THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE ON EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION

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Abstract - The aim of this study is to investigate how school climate is related to teachers' emotional exhaustion. The sample of the study includes 212 primary, middle and high school teachers in Istanbul. As a survey instrument questionnaire was used to learn the respondents' perception of school climate, and emotional exhaustion. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze if; the school climate is an antecedent of emotional exhaustion. Results revealed that the school climate is negatively related to the emotional exhaustion.

Index Term - school climate, emotional exhaustion

I. INTRODUCTION

Burnout has a dramatic importance in education (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000) because teaching is a very stressfull job and teachers are such professionals that they have the highest level of job stress across different countries (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). All teachers experience stress in their work life due to different reasons. The reasons of stress can be behavioral problems of students, problems in the parent–teacher relationship, conflict among colleagues, principals or school culture, or managerial problems. Teachers cope successfully with stress by active problem solving, taking social and emotional support from colleagues, reorganizing the teaching situation, cooperating with parents, or changing their teaching strategy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). While many teachers cope successfully with this stress some of them fail to cope with it and burnout syndrome may occur at the end of it (Jennett, Harris, & Mesibov, 2003) and because many teachers feel burned out they retire earlier (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Consequently, international researches and practices are making great effort to understand and prevent teacher burnout (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Although burnout syndrome has three dimensions, emotional exhaustion appears to be the key element of burnout (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) and it is defined as the decline in energy and chronic fatigue (Pines & Aronson, 1988; Schwarzer, Schimtz, & Tang, 2000). One of the variable that may predict differences in teachers' stress and burnout is the school climate. Stress levels of teachers may change depending on the school climate and understanding the factors that cause emotional exhaustion of teachers is important to define and improve effective intervention strategies. As stated in the literature, school climate has impact both on teachers and students . In most of the researches it is supported that positive school climate is important both for students and teachers (Collie, Shapka & Perry,2012). In schools where school climate is negative teachers may feel emotionally exhausted and this will also show its reflections on student success and achievement. Studies have shown that positive school climate is related to the academic achievement, motivation for learning, reduced aggression, and it has many other positive outcomes on student such as benevolence, concentrating on the lesson, respecting school staff, etc. (Cohen et al.,2009; Thapa et al., 2013). Also positive school climate was associated with experiencing less stress and burnout among teachers (Collie et al., 2012; Yao et al, 2015).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Settoon, et al. social exchange focuses on how organizations and leaders support and motivate employees. Moreover Settoon, et al. identifies that if an organization give an adequate and high quality support to their employees, then employees will have a high level of organizational commitment and they will use all their efforts to achieve the organizational goals (Settoon, et al, 1996,p.219). Based on this theory, school climate can be considered as a factor that provide organizational support to the teachers. School climate is a complex construct that includes elements such as the teachers' perceptions of cooperation among colleagues, students' motivation and behavior, school's resources and innovation, and decision-making authority (Yao et al, 2015, p. 12507). School climate is the heart and soul of the school and the essence of the school that cause teachers and students both love the school and want to be a part of it (Brown, 2016, p. 38). Norton (1984) defines school climate as the school's atmosphere or the individuality. Several considerations serve to underline the importance of school climate. These considerations include the following (Norton,1984, p. 43):

- The kind of climate sets the tone for the school's approach in reaching the identified goals and resolving problems.

- Effective communication is based on a trust-based climate and mutual respect.
- Climate serves as an important determinant of personal development attitudes.
- The climate allows generating innovative ideas, development, and creativity.

