The Mediating Role of Proactive Coping Strategy in the Relationship Between Procrastination and Job Burnout among High-School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to test a model for the mediating role of proactive coping strategy in the relationship between teacher's procrastination and job burnout. The sample of the current research consisted of 200 high-school teachers in Isfahan, Iran, who were selected by stratified random sampling method. The instruments which used in this study were The Proactive Coping Inventory (PCI), General Procrastination Scale and Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Fitness of the proposed model was examined through structural equation modeling (SEM), using SPSS-22 and AMOS-22 software packages. The indirect effects were tested using the bootstrap procedure. Findings indicated that the proposed model fit the data properly. According to these results application of coping strategies from teachers can improve the quality of teacher's efficiency (reduced procrastination) and can lead to lower level of job burnout.

KEYWORDS: Proactive Coping, Teacher Procrastination, Job Burnout

1. INTRODUCTION

Stress is a generally utilized term to describe psychological feelings of time pressure and work overload, bringing about a feeling of inadequacy in meeting the current demands which a person is encountering. Certain categories of human services, for example, medical, educational, and social-psychological services, are especially defenseless against stress and job burnout [1].

Teachers are encountering high levels of stress in their professional lives. Not only the high level of stress is affecting their personal lives, but it is also negatively impacting the lives of the people around them such as their families, their coworkers and their students [2]. Consequently of experiencing chronic, high degrees of stress, some teachers may experience physical and mental health issues and job burnout, ultimately causing increased absenteeism and a reduction in commitment. Burnout is a distressing and dysfunctional condition that both individuals and organizations would like to change; indeed, much of the major curiosity about burnout has been not in order to know what it is but to determine how to proceed about this [3]. According to Freudenberger [4] burnout is a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to an occupation, way of life, cause, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward [5]. Among the burnout's models, the Three-Factor Model [6] is widely appreciated among researchers. Maslach and Jackson [6] believed that burnout is a multidimensional syndrome consisting of three cognitive and affective components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion represents the basic individual stress dimensions of burnout, referring to feelings of being overextended and perceived depletion of one's emotional and physical resources. The cynicism (or depersonalization) component represents the interpersonal context dimension of burnout and refers to a negative, callous, or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job [3]. Cynicism reflects indifference or a distant attitude towards one's work in general, rather than towards recipients of one's services. Finally, inefficacy (or reduced personal accomplishment) presents the self-evaluation dimension of burnout and refers to feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement and productivity in work and covers a broader scope than personal accomplishment because social and non-social aspects of occupational accomplishments are included [7]. Essentially, it assesses the employee's expectations of continued effectiveness at work. The significance of the three-dimensional model is so it obviously areas the average person strain that experienced within the social situation and refers to individual's conception of both self and others [8].

Alternatively, the teacher's profession demanding will influence the subjective content and well-being of teachers. So it is possible to meet unique significant stressors. According Veresova [9] procrastination is an important source of personal stress. Procrastination has been defined "as a trait or behavioral disposition to postpone or delay performing a task or making decisions" [10]. In the other words, procrastination consists largely of opting for short-term relief through acts that are easy and immediately rewarding, while generally avoiding even its anxiety of doing more difficult, delay able, and important things [11]. So it is a certain predisposition to postpone that which is necessary to reach some goal [12]. Lowman (1993) [13] suggested that procrastination is a persistent or cyclical pattern in which an individual who is capable of doing the job

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repetitively avoids timely initiation or completion of work assignments that must be done by a particular deadline. Nuttal [14] mentioned that procrastination occurs for a variety of reasons such as lack of time management skills, understanding the task required and etc. Researches indicated that regularly 20 percent of people think of themselves as procrastinators [11]. Procrastinators can classified as the chronic procrastinators (the individuals that procrastinate in all area of life), The tense-afraid type (feeling an intense pressure to succeed and fearing of failure) and the denial-based type of procrastinators (avoiding as possible by dismissing their work or disregarding more challenging tasks and going for "having fun") [15]. A number of research has indicated that procrastination is caused by task characteristics such as Timing of Rewards and Punishments [16], higher stress [17], Task Aversiveness [18], individual differences and personality traits [19], and will lead to high anxiety [20], depression [21], poor academic performance [1].

However, Lazarus and Folkman [22] mentioned that teaching stress and burnout is not merely experiencing of the sources of strain, but might be modulated by psychological and social resources and the majority of teachers cope with stress successfully [23]. Psychological coping describes the procedure of evaluation of threat and the mobilization of cognitive and behavioral techniques to control the problem and its emotional correlates.

