The Perceptions of Primary Education Teachers on Their Occupational Burnout and the Contribution of the School Principal to Its Coping

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Author's contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author AK designed the study, performed the literature searches, wrote the first draft of the manuscript and completed the references. Author AA managed the analyses of the entire study, wrote the conclusion section and conducted the final editing of the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Contemporary and very intense pace of life and work has highlighted the importance of studying burnout syndrome that is currently used to describe a wide range of jobs and occupations. The purpose of the research is to examine the perceptions of primary education teachers about the reasons that cause burnout, as well as the measures taken by the principal in order to cope it. The research was carried out between February 2019 and April 2019 with the method of an anonymous self-completing questionnaire. All teachers working in school units, regardless of their specialty, were selected from the schools belonging to the Regional Unit of Kavala in Greece. A number was assigned to each unit, which was then recorded in a statistical table. From this table, 30 numbers were randomly selected representing 30 different schools, irrespective of their location and organisation. The sample of the research consists of 324 Primary Education teachers. The findings revealed that teachers do not feel particularly professionally exhausted or emotionally exhausted due to their profession, but instead they feel creative, believe that their goals are achieved and are willing to carry out their educational work - duty. Furthermore, as far as the feeling of personal

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achievement and satisfaction that teachers feel is concerned, the attitude of the principal and his/her contribution to the effectiveness of the educational leadership play an important role.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term "burnout" is used for a wide range of occupations and jobs. In recent decades, the intense pace of life and work have highlighted the importance of studying this syndrome. Many studies have attempted to analyse burnout, defining it in various ways. These definitions perceive burnout as a negative psycho-emotional experience of the person deriving from occupational anxiety [1], directing anyone's interest mainly upon its causes.

As far as the causes that provoke or prevent burnout syndrome, several studies have been conducted in Greece and abroad [2]. Human-related occupations and jobs are more vulnerable to burnout [3]. The pressure which time causes to teachers so that they can respond to their teaching duties, the demanding occupation assignments, the stress, the lack of supportive structures, the stressful centralised education system, as well as the crowded departments - classrooms, reduces teachers' available remaining time for their recovery and upgrading [4], creating an unattractive working environment for them.

Burnout in the workplace and, in particular, in employees of the education field has preoccupied a great deal of researchers in recent decades, mainly because of the impact is has on human mental health. The majority of these surveys aimed at documenting the phenomenon and finding effective methods and techniques for coping burnout. However, it is particularly important to consider the role of the principal towards the direction of successful coping the syndrome based on the perceptions of teachers [5], trying in this way to move research a step forward.

2. DEFINING BURNOUT

The term "burnout" is not synonymous with the terms "job stress", "fatigue", "alienation" or "depression", although its prolonged use in recent years has caused confusion of definitions and terms. Burnout becomes apparent as a result of hard work (investing time and emotions) and low satisfaction, combined with stressful working conditions. The term mostly refers to nurses, doctors, educators - teachers, social workers and other similar professions [6].

"Burnout" was first used to describe a state of fatigue and weakness of professionals' mental health in their workplace. Freudenberg called this treaty "a weakness of performance or burnout, due to excessive demands on energy, strength or capabilities" [7]. The person ends up becoming rigid and inelastic, his/her progress and structural changes are hindered for the reason that the above require an effort for adjustment. He also states that the most prone people to show burnout are those who are very devoted to their work, that is, those who feel an internal pressure to offer, as well as an external one to perform [7].

According to the psychologist Maslach [8], burnout is defined as a syndrome of psychosomatic fatigue, where the employee reduces his/her mood, respect, sympathy and any positive feelings about the people he/she meets professionally [3]. In this way, he/she does not get satisfaction from his work and gradually creates a negative perception even for himself [8]. What emerges from Maslach's definition about burnout is that it is associated with an "employee's psychosomatic strain, as long as the positive elements of his/her personality are lacking because of the difficulties of his/her daily professional employment" [7].

