



Examining the Relationship of Principals' Leadership Styles on Burnout in K-12 Public School Educators Located in the Rio Grande Valley

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Received on 11/08/2024; revised on 11/09/2024; published on 11/12/2024

Abstract

This study examines the connection between burnout dimensions among K-12 public school educators in South Texas and the perceived leadership styles of administrators. A snowball convenience sampling technique was used to recruit K-12 public school educators and a total of 268 participants were included in the study. Three surveys were filled out by the participants: a demographic survey, the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (*MBI-GS*), and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (*MLQ-5x*).

The *MBI-GS* assessed three dimensions of burnout—Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment—while the *MLQ* analyzed three facets of leadership styles—Transformational, Transactional, and Passive Avoidant. The data was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The findings showed a significant correlation between perceived principals' leadership and teachers' burnout in K-12 public school educators located in South Texas. Particularly, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment were all strongly predicted by Transformational Leadership. On the other hand, Transactional Leadership demonstrated a negative correlation with both Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment. These findings underline the significance of encouraging Transformational Leadership behaviors in educational leadership practices and offer insightful information on how principals' leadership styles either prevent or exacerbate burnout among K-12 public school educators.

Keywords: Full Range Leadership; *MLQ*; Maslach Burnout; *MBI*; K-12 Public School Educators; South Texas; Rio Grande Valley

1 Introduction

This research focuses on Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio's Full Range Model of Leadership. The Full Range Model highlights three forms of leadership: Transformational, Transactional, and Passive Avoidant leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2002). This form of leadership has become the subject of numerous research. However, few research has examined leadership styles associated with Burnout dimensions in South Texas public school educators, specifically located in the Rio Grande Valley.

A leader's behavior may influence a follower's willingness to work harder, satisfaction with employment, and level of output (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994). The Texas public education system serves nearly 5 million students, 51.3% of whom are Hispanic (Texas Education Agency [TEA] 2014). The Rio Grande Valley is one of the nation's poorest and least educated regions (ENCORE, 2008; Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, 1998). The Rio Grande Valley has among of the highest percentages of high school dropouts, illiteracy, and poverty

(Alemán, 2009; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2004). Teacher burnout has an impact on the teaching profession. The subsequent teacher shortage has not only caused a staffing concern in schools, but high turnover rates have also lowered classroom instruction quality (Chang, 2009).

Research has indicated that the leadership style of principals has a substantial impact on teacher burnout (Arnold et al., 2015). In South Texas, the number of teachers remaining in the teaching profession has declined over the years (South Texas Transition to Teaching [TEA], 2018). Teacher Burnout is an ongoing problem in schools and is the main reason why educators leave their jobs (Rumschlag, 2017). Burnout is one of the main issues impeding teachers' effectiveness (Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991). Teachers who are Emotionally Exhausted disconnect from their coworkers, lose interest in their organization, and disassociate themselves from their duties (Rumschlag, 2017). If Burnout is not adequately addressed, it can aggravate absenteeism and result in ineffective teaching, which decreases the learning standards for students (Rumschlag, 2017).

The literature on Leadership and Burnout repeatedly shows a negative significant correlation between Transformational Leadership and Burnout

(Harms et al., 2017; Bass et al., 2016; Tafvelin et al., 2019; Broome et al., 2009).

According to literature on Burnout, multiple of the control variables in this study impact teacher Burnout. Research on Gender and Burnout revealed various findings (Purvanova & Muros, 2010; Aguayo et al., 2017; Yorulmaz & Altinkurt, 2018). In a meta-analysis, women experienced higher overall Burnout (Purvanova & Muros, 2010). Other meta-analyses found that females reported lower levels of Emotional Exhaustion than males, whereas males experienced higher levels of Depersonalization and lower levels of Personal Accomplishment (Aguayo et al., 2017; Yorulmaz & Altinkurt, 2018).

Purvanova and Muros (2010) conducted a meta-analysis on 409 effect sizes from 183 studies that investigated variations in Burnout and Gender. The effect size revealed that females had experienced more burnout than males ($k = 26$, $N = 9,563$, $d = .18$, $p < .01$). The research study found that females had somewhat higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion than males ($k = 199$, $N = 77,656$, $d = .10$, $p < .01$), while males had slightly higher levels of Depersonalization ($k = 184$, $N = 70,431$, $d = -.19$, $p < .01$).

