. The Work Satisfaction Inventory subscale levels for general work satisfaction, and internal and external satisfaction were all found to be high. Taking the significant correlation among OES, WSQ and MBI scores into consideration, we can demonstrate a relationship between work stress, JS and burnout. However, the specific content of such a relationship is a matter of speculation. For instance, it is not certain whether burnout causes dissatisfaction or a drop in satisfaction leads to burnout.

Alternatively, both burnout and job dissatisfaction may be caused by other factors such as poor working conditions, effects of relationships with other workers (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). This finding supports the positions of Olkinuora et al.1990, Burke, Greenglass, & Schwarzer (1996), and Goker (2006a) that management of supervisory process, time pressure, interpersonal demands, lack of professional recognition, the diversity of tasks are sources of administrative stress among supervisors.

Management of supervisory process, time pressure, interpersonal demands, lack of professional recognition, the diversity of tasks required by reflective learning environments (Goker, 2006a), bureaucracy, lack of support, the amount of paperwork required and lack of resources provided (Burke, Greenglass & Schwarzer, 1996; Chan, 1998; Pithers, 1995) could be the sources of stress that systematically predict dimensions of burnout. Heavy work load, long daily working hours, and perception of negative work conditions can also lead to burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981a; Olkinuora et al.,1990).

Results gained in this study also reveal that supervisors' levels of occupational stress and emotional exhaustion, and personal accomplishment were also found to be moderate. The most important reason for this is known to be the effect of working with professional teachers, who really are ready to change and have the ability to make independent decisions in their work. However, the level of depersonalization was found to be low among the supervisors. It might be assumed that supervisors have limited possibility of changing their work assignment, which may have an effect on depersonalization. In addition, the lack of opportunities for personal development and advancement, bureaucracy, lack of support, the amount of paperwork required and lack of resources provided may also have effect on depersonalization, which correlates with the results of research studies conducted by Balkin, White & Bodey (2003); Matheny, Gfroerer & Harris (2000); Fletcher, (1988) and Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987).

However, the three burnout dimensions although empirically related, are conceptually distinct – a premise that has been further confirmed by research findings that revealed differential correlates for each of the three components of the construct (e.g. Kokkinos & Davazoglou, 2005; Mills & Huebner, 1998).

The supervisors in our study were found to have a high level of job satisfaction. Factors having an influence on the supervisor who have a high level of job satisfaction in Cyprus may be that their duties and responsibilities are clear in the law (The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus Education Ministry, 1994), their work is consistent with their duties, they can work more independently because they can arrange supervisory visits any time they wish, and their duties are not excessively affected by work environment and conditions. This result agrees with the views of Russel et al. (1987); Friedman, (2000); Fletcher, (1988) and Matteson & Ivancevich, (1987).

Davis (1981) and Dawis and Lofquist (1984) who believe that job satisfaction explains what makes people want to come to work and makes them happy about their job or not to quit their jobs. The quality of supervision provided by supervisors is also positively affected by achievements and job satisfaction. The satisfaction that supervisors receive from their relationships with other stakeholders ensures that they receive satisfaction from their work environment. A good relationship with other stakeholders and perceived support lessen the strain that is felt in the work environment.

Table 5 Comparison of Supervisors' Work Experience with Scores

Subscales	5 years or less		6-10 years		11-15 years		F	P
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
OES	34.9	7.9	35.6	7.6	34.9	6.4	0.97	0.37
MBI-EE	14.9	7.6	13.3	6.6	12.8	5.9	0.64	0.53
MBI-DP	14.3	4.9	16.1	3.6	13.6	2.5	0.51	0.60
MBI-PA	20.8	4.2	19.5	4.0	20.6	3.0	0.23	0.79
WSQ-GS	3.2	0.7	3.2	0.8	3.3	0.7	0.72	0.48
WSQ-IS	3.1	0.8	3.1	0.8	3.2	0.7	0.83	0.43
WSQ-ES	2.9	0.7	2.9	0.8	3.0	0.7	0.43	0.64

It was also found in our study that as the years of employment increased, the level of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and work-related stress decreased and personal accomplishment and job satisfaction increased. Thus, a significant relationship was not found between length of employment and job satisfaction. Other studies have also reported that as length of employment increases, job satisfaction also increases (Russel et al., (1987); Friedman, (2000); Davis, (1981), and Dawis & Lofquist, (1984).

Based on the results gained through this study, it is clear that stress still constitutes an integral part of supervisors' life and is closely interwoven with every aspect of human activity in educational setting. Within this context, The following recommendations are suggested by the researcher.

Keeping in mind that some dosage of stress accompanies the professional activity of supervisors to challenge and motivate the human organisation into action, a continuing education program on the subject of coping with stress could be organized. In addition, more quantitative and qualitative studies could be conducted. Supervisors could be made aware of the problems associated with stress and burnout and how these problems may adversely affect their professional and personal lives. Workshops and seminars could enlighten the profession and would offer an opportunity to share warning signs and indicators of stress and burnout. Further steps could be taken to proactively create awareness among supervisors about personal coping resources and stress management techniques. Job satisfaction and occupational stress levels could be monitored to prevent burnout from occurring in the profession. It should be kept in mind that effective management of human and material resources for goal achievement in schools, which focus on student achievement, is the responsibility of the supervisors as well as teachers and principals.

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