Additionally, Maslach and Jackson claim that burnout syndrome does not occur suddenly, but is the result of continuous work under conditions of anxiety and stress. At the same time, there are three aspects that describe the syndrome of burnout: the psycho-emotional exhaustion, the depersonalisation and the reduction of personal goals and achievements. Moving towards the onset of burnout, psycho-emotional exhaustion and fatigue occur primarily. This is explained by the fact that the employee feels exhausted from his/her profession and is not characterised by the necessary vigour to provide work. This fact results in his/her effort to defend himself/herself, decreasing his/her emotions and creating impersonal relationships with colleagues, in an attempt to avoid stress and anxiety. This

condition is generally ineffective and results in the final stage of burnout which is the reduced performance at work [2].

Sturgess and Poulsen refer to burnout as the "progressive loss of idealism, energy and purpose that people feel when they are associated with offering work as a consequence of their profession [9]." Cherniss describes burnout as the "disease of the over-devoted [10]." Brezniak and Ben Ya'Ir state that it has to do with the absence of balance between the possibilities, the values, the expectations and the requirements of the environment [11]. Therefore, burnout could be considered as a defence of a person, which is expressed through indifference, arrogance and emotional distance [12], but with very unpleasant results gradually for his/her overall health. Naturally, teachers cannot be excluded from the unpleasant consequences of this phenomenon [13].

3. BURNOUT AND TEACHERS

Occupational stress, and especially that of teachers, occupied scholars in the second half of the twentieth century, mainly due to its impact on mental and physical health, with the aim of finding methods and techniques for its effective management [14]. Teachers who have taken on a humanitarian profession experience stressful situations and end up in work exhaustion. Teacher's anxiety belongs to the general category of work-related stress, which is considered familiar with the concept of "professional anxiety" in the foreign literature [15].

A teacher may not communicate with students face to face, be inaccessible when students need him/her, or may refuse to help when they need it. Therefore, a teacher who suffers from burnout will experience a loss of enthusiasm, a drop in morale, a high sense of frustration, and will leave his/her work environment [16].

Regarding teachers' burnout, Hendrickson considers burnout to be physical, emotional and psychological exhaustion, which begins when the teacher is marked by a sense of lack of interest in teaching [17]. Teachers, through this phenomenon, react to the causes that stress them. Professionally exhausted teachers feel lethargy, as well as lack of enthusiasm and humour, show inability to concentrate and lack self-confidence [18].

Teachers' emotional and psychological burnout is related to how they feel when they invest emotionally in interpersonal relationships with their colleagues. More specifically, as emotional reserves decline, teachers feel powerless to "invest energy" in others [19]. At the same time, Farber states that burnout is not considered a way of teachers' expression in their working conditions, but rather a more general -of social nature- issue, that is an absence of a sense that they have taken on a role and are part of a community, which in fact means a feeling of isolation [20]. Towards this direction, it is interesting to analyse the possibility of the relationship between leadership in general -and in particular the leadership styles of the principal- and the teachers' effectiveness and burnout.

4. PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AND TEACHERS' EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST BURNOUT

Gaines mentioned the support provided by the principal to his/her teaching staff. He noted a negative relationship between supportive behaviour and teachers' levels of emotional exhaustion [21]. In the qualitative study of Schlichte, Yssel & Merbler, only a few teachers had the full support of the principal in their educational work. Supportive leadership has not only been a major cause against burnout, but has also contributed to teachers' job satisfaction [22].

In Greece, in the research of Stagia and Iordanidis, it is argued that the ways with which the principal leads the educational organisation is one of the reasons related to the teachers' burnout. In particular, the levels of burnout found in teachers appeared to be related to the principal's lack of supportive background [23].

At the same time, according to Leithwood, studies have shown that principal's leadership is related and influences teachers' effectiveness. In particular, teachers with low levels of self-efficacy are more authoritative, report high levels of anger and anxiety, express pessimistic views on student issues and are critical as well [24].

In addition, according to Bourandas and Saitis, effective leadership can have a positive impact and play an important role on employees' job satisfaction. Leadership and its degree of effectiveness is connected to interpersonal relationships and how they are managed [25]. The sense of creation, confidence, security and enthusiasm are key elements that can lead the employee to his professional success [26].