Aguayo et al., 2017 performed a meta-analysis to investigate the correlation between Burnout and Gender. The study found that females had lower levels of Emotional Exhaustion than males ($k = 31$, $N = 19,655$, $d = -.03$). Males were also shown to have a greater level of Depersonalization ($k = 25$, $N = 19,655$, $d = .03$) and lower levels of Personal Accomplishment ($k = 21$, $N = 19,655$, $d = .01$) than females.

Yorulmaz and Altinkurt (2018) performed a meta-analysis to investigate the correlation between Burnout and Gender. The study discovered that females had higher degrees of Emotional Exhaustion than males ($k = 100$, $N = 29,094$, $d = .068$). Males reported higher degrees of Depersonalization ($k = 99$, $N = 28,481$, $d = -.074$) and lower levels of Personal Accomplishment than females ($k = 98$, $N = 28,337$, $d = -.016$).

Research examining the correlation between Age and Burnout produced results that vary (Aguayo et al., 2017; Brewer & Shapard, 2004). According to one meta-analysis, older individuals rated less on Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization and more on reduced Personal Accomplishment (Aguayo et al., 2017). Brewer and Shapard (2004) used a meta-analysis of 34 studies to investigate the correlation between Age and Burnout. The research found a non-significant negative correlation between Age and Burnout.

According to research, there is a negative correlation between Tenure and Burnout. Brewer and Shapard (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of 20 studies to investigate the correlation between Tenure and Burnout. The study demonstrated a substantial negative correlation between Emotional Exhaustion and Tenure ($k = 20$, $N = 3,941$, $\rho = -.09$, $r = .05$, $p < .05$).

Research examining the correlation between Educational Attainment and Burnout produced results that vary (Yorulmaz & Altinkurt, 2018; Lee & Ji, 2018). According to one meta-analysis, teachers with graduate degrees reported higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion ($k = 34$, $N = 8,374$, $d = -.021$) and Depersonalization ($k = 34$, $N = 8,374$, $d = -.039$) compared to those with undergraduate degrees. Furthermore, it was revealed that teachers with a graduate degree reported a lower sense of Personal Accomplishment ($k = 34$, $N = 8,374$, $d = -.042$), than those with an undergraduate degree (Yorulmaz & Altinkurt, 2018). According to an individual study conducted by Lee & Ji the results of the study revealed that Burnout did not significantly differ according to Educational Attainment (Lee & Ji, 2018).

2 Methods

The study's sample consisted of South Texas public school educators who taught in grades K-12. Educators were asked to assess their own degrees of Burnout and the Leadership style of their principal. A convenience sample was used to collect the data. Social media and Outlook email were used to distribute the survey among personal and professional networks. A survey link was sent to the participants, containing the demographic questionnaire, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (*MLQ-5x*), and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (*MBI-GS*). Individuals who worked in K-12 public schools and were between the ages of 20 and 80 were eligible to take part in the study. At the start of the survey, a consent form requesting for the participant's permission to participate in the study was displayed. Data from 268 participants who completed the consent form, demographic questionnaire, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (*MLQ-5x*), and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (*MBI-GS*) were analyzed in this study. The demographic questionnaire asked information on the participant's age, tenure, gender, and educational attainment. Participants were excluded from the study who did not meet the inclusion criteria of working in education and lived in South Texas.

The participant's perception of their principal's Transformational, Transactional, and Passive Avoidant Leadership were assessed using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (*MLQ-5x*). There are 36 items in the *MLQ*, and it is a psychological assessment that focuses on leadership styles. Three dimensions of Burnout—Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment—were measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (*MBI-GS*).

SPSS version 26 was used to import all the data gathered for this investigation. To determine if the independent variables of Transformational, Transactional, and Passive Avoidant predicted our dependent variable Burnout—which includes Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment—beyond the impact of the control variables, a multiple regression analysis was conducted.

Null Hypotheses:

H₀₁: There is no relationship between Leadership Style (Transformational, Transactional and Passive Avoidant Leadership) and Burnout (Emotional Exhaustion) as perceived by the teacher when controlling for Gender, Age, Tenure, and Educational Attainment.

H₀₂: There is no relationship between Leadership Style (Transformational, Transactional and Passive Avoidant Leadership) and Burnout (Depersonalization) as perceived by the teacher when controlling for Gender, Age, Tenure, and Educational Attainment.