In this Vein, Coping is a process that can be defined as ongoing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage psychological stress to protect psychological and physiological well-being [24]. Coping strategies are generally clustered into two broad categories: problem-focused and emotion-focused ways of coping [25]. Problem-focused coping sometimes consists of attempts aimed directed at modifying the person-environment exchange or changing or managing the foundation of stress, and emotion-focused coping is aimed at regulating emotional reactions elicited by the specific situation [26]. Research has shown differences in the effectiveness of these two coping forms [27]. Perceived control is a vital facet of f problem-focused coping. Research reports that situational appraisals of control have been associated with performance of active problem-solving coping strategies [28]. Employees who believe that they have little control over work domains are less likely to engage in active problem-solving coping and more likely to employ emotion-focused strategies [22]. Additional information indicated that individuals in many cases are able to identify cues indicating that there is difficulty on the way and they take steps to cope with it before it occurs. The processes through which people anticipate or discover potential stress resources and act beforehand to avoid them can be seen as proactive behavior. Through the process that individuals counteract, remove, minimize or change impending stressful events, proactive behavior can remove a great deal of stress before it occurs. The skills related with this specific behavior contain planning, goal setting, organization and mental simulation [29].

Based on Schwarzer's Proactive Coping Theory [30], the proactive individual tries strives for development in his or her life and environment rather than primarily responding to a previous or expected adversity. Schwarzer [30] stated that proactive coping is autonomous and self-determined goal setting and realisation of goals; it relates to self-regulatory goal attainment processes and explains what motivates people to strive for ambitious goals and to commit themselves to personal quality management.

A large body of research on teacher-student relationships and coping (e.g., social competence) suggest that teacher-student relationship patterns are associated with social, emotional, and school-related adjustment and functioning [2]. Many researches confirmed that proactive coping is an effective method for coping with stress load in teacher's profession that is oriented to achieving targets and includes future requirement which can lead to self-development [9]. These kinds of studies have clearly demonstrated that teacher burnout levels that resulted from procrastination (as a current resource of stress) are affected by proactive coping strategy.

Although burnout has become one of the most widely studied subjects [31], there has been no study which evaluates the link between coping strategies employed in the relationship between procrastination and job burnout levels specifically among Iranian teachers which indicates the urgent need of more research on teacher's coping strategies. The knowledge obtained from this research provides insight into the role of proactive coping strategy of Iranian teachers. So, the present study focused to examine the effect of procrastination as a source of stress on job burnout through proactive coping strategy used in a teaching context as a mediating variable. (See Figure 1).
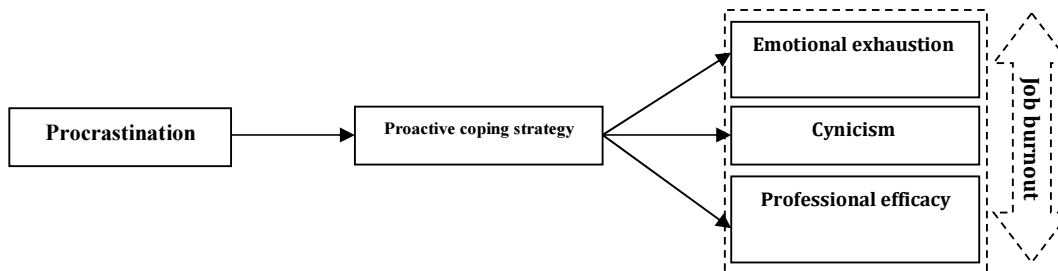

Figure 1. The hypothetical model of the current research

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants:
Respondents for this study were selected by stratified random sampling method from public high-school' teachers in Isfahan, Iran. Anonymous questionnaires were distributed to 150 full-time teachers (50 man and 100 women) working in various public schools. Altogether, 124 questionnaires were returned.

Measures:
Procrastination: procrastination was assessed with *General procrastination Scale* by Lay [12] that has 20 items that measures trait procrastination on a variety of everyday activities. Items are scored on a 5-point likert scale ranging from 1 (False of me) to 5 (True of me). In present study, The Reliability of these items by using Cronbach's alpha was equal to .84, and the Validity of the scale were calculated using confirmatory factor analysis, Was the top .88.

Proactive coping: Schwarzer et al.'s Proactive Coping Inventory (PCI) [30] used to identify proactive coping style. PCI consists of 14 items, combines autonomous goal setting with self-regulatory, goal attainment, cognitions and behavior to which the respondent gives answers on a scale 1 (not at all), 2 (barely true), 3 (somewhat true). The scale has high internal consistency as seen in reliability measures (α) of .85 and .80 in the two samples [30]. In addition the scale shows good item-total correlations and acceptable skewnes as an indicator of symmetry around the mean [30]. A principal component analysis confirmed its factorial validity and homogeneity. In the current research, PCI showed acceptable reliability coefficients, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients 0.91 and the CFA results showed that the original first-order factor structure had acceptable goodness of fit indices.