In other words, school climate serves a crucial role in determining what the school is and what it might become. The verb "burn out" is defined as "to fail, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources" (Freudenberger, 1974, p. 159). According to Maslach and Jackson (1981) burnout is a syndrome which consists three dimensions. These are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion appears if a teacher physically and emotionally feels fatigue and stress (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Second dimension is depersonalization and it includes cynical attitudes towards students, parents, and the school environment. Personal accomplishment is the last dimension and it occurs when teachers feel that they will no longer contribute to students' development (Grayson & Alvarez,2008). The burnout manifests itself in many different physical and behavioral signs. Physical signs are feeling of exhaustion and fatigue, being unable to shake a lingering cold, suffering from frequent headaches and gastrointestinal disturbances, sleeplessness and shortness of breath. A staff member's quickness to anger and his instantaneous irritation and frustration responses, crying easily and screaming are the examples of behavioral signs (Freudenberger, 1974, p. 160). Emotionally exhausted teachers may feel powerless or they may feel that they are being used, they are at the end of the path, and that they are physically exhausted (Ören & Türkoğlu, 2006, p.2). Environmental stressors such as relationship of the teachers with students, colleagues, principals and the organizational working circumstances may cause burnout of teachers (Evers, Tomic, & Brouwers, 2004). Due to these stressors teachers feel emotionally exhausted, have negative attitudes toward students and a negative professional efficacy (Schonfeld, 2001). These negative responses are associated with a decline in teaching quality, less flexibility in response to various student needs and teacher-student interactions (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Due to the workload, poor career structure and low salaries, the teaching occupation may become increasingly stressful as a whole (Schonfeld, 2001).Depending on the preeceding discussion, school climate is thought to be negatively related to emotional exhaustion among teachers.

III. METHODOLOGY

Sample

The universe of the research is composed of teachers working in public schools in Istanbul. In this phase, a total of 212 public school teachers selected through simple unselected sampling have participated in the research. 71% (151) of the participants were female and 29% (61) of the participants were male. 71 of participants were teachers of primary schools, 83 of participants were teachers of middle schools and 58 of participants were teachers of high schools. Regarding years of teaching experience, 9% (20) of the participants had below 5 years of experience, 20% (42) had from six to ten years, 22% (46) had from eleven to fifteen years, 49% (104) had more than fifteen years.

Data Collection

One of the scales used in the research is the school climate scale which is revised by Johnson et al. and it is used to measure the teachers' perceptions of school climate (Johnson, Stevens, & Zvoch, 2007). The scale was translated into Turkish and then back-translated into English independently by two researchers. After the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), three factors were determined, and they are named as student relations, usage of resources and coordination and consultation. Furthermore, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted, we used the indices which Iacobucci (2010) mentioned. The results of CFA indicated that the model fit the data well as the comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.90; X^2/sd is 2,164 and SRMR (standardized root mean square residual) is 0,077. These are acceptable values for Structural Equation Modeling Surveys done in AMOS programme (İlhan & Çetin, 2014). Cronbach's α coefficients for each subscale were 0.81 (Student Relations, 4 items), 0.79 (Usage of Resources and Coordination, 9 items), 0.67 (Consultation, 3 items).Teachers' emotional exhaustion was measured with the emotional exhaustion subscale from a modified Turkish version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators (İnce & Şahin, 2015). Structural equation modeling results indicates that CFI = 0.967; X^2/sd= 2,873 and SRMR= 0,038. Cronbach's α coefficients for this scale is 0,93 (9 items).

IV. RESULTS

Table 1 represents descriptive statistics of teachers' school climate and emotional exhaustion and intercorrelations among the latent variables. Teachers' school climate perceptions were neutral M(Mean)=3.15, SD (Standard Deviation) = 0.65), neither very negative nor very positive (the range of the scale was from 1 to 5). On the other hand, teachers' emotional exhaustion perceptions were less than their school climate perceptions (M=2,70;

SD=0,89). Moreover, all the latent variables were significantly
intercorrelated (p<0,01).

Table 1. Means, standart deviations and correlations of the latent variables in this study

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	School Climate	Emotional Exhaustion
School Climate	3,15	0,65	1	-0,36**
Emotional Exhaustion	2,70	0,89	-0,36**	1

**p<0,01

Results of Path Analysis

In this study, we tested a path model for two latent traits (school climate and emotional exhaustion) by means of structural equational modeling analysis with the AMOS 5 program. Structural equational model was conducted, and it is revealed that the data fits the model at a particular significance level. In the structural model the predicted variable is the school climate and the dependent variable is emotional exhaustion. As indicated in Figure 1, school climate is negatively related to emotional exhaustion among teachers (β=-0,42; p<0,01). The analysis showed that school climate had a negative effect on emotional exhaustion; teachers who evaluated school climate more positively had felt less emotional exhaustion.