H₀₃: There is no relationship Leadership Style (Transformational, Transactional and Passive Avoidant Leadership) and Burnout (Personal Accomplishment) as perceived by the teacher when controlling for Gender, Age, Tenure, and Educational Attainment.

3 Results

Table 1 shows the Cronbach Alpha, a metric used to assess the instruments internal consistency (*MLQ-5x*). Additionally, the study's Cronbach Alpha showed favorable outcomes for Transformational, Transactional, and Passive Avoidant Leadership styles.

3.1 Table 1 Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Reliability

Leadership Style	<i>MLQ-5x</i>	García, 2024
Transformational	.94	.97
Transactional	.62	.72
Passive Avoidant	.78	.89

Table 2 shows the Cronbach Alpha, a metric used to assess the instruments internal consistency (*MBI-GS*). Additionally, the study's Cronbach Alpha showed favorable outcomes for Burnout—Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment.

3.2 Table 2 Maslach Burnout Inventory Reliability

Burnout	<i>MBI</i>	García, 2024
Emotional Exhaustion	.90	.96
Depersonalization	.76	.91
Personal Accomplishment	.76	.86

The correlation matrix shown in Table 3 shows the correlation coefficients between the independent and dependent variables used in this study. Results for the Full Range Leadership Model's subscales on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Transformational Leadership and Transactional Leadership were found to be intercorrelated ($r = .735, p < .01$). Transformational Leadership and Passive Avoidant Leadership ($r = -.445, p < .01$). Transactional Leadership and Passive Avoidant Leadership ($r = -.145, p < .05$).

Results between the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (Transformational) and the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (Personal Accomplishment) ($r = .342, p < .01$). Results between the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (Transformational) and the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (Depersonalization) ($r = -.582, p < .01$). Results were also found between the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (Transformational) and the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (Emotional Exhaustion) ($r = -.515, p < .01$). Results between the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (Transactional) and the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (Personal Accomplishment) ($r = .164, p < .01$), Depersonalization had a correlation ($r = -.303, p < .01$), and Emotional Exhaustion ($r = -.333, p < .01$). Results between the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (Passive Avoidant) and the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (Personal Accomplishment) ($r = -.243, p < .01$), Depersonalization correlation ($r = .452, p < .01$), and Emotional Exhaustion ($r = .282, p < .01$).

Results for the Maslach Burnout Inventory had intercorrelations between Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization ($r = .745, p < .01$). Emotional Exhaustion was also correlated with Personal Accomplishment ($r = -.232, p < .01$). Depersonalization was correlated with Personal Accomplishment ($r = -.315, p < .01$).

Age had a strong positive correlation with Tenure ($r = .657, p < .01$). Age had a weak negative correlation with Depersonalization ($r = -.158, p < .01$), and a weak negative correlation with Emotional Exhaustion ($r = -.172, p < .01$).

Table 3 provides the Pearson product-moment correlation to assess the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the independent variables (subscales of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire), the dependent variables (subscales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory), and the control variables (demographic variables). Correlation coefficients ranged from +1 to -1, where a value closer to +1 or -1 indicated a stronger relationship, while values closer to 0 indicated a weaker relationship.

3.3 Table 3 Correlation Matrix of Continuous Variables

	Tenure	Age	TF	TR	Passive	EE	D	Personal
Tenure	1							
Age	.657**	1						
Transformational (TF)			1					
Transactional (TR)			.735**	1				
Passive Avoidant (Passive)			-.445**	-.145*	1			
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)			-.172**	-.515**	-.333**	.282**	1	
Depersonalization (D)			-.158**	-.582**	-.303**	.452**	.745**	1
Personal Accomplishment (Personal)			.342**	.164**	-.243**	-.232**	-.315**	1
			Weak .00 - .29	Moderate .30 - .49	Strong .50 +			

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4 provides the results for multiple regressions run for the Burnout dimensions of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment.

3.4 Table 4 Summary of Results

Variable	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
Age	$R^2 = .029$ $\beta = -.174$	$R^2 = .025$ $\beta = -.170$	
Gender			
Tenure			
Education			
Transformational	$\Delta R^2 = .266$ $\beta = -.516$ $r_p = -.524$	$\Delta R^2 = .340$ $\beta = -.646$ $r_p = -.448$	$R^2 = .117$ $\beta = .481$
Transactional		$\Delta R^2 = .018$ $\beta = .205$ $r_p = .173$	$\Delta R^2 = .017$ $\beta = -.189$ $r_p = -.137$
Passive Avoidant		$\Delta R^2 = .047$ $\beta = .196$ $r_p = .217$	

These are significant predictors of Burnout. Age was a significant predictor of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization. With regards to the independent variables: Transformational Leadership was found to be a predictor for all three facets of Burnout. Transactional Leadership was found to be a predictor for Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment. Passive Avoidant was found to be a predictor for Depersonalization.