Professional and psychological support offered by the leader creates a sense of security and motivates employees in order to feel less pressure and stress [27]. When a principal asserts his/her authority, but at the same time gives space to the subordinates in terms of their decisions and responsibilities [28], this results in teachers who are positive towards school and feel confident and secure for achieving the tasks assigned to them [29]. They feel important, since their point of view and also their action have an impact on the general functioning of the organisation, motivating themselves to improve their performance [30].

Pashiardis [31], Papadopoylos [32] & Cassar & Buttigieg [33] investigated the influence of leadership on teachers' professional satisfaction and concluded that the leadership attitude of the principal in an organisation creates feelings of familiarity, emotional support and positive attitudes in their professional environment. A charismatic leader positively shapes his work environment, creates a sense of calmness and completion in employees, making them more efficient [34,35,36].

The principal of the school unit regulates several important reasons related to cope with burnout, such as a healthy work environment, smooth interpersonal relationships, anxiety resulting from work [36], facing also very often he/she himself/herself its symptoms, as shown by a recent empirical research [37]. Strict regulations and increased bureaucracy intensify teachers' frustration [26]. The difficult working conditions related to the insufficient maintenance of the building facilities of the school units can exhaust teachers professionally [38].

Studies have shown that the school principal is considered a major factor for the work stress of teachers [39], since several times there is a lack of support from the principal and also difficulties in managing interpersonal relations. The manager-leader should organise, guide and control the actions of his subordinates, create visions and motivate them, in order to provoke their pleasant cooperation [40]. The avoidance of conflicts and the harmonious management of teachers' differences, helps and motivates every teacher. On the contrary, the lack not only of a cooperative climate but also of communication between teachers can provoke new problems and reduce their work performance.

It is understood, therefore, that the effective leader should direct the attitudes and behaviours of the teaching staff, be inspired by passion, zeal, enthusiasm and faith in its members [41]. At the same time, however, the effectiveness of the leader is related to his power of influence. The leader is considered efficient when he/she can influence his teaching staff, work with labour and faith, without taking advantage of the power offered by his position [42]. Therefore, there is an urgent need to further investigate the relationship between burnout and the role of the principal, in order to examine whether it affects significantly or not teachers' burnout. Our research aims to investigate whether teachers feel exhausted at work, as well as what the attitude and actions taken on by the school principal to cope the burnout of primary school teachers are.

5. METHODOLOGY

The research process followed includes the sample of the administrative staff (principals and vice principals) that participated, as well as the tool and the statistical description and analysis that were used to gather and analyse data.

5.1 Sample

To participate in the research, all teachers working in school units, regardless of their specialty, were selected from the schools belonging to primary education of the Regional Unit of Kavala in Greece. A number was assigned to each unit, which was then recorded in a statistical table. From this table, 30 numbers were randomly selected representing 30 different schools, regardless of their location and organisation. According to Robson [43], the selection of sampling research is the easiest way to collect a great deal of data from a large number of individuals quickly and efficiently, while at the same time ensuring anonymity, which encourages honesty in responses.

In the Regional Unit of Kavala there are 65 primary schools in which 926 teachers of all specialties work. From the aforementioned way of sampling, the sample of the research consisted of 30 schools, in which 350 teachers worked during the academic year 2018-19. 324 of them answered the questionnaires, giving a participation rate of 92.6%. Moreover, these 324 participants constitute more that 35% of the total population of teachers in the prefecture. As a result, the population size is 350 people which is adequate enough to achieve a confidence level

of 99.999% as our sample size exceeds 297, that is the proposed - desired number.

5.2 Research Tool

Data collection was performed using a questionnaire. Creswell [44], states that the questionnaire is the ideal research tool for a quantitative survey, because it allows the researcher to collect data from a large sample and generalise results to an even larger population.