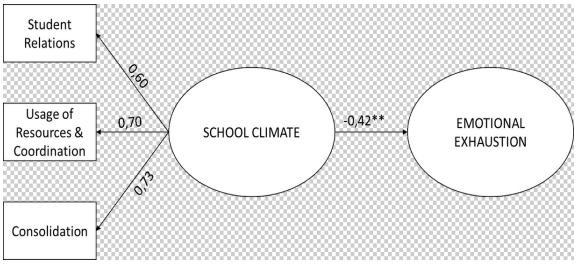


Figure 1. Structural model of relations between teachers' perception of school climate and emotional exhaustion. Standardized regression weights reported.

** p < 0.01.

The measurement model included two latent variables and twelve observed variables. Fit indices revealed good model fit: $\chi^2(50, N=212) = 129.621$, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA= 0.08,
CFI = 0.946, TLI= 0.929. The results of the analysis are shown at table 2 below.

Table2. Structural Equational Model Analysis

Model	X^2/ df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Structural Equational Model	2,59	0.929	0.946	0.08

N=212

CFI: comparative fit index, TLI: Tucker- Lewis Index, df: Degree of freedom, X^2: Chi-square, RMSEA: Root mean square error of approximation

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study we examined the relationship between perceived school climate and emotional exhaustion of teachers. Teachers' perception of school climate and their emotional exhaustion in our study is lower when compared to similar studies (eg. Yao et al, 2015,). Furthermore, school climate has a negative effect on emotional exhaustion. Grayson & Alvarez (2008) found that different aspects of school climate related to each of the three primary burnout dimensions. For example, emotional exhaustion, was closely associated with the climate factors of parent/community relations and student–peer relations. Researches also indicates that a positive social climate and social support are negatively related to burnout (Hakanen et al., 2006; Leung & Lee, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). These results are similar to our research.

Understanding the factors that affect the emotional exhaustion of teachers are important for the effective and healthy school environment. School climate is one of the organizational factors that may affect the emotional exhaustion. For example, being aware of the problems related to the school climate may prompt implementing the behavior management strategies such as supporting teachers, developing staff leadership teams, and developing teacher in-service programs (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). In addition, school climate is significantly related to teachers' emotional exhaustion level. School climate components are very important for increasing the teachers' positive experiences and reducing the emotional exhaustion. School administrators must be aware of the importance of the school climate. Dimensions as such student relations, usage of resources and coordination and consultation are the main points of school climate. All of these dimensions affect the teachers' emotional exhaustion level. If the school climate is positive, then teachers' emotional exhaustion will decrease. For teachers to feel good about themselves national educational institutions and organizations should do the following:

- Establish a career development system for teachers to advance in career stages
- Provide opportunities for teachers to take part in projects
- Develop school resources to increase communication among teachers, students and school management
- Give active roles to teachers corcerning decisions about the education system. Teachers who think they have an influence on decisions will adapt the school environment more quickly.
- Improve teachers' income levels.

This study has some implications for teachers, teacher education programs and administrators of educational institutions. The results underline the importance of school climate which directly affect the teachers' emotional exhaustion. In Turkey, pre-service and in-service teacher education programs are mostly related to the pedagogical skills and knowledge needed for the education of students. However, teachers should use behavior management skills effectively to feel less exhausted. If the teachers can use the behavior management skills effectively towards their colleagues, students, parents, principals, etc. then they will be more relax and peaceful at their work (Malinen& Savolainen, 2016). On the other hand, in schools principals play critical roles in the formation of school climate. Principal education programs should be more effective. The princpals must be fair and consistent. There must have be effective communication between teachers and principals (Halawah, 2005). They must support teachers, develop staff leadership teams, and develop teacher in-service programs (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). This study also indicates that the negatively perceived school climate ensures the higher emotional exhaustion which may eventually lead to teachers retire. Therefore, in-service programs for teachers and principals can help to build a positive school climate perception.

For further studies, the effects demographic variables, personalities or some other variables such as leadership strategies on emotional exhaustion can be investigated. Besides this research can be done into other business sectors (eg. health, security). Moreover, some possible limitations should be specified. Participants in this study work in primary, middle and high schools. Thus, the sample might not be representative of the overall population of Turkish primary, middle and high school teachers. In addition, participants' self- assessments, common method variance and social desirability limitations must be thought.

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