Authentic Leadership's Impact on Worker Burnout

Brenda Lugo Jasso[*], Mark T. Green and Esther Gergen

[1]Department of Leadership Studies, Our Lady of the Lake University, 411 SW 24th, San Antonio, TX 78207

*Email: brenda.m.jasso@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between the teacher's perception of their principal's Authentic Leadership Behaviors and Teacher Burnout. The study consisted of teachers ($N = 162$) from the Region one area of South Texas who taught at either an elementary (PK3-5th grade), middle school (6th-8th grade), or high school (9th-12th grade). The participants completed a survey that consisted of a demographic questionnaire, the *Authentic Leadership Questionnaire* (*ALQ*) rater version to measure the authentic behaviors of their principals, and the *Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey* (*MBI- ES*) to measure the levels of teacher burnout using the three facets known as Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. The research used regression analysis to determine if a relationship existed between the Authentic Leadership Behaviors and Teacher Burnout, while controlling for the teacher's gender, grade level taught, age, tenure, and educational attainment. The results indicated that three of the five control variables were not predictors of burnout. Gender and Tenure were significant predictors of Burnout and were both consistent with the literature. Internalized Moral Perspective and Overall Authentic Leadership were also significant predictors of Burnout. An interesting finding was that most of the literature stated that Balanced Processing had a significant effect on Burnout, however, this study showed it was not a significant predictor of Burnout. Overall findings suggest that although leadership mattered, it was a small predictor of Burnout. A discussion of the findings, along with implications and practical applications, were provided. The limitations of the study and recommendations for future research were also included.

Keywords: Authentic Leadership, Burnout, Stress, Leadership, Teachers, Principal

1   Introduction

Authentic leadership is defined as "a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development" (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). This is an expansion of Weber's Charismatic leadership theory which stated that the leader has the ability to influence and inspire others to work for the greater good. It is further expanded by Robert House's study on the Culture of organizations and how culture has a significant, positive impact on employee's job performance.

Authentic behavior involves acting in accord with one's values and needs, as opposed to acting in order to please others or receive rewards or avoid punishment (Wong & Cummings, 2009). The measure of authentic leadership was based on the assumption that there are general or perhaps universal facets of what constitutes authentic leadership that consistently define such leaders as self-aware, ethical, balanced decision makers and transparent. The *Authentic leadership questionnaire*, or ALQ, was developed using four constructs known as relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and self-awareness (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008).

According to Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter (1997), "Burnout is a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity". The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey, or MBI-ES, was developed using three facets known as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997).

The Alliance for Excellent Education conducted a study that suggested that differences in school climate strongly influence teacher turnover. About 13% of the American workforce of 3.4 million public school teachers either move or leave the profession each year. Attrition that costs the U.S. up to $2.2 billion dollars annually. Burnout likely contributes to the high rate of teacher turnover. Policy recommendations that include comprehensive induction programs for new teachers, support staff selection and professional growth systems that foster collegial collaboration were included (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). Authentic leadership is likely effective in guiding teachers, by providing trust and transparency, while recognizing teacher accomplishments contributing to the overall success of the school. Authentic leadership is proposed as a core of effective leadership needed to build trust because of its clear focus on

the positive role modeling of honesty, integrity, and high ethical standards in the development of leader-follower relationships (Wong & Cummings, 2009).

The literature regarding leadership and burnout consistently finds that a significant negative effect between authentic leadership and burnout (Banks, McCauley, Gardner, & Guler, 2016; Laschinger, Wong, & Grau, 2013; Wong & Cummings, 2009).

The burnout literature has also found that several variables used as control variables in this study influence teacher burnout. Females rated higher than men in emotional exhaustion while men rated higher in depersonalization and personal accomplishment (Purvanora & Muros, 2010; Yorulmaz & Altinkurt, 2018; Aguayo, Vargas, Cañadas, & De La Fuente, 2017). The higher the class level (high school), the more burnout experienced. (Rashkovits & Livne, 2013).

Purvanora and Muros (2010) meta-analyzed 409 effect sizes that had been calculated in previous studies for gender and burnout. The true score correlation (k = 199, N = 77,656, d = 10) found that women are slightly more emotionally exhausted then men. The true score correlation (k = 184, N = 70,431, d = -.19) found that men are somewhat more depersonalized than women. Furthermore, the true score correlation (k = 26, N = 9,563 d = .18) found that women rated higher in overall burnout than men.