The questionnaire consists of four sections concerning: (a) the causes-factors that lead to the teachers burnout, (b) the role of the principal in coping teachers burnout, (c) the connection of interpersonal relationships between the principal and the teaching staff with teachers' burnout and (d) the relationship of school leadership styles and models with teachers' burnout. There were 77 questions in the questionnaire. The first part included questions about the demographic characteristics of the sample. The second part of the questionnaire, and more specifically the questions from 1 to 29, relate to the factors of teachers' burnout. The third part of the questionnaire, and more specifically questions 30 to 52, concerns the teachers' views on how the school principal deals with burnout. The fourth part of the questionnaire, that is questions 53 to 61 concern the interpersonal relationships of teachers with the school principal. The fifth and last part of the questionnaire, and more specifically questions 62 to 77, concern the teachers' views on the leadership models / styles followed by the school principal.

In the present research, the apparent validity is carried out through the theoretical analysis and review of the international and Greek literature. Internal validity is realised through random sampling, offering a representative sample by the teachers of the Primary School of the Regional Unit of Kavala and providing more chances for generalisation of the results. In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the specific study, recognised research tools were used, due to their service in answering research questions of this study. In addition, to ensure higher levels of validity and reliability for the measurement scales, we initially conducted a pilot test of our research tool. In this pilot test, 15 people were selected to answer the original form of the questionnaire. Through the answers of the teachers, any existing remarks and difficulties during the completion were recorded. This

recording led to essential changes and improvements to the questionnaire, enhancing the validity of the content.

After validity, reliability is an important element to be examined. The reliability of the resulting factors of this study was evaluated based on Cronbach's alpha value (internal correlation). The alpha value is considered acceptable when it exceeds 0.70, as it happens in the present research, or marginally acceptable when it is between 0.6 and 0.7.

5.3 Statistical Description and Analysis

To describe the answers given, frequency distribution tables were constructed for each statement/question. Factor values resulting from conducting an Exploratory Factor Analysis were described by calculating the corresponding mean values and standard deviations in terms of gender, age, years of working service, marital status, type of employment, postgraduate training and possession of a postgraduate degree. Factor value comparisons, based on the above demographics, were performed by applying the Mann-Whitney test for cases where the comparison was between two subgroups of teachers, and by applying the Kruskal-Wallis test for cases where the comparison was among more than two subgroups of teachers with a post-hoc Mann-Whitney test. The Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests were chosen because the factor values did not follow the normal distribution, according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilks tests. Finally, the correlations between the questionnaire factors were investigated by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient. The audits were performed at a significance level of 0.05. For the statistical analysis, the statistical programme SPSS (version 22) was used.

6. FINDINGS

From the analysis of the research data, some interesting results emerged. Participants showed differences apart from gender, age and marital status, in terms of position, years of working service, cognitive levels, and years of service in the schools where they worked.

More specifically, most teachers feel that their work is quite valuable, resulting in an increased feeling of their personal achievement. The sense of accomplishment of their professional duties,

the good interpersonal relationships with the school management and the colleagues, as well as the satisfaction they receive from their students' response, are likely to contribute substantially to the increase of the feeling of personal achievement.

The majority of the teachers in this sample do not feel depersonalised and their professional exhaustion is at low levels. At the same time, respondents reported a low rate of professional exhaustion and depersonalisation, as they claimed feeling refreshed by their work, while generally believing that they had taken significant positive professional steps.

Table 1 shows the results related to the causes and factors that lead to teachers' burnout, as evidenced by the responses of the sample teachers. It must be noted that the factors of personal achievement, emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation have been measured on a 7-point Likert scale, while the factors of working conditions and also salary income and development have been measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

Tables 1.1-1.5 show the results related to mean scores and standard deviations of questions forming the above five factors related to teachers' burnout, as evidenced by the responses of the sample teachers.

The results of the study are in contrast to those of other studies, which recorded that teachers do not feel interested in their educational work and feel physical and emotional exhaustion [17,18]. A similar study noted that teachers feel degraded and emotionally injured, a fact which has a negative impact on their teaching [44].

In addition, this survey revealed that most teachers are not satisfied enough with their financial income, as well as with the existing opportunities for professional development. This finding is identical to those of other surveys [7,45], which recorded low income as one of the main causes of teacher burnout.