4 Summary

This study set out to investigate how principals' leadership styles affected teachers' perceptions of their self-rated Burnout. The study's conclusions suggest that the Transformational Leadership level of the principals may have an impact on the Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment of the teachers. Understanding how Transformational Leadership behaviors may affect teacher Burnout may be helpful to principals. Furthermore, it is suggested that the level of Depersonalization exhibited by teachers may be influenced by the Transformational, Transactional, and Passive Avoidant Leadership styles of their principals. Additionally, it is suggested that the teachers' level of

Personal Accomplishment may be influenced by the Transformational and Transactional Leadership styles of their principals.

Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization were significantly predicted by the demographic variable of age; Burnout was not significantly predicted by gender, tenure, or educational attainment, but rather by the leadership style of the principal.

5 Limitations

However, there were some limitations in this study. In analyzing the descriptive statistics, the subscales of Burnout (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment) all had ceiling effects, which may have understated their relationships, and the subscale of Leadership (Passive Avoidant) had a floor effect. Additionally, this study used a sample of convenience, which was an online survey that was distributed by the researcher's personal and professional networks via Outlook email and social media. Although a convenience sample enables the researcher to generalize findings, the findings may not be applicable to the wider population. Furthermore, this study was further limited by geographic location. The geographic location was restricted to South Texas, specifically the K-12 public schools located in the Rio Grande Valley. Although the data is representative of the sample, it may not accurately represent all educators or the educational systems. Finally, this study excluded principals' self-ratings and concentrated on teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership styles and teachers' self-rated burnout.

6 Recommendations for Future Research

To provide a more comprehensive and precise representation of teachers working in the state of Texas, future researchers would want to broaden this study to include the Texas Education Agency. This recommendation will enable the researcher to obtain a larger sample size and expand findings to the population of Texas teachers. This study can be broadened to include private schools to look at teachers who work with students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. This will enable the researcher to determine whether the leadership styles of principals and teachers' self-rated burnout differ in private vs public schools. Researchers may want to consider including teachers who are tested and evaluated via performance by the STAAR or AP exams. By doing so, the researcher will be able to determine whether administrators' leadership styles and self-rated burnout are perceived differently than those of teachers whose course subjects are not evaluated by state exams

7 Implications and Key Take Aways

The findings point to various implications for leadership styles and methods. Regarding Emotional Exhaustion and Transformational Leadership. Principals who exhibit inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation, and are thought to be Transformational leaders, may help teachers who are experiencing Emotional Exhaustion. Principals are more likely to create a positive and inspiring work environment if they recognize the value of Transformational Leadership in lowering Emotional Exhaustion. According to perceived leadership styles and depersonalization. Transformational Leadership decreased Depersonalization, while Transactional Leadership and Passive Avoidant Leadership

increased Depersonalization. The application of Transformational Leadership should be emphasized by principals to reduce teachers' impersonal responses and feelings of disengagement. According to perceived leadership styles and Personal Accomplishment, teachers who experienced Transformational Leadership by their principal felt more accomplished, whereas those who experienced Transactional Leadership felt less accomplished. While Transactional Leadership may have negative consequences on teachers' sense of Personal Accomplishment, principals should use Transformational behaviors like coaching, mentoring, and encouraging to help teachers feel more accomplished in their work. According to the findings, teachers who were older reported feeling less Depersonalization and Emotional Exhaustion. To potentially lower burnout levels, principals could recognize the years of expertise of senior teachers and assign them to advise and work alongside new educators.

Key Take Aways

- Teachers' experiences of Burnout were impacted by the leadership styles of their principals
- Developing principal's Transformational Leadership skills may lessen teachers' experiences of Burnout
- Educational Attainment, Tenure, and Gender did not significantly predict Burnout

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the faculty at Our Lady of the Lake University. Your expertise, guidance, and commitment to excellence have significantly shaped my research and academic development. I am particularly grateful to my advisor, Dr. Yu Sun, whose insightful feedback and support have been crucial to the completion of this work.

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