Research has found a negative correlation between age and burnout (Brewer & Shapard, 2004; Aguayo, Vargas, Cañadas, & De La Fuente, 2017).Research on tenure showed mixed results with one study stating that the more experience, the lower the emotional exhaustion (Brewer & Shapard, 2004) while another study showed that the more experienced teachers experienced more emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment than teachers with 10 years or less experience (Yorulmaz & Altinkurt, 2018). Studies on educational attainment and burnout had mixed results. One study found that teachers with a graduate degree experienced emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment more than teachers with an undergraduate degree (Yorulmaz & Altinkurt, 2018). Another study showed that educational level had a significant negative correlation with burnout (Rashkovits & Livne, 2013).

2 Methods

A convenience sample comprised of Region One Texas Public School Educators was utilized in this study. Texas Region one is one, of twenty, regional educational service centers in Texas. It serves thirty-eight school districts and ten charter school systems in South Texas. The Region One ESC serves eight county areas: Brooks, Cameron, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Starr, Webb, Willacy, and Zapata counties (Region One Website, 2020). Inclusion criteria to ensure the participant was a Region One teacher was used in the survey they accessed.

The survey consisted of a demographic questionnaire, the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ), and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey (MBI-ES) The survey began with an electronic informed adult consent form that participants must answer yes to continue the survey. If the participant answered no, the survey would automatically take them to end of the survey and would not allow further participation. The next question was set up to meet inclusion criteria and will ask the participant if he or she teaches at a Region One Texas public school. If the participant answered yes, the survey would continue to ensure that only Region One public school teachers were surveyed. If the participant answered no, the survey would automatically take them to the end of the survey and would not allow further participationThis study utilized data collected from 162 participants who completed the *Authentic Leadership*

Questionnaire (*ALQ*), and the *Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey* (*MBI-ES*). Participants also reported their gender, grade level, age, tenure, and educational attainment.

The ALQ contains four subscales: Relational Transparency, Internal Moral Perspective, Balanced Processing (decision-making) and Self-Awareness. There is also an overall authentic leadership score. The MBI-ES measures three dimensions of burnout: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Lack of Personal Accomplishment.

A multiple regression block design was used to look for the relationships and strongest predictors between the independent and dependent variable. This was done by analyzing the R^2, or variance explained, and ΔR^2 the additional variance explained. Block one consisted of some of the control variables such as gender (categorical/dichotomous), age (continuous), and tenure (continuous). Stepwise method allowed the researcher an opportunity to look for the best combination of predictors and put the significant predictors in the model from strongest predictor to weakest. Block two consisted of a control variable called educational attainment (categorical). In order for this variable to be entered into the regression equation/model, enter method was used and the categorical data was dummy coded. Block three included the independent variables of relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and self-awareness in the last, and final block, in order to give the control variables an opportunity to show significance.

The standardized coefficients, or beta weights, were used for six variables: age, tenure, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and self-awareness. This allowed the researcher to see the strength, direction, and slope of the variable. Partial correlations were used to find relationships between authentic leadership behaviors and burnout controlling for the other predictors in the model. The other predictors were controlled by holding them constant at their mean. A t-test was conducted to note gender mean differences between males and females. The study used the standard level of significance of p < .05.

3 Results

Of the 160 participants, 20.6% were males and 79.4% were females. Two participants failed to share their gender status. Figure 2 shows the Participant gender for this study. The grade level that the teachers taught was collected using three categories. The teachers taught at either the Elementary Pk3-5th grade (N = 66), Middle School 6th-8th grade (N = 67), or High School 9th-12th grade (N = 28). Of the 162 participants, 1 participant failed to report the grade level taught. 41% of the participants were Elementary, 41.6% were Middle School teachers and 17.4% were High School Teachers.

Participants had either a Bachelor's Degree (N = 96), a Master's Degree (N = 61), or a JD, PhD, or EdD (N = 3). The categorical data of the JD, PhD, EdD group was small (N = 3) so the groups were combined using the degrees of freedom. In order to gain more statistical power and reduce chance of type II errors, Educational Attainment was collapsed (see Figure 5) into two categories- Bachelor's Degree or Masters or higher. Of the 160 participants, 60% has a Bachelors' degree and 40% had a Master's degree of higher.