Despite the fact that teachers have experienced the current financial crisis, they believe that both the emotional and the professional security their job offers them are essential reasons for satisfaction. At the same time, however, they state that they are not offered as many opportunities as it would be appropriate for their professional development. The research also recorded dissatisfaction for the fact that the modern Greek educational system does not offer teachers the necessary opportunities for training and education, which would be associated with their general development.

Table 1. Mean scores and standard deviations of factors related to teachers' burnout

Factors	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
Personal Achievement	5.76	0.67
Emotional Exhaustion	2.52	1.18
Depersonalisation	1.63	0.83
Working Conditions	3.91	0.54
Salary Income and Development	2.37	0.63

Table 1.1 Mean scores and standard deviations of questions forming the factor personal achievement

Questions	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
*5. I feel that I treat some of my students impersonally as if they are objects.	6,57	0,89
6. I deal with the problems that my students have during the learning process very effectively.	6,02	0,96
4. I can easily realise how my students feel about different things.	6,00	1,12
12. I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students.	5,99	1,09
9. I feel that I am full of energy.	5,87	1,05
13. I feel refreshed after cooperating closely with my students.	5,80	1,12
14. I feel that I have accomplished a lot of remarkable things at work.	5,60	1,10
23. My work is worthwhile.	4,23	0,65

* The scale of question 5 has been reversed.

Table 1.2 Mean scores and standard deviations of questions forming the factor emotional exhaustion

Questions	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
1. I feel emotionally exhausted because of my job.	3,02	1,62
3. I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day at work.	2,55	1,39
15. I feel that I have reached the limits of my endurance.	2,51	1,45
2. I feel "empty" (e.g. with feelings of cancellation, inadequacy, lack of meaning) at the end of a school day.	2,27	1,34
10. I feel frustrated by my work.	2,23	1,43

Table 1.3 Mean scores and standard deviations of questions forming the factor depersonalisation

Questions	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
16. I have the impression that my students blame me for some of their problems.	1,86	1,14
7. I feel less sensitive towards people, since I started this job.	1,69	1,43
8. I am worried for the fact that this job is hardening me emotionally.	1,61	1,16
11. I really do not care what happens to some of my students.	1,36	0,96

Table 1.4 Mean scores and standard deviations of questions forming the factor working conditions

Questions	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
*27. My principal is rude.	4,50	0,66
*25. My job is boring.	4,21	0,82
24. My job satisfies me.	4,09	0,74
18. My workplace is pleasant.	4,06	0,81
26. My principal understands my problems.	4,01	0,85
17. My working conditions are the best I have ever had.	3,62	1,00
*29. The organisation discriminates among its employees.	3,35	0,91
28. The organisation takes care of its employees.	3,41	0,84

The scale of questions 25, 27 and 29 have been reversed.

Table 1.5 Mean scores and standard deviations of questions forming the factor salary income and development

Questions	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
19. I get paid well for the job I offer.	2,48	0,99
*20. I get paid less than I deserve.	2,30	1,02
21. There are a lot of opportunities for promotion.	2,46	0,87
*22. The prospects for promotion are very limited.	2,26	0,85

The scale of questions 20 and 22 have been reversed.

It is worth mentioning that female teachers stated that they feel more professionally exhausted than men and as a result they show a greater sense of depersonalisation and emotional exhaustion. It is also worth noting, however, that female teachers are likely to experience the stress of their family and professional role, as well as the dilemma of choosing between family and career.

Older teachers reported feeling more professionally exhausted compared to younger ones. The interpretation of this may lie in the fact that as one grows older he/she does not have the same stamina and strength to work in the increasingly demanding conditions that come up, resulting in increased burnout for the elderly

people [46]. The above results are in contrast to those of other surveys, which recorded that younger teachers feel more burnout [10,46,47]. This is most likely related to the increased teaching experience of older teachers [48,49].