Job burnout: The Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI–GS) [32] was used to assess job burnout. The MBI–GS includes three subscales: Exhaustion (EX) (5 items; e.g. 'I feel used up at the end of the workday'), Cynicism (CY) (5 items; e.g. 'I have become less enthusiastic about my work') and Professional efficacy (PE) (6 items; e.g. 'In my opinion, I am good at my job'). The items are framed as statements of job-related feelings (e.g. "I feel burned out from my work) and are scored on a 7-point frequency scale (ranging from never (0) to daily (6)). Burnout is reflected in higher scores on exhaustion and cynicism and lower scores on efficacy. Results of Cronbach's alpha coefficient showed that the 3 factors had acceptable reliability coefficients (ranging 0.71-0.86), and the CFA results indicated that the this scale had acceptable goodness of fit indices.

3. RESULTS

The descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and the correlations among research variables are shown in Table1.

Structural model:
Results of structural modeling suggested that the hypothesized model fit the observed data adequately CMIN= 203.524, df=6 , p<0.05, CMIN/df= 33.921, NFI= .91, CFI= .91, TLI= .86, IFI=.92 , RMSEA= .04. The structural model and standardized parameter estimates are shown in Figure 2.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (Means & Standard Deviations) and Inter-Correlations for Research Variables

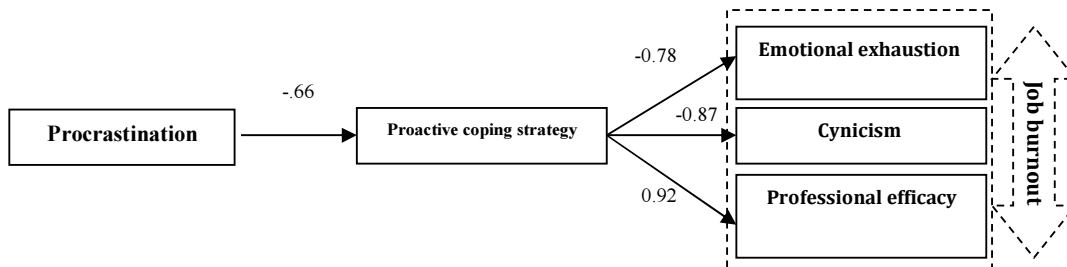|	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	**Procrastination**	52.66	13.77	___				
2	**Proactive coping**	40.72	7.13	-0.62*	—			
3	**Emotional exhaustion**	11.48	2.41	0.51*	-0.62*	—		
4	**Cynicism**	21.48	1.69	0.74*	-0.71*	0.77*	—	
5	**Professional efficacy**	18.76	1.79	-0.52*	0.51*	-0.68*	-0.62*	—

*$p < 0.001$

Figure 2. Structural model and standardized parameter estimates

To determine the significance of the mediating effects, bootstrapping procedure was used. Bootstrapping procedure was used to determine the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals around these effects. A confidence interval that did not span zero indicated a statistically significant effect. The results for bootstrapping analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results for bootstrapping analysis with mediators

Mediating by	Data	Boot	Bias	95% Confidence Interval
Procrastination ➤ proactive coping ➤ exhaustion	-2.6504	-2.2424	.0018	-3.0070- -2.5333
Procrastination ➤ proactive coping ➤ Cynicism	-1.4558	-1.2334	.0001	-2.010- -2.26577
Procrastination ➤ proactive coping ➤ Professional efficacy	-3.1756	-3.0005	.0005	-3.7379 - -32857

As shown in Table 2 the confidence interval for the 3 paths did not span zero which indicates statistically significant mediating effects. So, results confirmed the mediating role of proactive coping strategy in the relationship between procrastination and all three burnout's dimensions.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study ended up being to determine the mediating role of proactive coping strategy in the relationship among teacher's procrastination and job burnout. This particular research contributes to the increasing entire body associated with literature that examines the effects associated with procrastination throughout academic contexts. Especially, we identified which proactive coping strategy mediated the relationship between teacher's procrastination and job burnout which is consistent with findings of Veresova [9] and Van Wyk [11]. This study is a venture to a superior seeing about the role of procrastination as an important source of stress in teachers' career. The results of this study contribute to the existing knowledge in the accompanying perspectives: the concept of teachers' procrastination, the important role of proactive coping strategy in teachers' job burnout, and the practice of teacher training and teacher education.