Participant ages ranged from 23 years of age to 69 years of age. Of the 162 participants, 2 failed to report their age. The mean age of the participants was 44.13 years old. Participant tenure ranged from 1 year to 34 years. Of the 162 participants, 6 failed to report their tenure. The mean for tenure was 16.054 years.

Table 1. Authentic Leadership Questionairre Reliability

Variable	ALQ	This Study
Relational Transparency (RT)	.77	.88
Internalized Moral Perspective (IMP)	.73	.88
Balanced Processing (BP)	.70	.81
Self-Awareness	.73	.93

Table 2. Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey Reliability

Variable	MBI-ES	This Study
Emotional Exhaustion	.90	.90
Depersonalization	.76	.61
Personal Accomplishment	.76	.70

Table 3 provides the results for multiple regressions run for the burnout dimensions of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization. None of the variables predicted a lack of personal accomplishment.

Table 3. Summary of Results

Variable	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization
Gender	$R^2 = .071$ F > M	
Tenure		$R^2 = .042$ $\beta = -.194$
Internalized Moral Perspective	$\Delta R^2 = .087$ $\beta = -.303$ $r_p = -.305$	$\Delta R^2 = .069$ $\beta = -.263$ $r_p = -.268$
Overall Authentic Leadership	$\Delta R^2 = .089$ $\beta = -.308$ $r_p = -.310$	$\Delta R^2 = .064$ $\beta = -.254$ $r_p = -.259$

Because the four scales of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire were correlated with each other above $r = .80$, the multiple regressions were run twice: Once with the four subscales, and a second time with an overall authentic leadership score.

The subscale entitled internal moral perspective predicted 8.7% of the variance in teacher emotional exhaustion, beyond the effects of the gender of the teacher. Internal moral perspective predicted 8.9% of the variance in teacher emotional exhaustion, beyond the effects of the tenure of the teacher.

When the same multiple regressions were run using overall authentic leadership rather than the subscales and the same control variable, the results were similar. For this sample, the more authentic the teachers rated their leaders, the less emotional exhaustion and depersonalization they reported.

dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

4   Discussion

This study found that the higher the teacher's rating of their principal on moral/ethical behaviors, the lower their emotional exhaustion ($\Delta R^2 = .087, \beta = -.303$). The higher the teacher's rating of their principal on overall authentic leadership behavior, the lower their emotional exhaustion ($\Delta R^2 = .089, \beta = -.308$).

Ethical and moral behaviors modeled by the principal may contribute to leading by example and doing the right thing. If trust is going to be built between the leader and the follower, the leader must demonstrate an observable sense of morality. One way of characterizing morally acceptable leaders is to specify what their objectives are with respect to the group and the individuals who make it up (Gardner, 1990, p.73). Demonstrating these behaviors may lead to an increase in trust between the leader and the follower possibly leading to less emotional exhaustion and less overall burnout. A bottom line is that trust is vital in any leader-follower relationship. Ethical/moral behaviors modeled by the principal may also establish a more suitable school climate, thus possibly minimizing the teachers' unfeeling and impersonal response towards students (Maslach et at., 1986).

The higher the teacher's rating of their principal on ethical/moral behaviors, the 2 less depersonalization they experience ($\Delta R^2 = .069, \beta = -.263$). The higher the teacher's rating of their principal on overall authentic leadership behaviors, the less depersonalization they experience ($\Delta R = .064, \beta = -.254$). Ethical/moral behaviors modeled by the principal may establish a more suitable school climate, thus possibly minimizing the teachers' unfeeling and impersonal response towards students (Maslach et at., 1986).

Tenure accounted for 4.2% of how depersonalized teacher were, meaning that the more experience the teachers have, the less depersonalized they felt ($R^2 = .042, \beta = -.194$). In the education field, an experienced teacher tends to become more comfortable with the position and do not isolate themselves from their students, parents, or others. Some may become complacent with their position that they do not notice the significant disconnect from their students. Studies suggest that novice teachers are the ones leaving the profession at higher rates than experienced teachers (Rumschlag, 2017). In the state of Texas, teachers are required to participate in continuous and ongoing professional development which may contribute to less depersonalization as they receive continuous support in the profession.