In terms of the teachers' marital status, it appears that unmarried teachers show greater occupational burnout than married ones. This situation is usually due to the fact that unmarried teachers do not have a supportive family environment, which would compensate for their burnout [50]. The results of our study are in line with those of other surveys [47,48,51], which reported that unmarried teachers show less personal achievement than married ones. Research has also shown that married teachers experience lower levels of burnout and depersonalisation and higher levels of personal achievement than single and divorced ones [2,52].

As far as teachers' employment status is concerned, it is revealed that permanently appointed teachers differ from non-permanent ones in terms of burnout. In particular, permanently appointed teachers express higher levels of burnout than non-permanent ones. At the same time, there are studies [2,4], which argue that the permanent appointed teachers do not differ from non-permanent ones in terms of the extent of burnout.

As for the role of the principal of the school unit, most teachers stated that they are the ones who provide independence to the teaching staff and take care of the proper management of their interpersonal relationships. In most schools of primary education of Kavala there is freedom of movement and speech, expression of opinion and the absence of a strict control mechanism by the management of the school unit. In this context, most of the teachers expressed the view that the school principal should have good interpersonal relationships with the teaching staff. After all, the absence of interpersonal relationships

between principals and teachers is a major cause of burnout [2,53,54].

Table 2 below presents the results concerning the role of the principal in coping teachers' burnout, as evidenced by the responses of the sample teachers. The results show that the teachers of this sample believe more, on average, that the school principal provides more autonomy to the teachers compared to the proper management of his/her interpersonal relationships.

Tables 2.1-2.2 below show the results related to mean scores and standard deviations of questions forming the above two factors related to the principals' role in coping teachers' burnout, as evidenced by the responses of the sample teachers.

School principals are marked by limited interpersonal relationships with colleagues, resulting in teachers' emotional and psychological exhaustion [19]. Lack of emotional support from school management, workload, lack of autonomy and lack of interpersonal relationships with colleagues, are some of the main causes of burnout [54,55].

Teachers consider it an important condition for the principal to have communication with teachers in order to maintain good interpersonal relationships. Table 3 below presents the results concerning the role of interpersonal relationships between the principal and the teaching staff in coping burnout, as evidenced by the responses of the sample teachers. From the scale of the relationship of the interpersonal relations between the principal and the teaching staff and also the burnout of the teachers, the factor concerning the communication between the principal and the teachers was maintained.

Table 3.1 below shows the results related to mean scores and standard deviations of questions forming the above factor related to the factor concerning communication between the principal and the teachers, as evidenced by the responses of the sample teachers.

Table 2. Mean Scores and standard deviations of the principals' role in coping teachers' burnout

Factors	Mean Scores	Standard deviation
Interpersonal Relationships	3.99	0.76
Teachers' Autonomy	4.73	0.50

Table 2.1 Mean scores and standard deviations of questions forming the factor interpersonal relationships

Questions	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
42. To what extent does your school principal apply participatory decision-making processes to his / her teaching staff?	4,26	0,92
51. To what extent does your school principal work to create an atmosphere of order in the school?	4,22	0,91
30. How satisfied are you with the way your school principal manages the school?	4,22	0,92
38. Does your school principal support open communication and flexibility in his / her relationships with staff members?	4,18	0,91
50. To what extent does the principal of your school clearly set the rules of students' behaviour in his / her school environment?	4,16	0,90
45. To what extent does your school principal lead the new school staff?	4,12	0,92
46. To what extent does your school principal praise teachers who make an outstanding contribution to school activities?	4,10	0,98
41. To what extent does your school principal solve teachers' problems in a collaborative way?	4,09	0,97
40. To what extent does your school principal create a common vision for the improvement and development of the school for you?	3,97	0,95
49. To what extent does your school principal present, discuss and transmit the school vision to all its members?	3,92	0,98
48. To what extent does the school principal emphasise and cultivate two-way communication between the school and the community?	3,91	0,90
47. To what extent does your school principal encourage the school to engage with the community and parents?	3,91	0,91
44. To what extent does your school principal encourage the professional development of teachers?	3,76	1,09
36. Does your school principal promote programmes and practices that create a positive learning environment?	3,69	1,00
37. Does the school principal offer you educational materials and sources to support you in fulfilling your educational goals?	3,65	1,07
43. To what extent does the principal of your school take care of the training of the teaching staff?	3,63	1,04