There are numerous possible explanations for academic procrastination is being significantly related with three dimension of burnout. According Burka and Yuen [33], procrastination is just a personal feature of individuals with lower self-confidence, tendency to laziness and lack of self-control. Procrastinators are less inclined to complete tasks promptly, and spend far more time to accomplish academic assignments [34]. As quality and far more energy that the teachers may quickly dissipate and sense of tedium [35]. Working under limited time, often with not sleeping enough, can seriously impair concentration, cognition, and performance [1]. So, increased degree of procrastination lead to increased degrees of stress and burnout.

Chan [36] highlights that evidence of stress reactions, including ill-health and psychological distress, aren't solely caused by external stressors but may also be determined by a number of mediating variables, many of which are often collected under the umbrella term coping mechanism [37]. In association with stress, coping has been a significant aspect of measure as it could mitigate a person's distress in a stressful event [26]. The transactional type of stress and emotion, TMSE [26] has been offered as a construction for evaluating the coping process whenever a stressful event arises. Stressful experiences are thought person-environment transactions, and these transactions be determined by the impact of the external stressor. This process is mediated by both appraisal of the stressor and the social and cultural resources at one's disposal [38]. It could be that after teachers feel stressed by students, they might compromise the specific situation to obtain something positive from it. This could be like the relationships between teacher's perceived stress and their tendency to utilize Avoidance-Escape coping skills [39].

Proactive coping strategy is separated from other coping forms in that it incorporates and utilizes social and non-social resources and uses positive emotional strategies. Moring, Fuhrman, & Zauszniewski [40] stated that proactive coping includes goal setting and tenacious goal pursuit. Coping for the proactive individual is not really a single response, it is just a view of oneself and one's world. It is definitely an approach to life, an existential belief that things will continue to work out not due to luck and other uncontrollable factors, but because the person takes responsibility for outcomes. Proactive individuals accumulate resources and have the ability to mobilize all resources if necessary and prevent the sources of exhaustion [9].

Notably, the current research reaches investigate how this trait can influence on teacher's job burnout through the mediation mechanism. Planning factor suggests a kind of coping strategy that will require more cognitive effort from individuals who are attempting to reduce stress. These strategies include an original part of the coping process (i.e., Strategic Planning and Self-Control) [41]. Results indicate that people who do participate in Proactive types of coping strategies have the cognitive ability to resume a targeted behavior carrying out a disruption or distraction. Moreover, the ability to create a hypothetical plan of action with regards to a stressful event appears to logically coincide with the capability to generate a schedule of action [42]. These concepts appear to relate genuinely to the Reformative Self-Control factor of learned resourcefulness through planning new

behaviors to restore maladaptive one [43]. So, while procrastination had significant relationships with coping strategies, the proactive coping decreased the harmful effects of procrastination on increasing teacher's job burnout. In this Vein, using these strategies will help teachers to reduce the negative effects of procrastination in stressful situations.

Therefore, improving teacher's coping strategies may be an efficient way of preventing psychological distress in academic contexts. The application of specific programs such as stress and time management programs and training coping strategies among teachers may improve positive individual and workplace outcomes [44]. Moreover, As Dyson [45] suggests, the purpose of teacher education is to prepare and develop teachers, and this process is continual throughout a teacher's career. It seems that developing student-teachers' personal resources such as proactive coping strategies is easier at the university training stage than once they are professionally employed [46], since educational legislation does little to promote them and few economic resources are available [47]. So educational institutes can benefit from positive impact of proactive coping strategies programs in teacher's future and current career.

Finding a mediator or moderator in models of stress is essential because stress seems inevitable in the teacher's career. However, if there is something that can help to reduce it, both teachers and students may benefit. Knowing that there is lack of empirical research to support the job burnout of teachers, more efforts should be made to understand the psychological demands faced by educators and studies should consider developing more items that would represent individuals' abilities to tolerate unpleasant emotional and cognitive reactions to stress.

Limitation and recommendations for future researches

The present study has major limitations that needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results. First, the sample comprised teachers from public high-schools, with almost the participants being women, may mean that the results are not generalizable to other populations. Second, this research examined the current experiences of teachers. However, According to Balkis [48] teacher's behaviors that arise from burnout and procrastination might be related to their previous experiences. Third, this study is not based on longitudinal data. The causal directions are based on theoretical argument. Future research could conduct similar studies in other educational settings to determine the generalizability of these findings and can be conducted as longitudinal studies to how academic procrastination affects burnout levels and how it is experienced by the teachers.

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