The research suggested that leadership is a factor in reducing burnout. The fact that there are many kinds of leaders has implications for leadership education (Gardner, 1990, p. 5). It is vital that educators be exposed to leadership training as it impacts education. Professional development for school administrators, including Principals, Assistant Principals and Deans of Instructions, in the area of Authentic Leadership should be conducted on an annual basis. The study supports the idea that "leadership begins and ends with authenticity" (George, 2003, p. 11). Administration of the self-assessment for Principals using the ALQ self-rated form may help promote self-reflection and self-awareness of the leader. This may allow the leader the need to address teacher burnout by reviewing the climate survey and addressing campus needs annually. Organizations can help address burnout through interventions aimed at improving workplace conditions (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). It may also help the leader develop authentic leadership behaviors that may positively impact their

relationship with the followers. This study suggests that ethical and moral behaviors of the leader are significant predictors of burnout. Therefore, both principals and teachers require enhanced training for standard practices and ethical conduct as set forth in the Texas Administrative Code.

References

Aguayo, R., Vargas, C., Cañadas, G. R., & De la Fuente, E. I. (2017). Are socio-demographic factors associated to burnout syndrome in police officers? A correlational meta-analysis. *Anales de Psicología, 33*(2), 383–392. https://doi.org/10.6018/analesps.33.2.260391

Banks, G. C., McCauley, K. D., Gardner, W. L., & Guler, C. E. (2016). A meta-analytic review of authentic and transformational leadership: A test for redundancy. *The Leadership Quarterly*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.02.006

Banks, G. C., McCauley, K. D., Gardner, W. L., & Guler, C. E. (2016). A meta-analytic review of authentic and transformational leadership: A test for redundancy. *The Leadership Quarterly*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.02.006

Brewer, E. W., & Shapard, L. (2004). Employee burnout: A meta-analysis of the relationship between age or years of experience. *Human Resource Development Review, 3*(2), 102-123. doi:10.1177/1534484304263335.

Gardner, W. L., Avolio, B. J., & Walumbwa, F. O. (2005). Authentic Leadership Theory and Practice: Origins, effects, and development. Monographs in Leadership and Management, Volume 3. Emerald Group Publishing.

George, B. (2003). *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*. Jossey-Bass.

Laschinger, H.K.S., Wong, C.A. & Grau, A.L. (2013), Authentic leadership, empowerment, and burnout: a comparison in new graduates and experienced nurses. *Journal of Nursing Management, 21*: 541-552. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2834.2012.01375.x

Maslach, C., Jackson, S. E., & Leiter, M. P. (1997). Maslach burnout inventory, 3ed. In C. P. Zalaquett, & R. J. Wood (Eds.), Evaluating stress: A book of resources 191-218. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education.

Maslach, C., Jackson, S. E., & Leiter, M. P. (2018). Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual (4th ed.). California: Mind Garden, Inc.

Maslach, C., Jackson, S., & Schwab R. (1986). Maslach Burnout Inventory - Educator Survey (MBI-ES). California: Mind Garden, Inc.Purvanova, R. K., & Muros, J. P. (2010). Gender differences in burnout: A meta-analysis.

Purvanova, R. K., & Muros, J. P. (2010). Gender differences in burnout: A meta-analysis.Journal of Vocational Behavior, 77, 168-185. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2010.04.006Rashkovits, S., & Livne, Y.(2013). The Effect of Education Level on Psychological Empowerment and Burnout-The Mediating Role of Workplace Learning Behaviors. *International Science Index, Psychological and Behavioral Sciences, 7*(6), 1896 - 1901.

Wong, C.A., & Cummings, G.G. (2009), The influence of authentic leadership behaviors on trust and work outcomes of health care staff. *Journal of Leadership Studies, 3*: 6-23. https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.20104

Yorulmaz, Y.I., & Altinkurt, Y. (2018). The examination of teacher burnout in Turkey: A meta-analysis. *Turkish Journal of Education*, *7*(1), 34-54. DOI: 10.19128/turje.348273