Table 2.2 Mean scores and standard deviations of questions forming the factor teachers' autonomy

Questions	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
*35. Do you think that the way your school principal manages your school causes feelings of depersonalisation in your work environment?	4,85	0,55
*34. Do you think that the way your school principal manages your school is physically exhausting?	4,84	0,56
*33. Do you think that the way your school principal manages your school causes emotional exhaustion?	4,80	0,58
*32. Do you think that the way your school principal manages your school is stressful?	4,74	0,64
39. To what extent does the school principal allow enough autonomy for teachers to organise and plan their teaching?	4,45	0,77

* The scale of questions 32, 33, 34 and 35 have been reversed.

In terms of leadership styles and models, it was revealed that the majority of principals are marked by the existence of an ethical, transformative, contingent, divisive and transactional form of leadership, as well as by a democratic style. Table 4 below presents the results concerning the style or models of school leadership related to the teachers' burnout. According to the results, the teachers of the sample consider more, on average, that the school principal follows the transformative, contingent, divisive and transactional form of leadership in terms of the moral form of leadership and the democratic leadership style.

Tables 4.1-4.2 below show the results related to mean scores and standard deviations of

questions forming the above two factors related to moral - ethical form of leadership and democratic leadership style as well as transformative, contingent, divisive and transactional form of leadership, as evidenced by the responses of the sample teachers.

Teachers also claimed that most principals decide and act ethically, do not hinder teachers' work, are consistent in carrying out their duties and give teachers a high degree of independence and freedom. At the same time, Arnold et al. [33] point out that transformational leadership reduces teachers' burnout while adding meaning and value to their lives, strengthens relationships and improves general school living conditions [56].

Table 3. Mean scores and standard deviations of the factor concerning communication between the principal and the teachers

Factors	Mean Scores	Standard deviation
Communication between the principal and the teachers	4.34	0.61

Table 3.1 Mean scores and standard deviations of questions forming the factor communication between the principal and the teachers

Questions	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
61. Do you feel comfortable expressing a problem to your school principal that concerns you about your work?	4,95	0,22
55. How often does your principal communicate orally with the teaching staff?	4,66	0,57
56. How often is the teaching staff informed by the principal about issues related to the operation of the school unit?	4,57	0,62
59. To what extent do you consider your school principal to have communication skills?	4,39	0,78
58. How important do you consider non-verbal communication (posture, tone of voice, facial expressions, smile) between the school principal and the teaching staff?	4,18	0,84
57. How effective do you consider the cooperation of the principal with each one of the teachers individually?	4,13	0,89
60. How effective is your principal's intervention in resolving conflicts among teachers?	3,96	0,94

Table 4. Mean Scores and Standard deviations of the factor concerning styles and or models of school leadership

Factors	Mean Scores	Standard deviation
Moral - ethical form of leadership and democratic leadership style	3.99	0.76
Transformative, contingent, divisive and transactional form of leadership	4.73	0.50

Table 4.1 Mean scores and standard deviations of questions forming the factor moral - ethical form of leadership and democratic leadership style

Questions	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
*77. The manager is not consistent in the performance of his / her duties, does not set goals and delays to make decisions.	4,77	0,71
*70. The principal of your school uses fear as a motivator and often opposes to his colleagues.	4,74	0,58
*76. The principal is indifferent towards the performance of teachers' duties.	4,70	0,62
67. Your school principal decides and acts with moral values, is fair, honest and trustworthy.	4,57	0,73
62. Your principal aims to create a healthy climate, aiming at continuous learning and support for students and teachers.	4,48	0,78
68. The principal of your school exercises his / her leadership and behaves in such a way that at the same time facilitates the work of the teachers.	4,44	0,77
66. The school principal gives you a basis for the development of the school and considers the students' learning as his / her priority.	4,35	0,74
*71. Your school principal makes his / her own decisions and receives strength from the position he / she holds.	4,34	0,90
73. Your school principal gives his / her associates a high degree of freedom and independence.	4,31	0,71
74 Your school principal simply acts as a carrier of information to subordinates, as he / she promotes the equal participation of all members.	3,39	1,14
75. The school principal gives all the power to the teaching staff and makes minimal intervention moves.	3,19	1,11

Table 4.2 Mean scores and standard deviations of questions forming the factor transformative, contingent, divisive and transactional form of leadership

Questions	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
72. Your school principal takes seriously the suggestions of the teaching staff he / she manages.	4,40	0,79
69. Your school principal has the ability to differentiate his / her leadership style in relation to the problems he / she has to face each time.	4,02	0,92
63. The principal of your school tries to satisfy the wishes of the teachers, as a reward and in return for the services they offer.	3,67	1,12
64. The principal of your school exerts influence over his / her teaching staff through his / her attitude.	3,60	0,94
65. The principal of your school adopts a form of division of leadership into his / her teaching staff, without relying on the traditional lines of hierarchy.	3,20	1,12

7. CONCLUSION

The school is an interactive workplace in which different factors act to produce teacher burnout, so if there is a desire to reduce teachers' level of burnout, a school principal's leadership style can definitely help to attain these goals [57]. Administrative support is the help given to a teacher by the principals so that he/she can be able to execute his/her day operations within the school [58]. Positive support is associated with less burnout because positive reappraisal and the formation of adaptive responses are supported by positive communication. However, teachers' coping efforts can fail if the communication with others focuses on negative topics [59]. Positive relationships are facilitated by structures which give teachers the possibility

of developing standing relationships with each student, such as in primary school where teachers have less students than in upper levels [60]. Collaborative programmes can be designed to provide support and guidance to colleagues and help them learn to cope with stress [61,62].

As far as this particular study is concerned, most teachers feel that their work is quite valuable, resulting in an increased feeling of their personal achievement. The sense of accomplishment of their professional duties, the good interpersonal relationships with the school management and the colleagues, as well as the satisfaction they receive from their students' response, are likely to contribute substantially to the increase of the feeling of personal achievement. The majority of them do not feel depersonalised and their professional exhaustion is at low levels. At the same time, they reported a low rate of professional exhaustion and depersonalisation, as they claimed feeling refreshed by their work, while generally believing that they had taken significant positive professional steps.

As for the role of the principal, most teachers stated that he/she is the one who provides independence to the teaching staff and takes care of the proper management of their interpersonal relationships. In most schools of primary education of Kavala there is freedom of movement and speech, expression of opinion and the absence of a strict control mechanism by the management of the school unit. In this context, most of the teachers expressed the view that the school principal should have good interpersonal relationships with the teaching staff. After all, the absence of interpersonal relationships between principals and teachers is a major cause of burnout. Teachers consider it an important condition for the principal to have communication with teachers in order to maintain good interpersonal relationships.

In terms of leadership styles and models, it was revealed that the majority of principals are marked by the existence of an ethical, transformative, contingent, divisive and transactional form of leadership, as well as by a democratic style. The teachers of the sample consider more, on average, that the school principal follows the transformative, contingent, divisive and transactional form of leadership in terms of the moral form of leadership and the democratic leadership style. They also claimed that most principals take decisions and act ethically, do not hinder teachers' work, are

consistent in carrying out their duties and give teachers a high degree of independence and freedom.

Taking all the above findings into consideration, it is therefore essential to mention that the principals of the schools examined contribute positively to cope burnout and emotional exhaustion of teachers. They support the effort and work of teachers, strengthen their morale and promote the right conditions for successful communication and the best possible interpersonal relationships. The attitude of the principal is of major importance, so that teachers can be able to face any difficulty and overcome any obstacle that emerges within a school unit. The principals of this research are not marked by centralism, but they are willing to listen and solve the problems of their colleagues. The authoritative style and the mood of delay do not seem to characterise them, leaving a lot of hopes for the future research on this field.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

The participants were offered a detailed explanation of the research topic and its main focus, before asking for their consent to participate in the research. The study's ethical clearance was obtained from the Humanitarian Faculty of the Hellenic Open University.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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