

Teaching styles and burnout: A short-term longitudinal study

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Abstract: The aim of this short-term longitudinal study was to investigate the associations between teaching styles and burnout. The participants, 73 teachers, were asked to answer the Teaching Styles Questionnaire and the Cuestionario de Burnout del Profesorado twice, with a three-months gap; both instruments were presented in their Portuguese version. Results point to the stability of teaching styles and lowered personal accomplishment, but not of emotional exhaustion. Also, we found negative associations between authoritative teaching and burnout and positive associations between permissive teaching and burnout. Only the lowered personal accomplishment facet of burnout was significantly predicted by authoritative and permissive teaching. The implications of this study suggest the importance of preventing burnout, namely by aiding teachers in developing more efficacious teaching styles (e.g., authoritative). The authoritative style is considered as ideal, having in mind its correlation with higher levels of work accomplishment and lower levels of emotional exhaustion.

Keywords: Teaching styles; Burnout; Emotional exhaustion; Personal accomplishment.

Estilos de ensino e burnout: Um estudo longitudinal de curta duração: O objetivo deste estudo longitudinal de curto prazo foi investigar as associações entre estilos de ensino e *burnout*. Aos participantes, 73 professores, foi solicitado que respondessem ao Questionário de Estilos de Ensino e ao Cuestionario de *Burnout* do Profesorado duas vezes, com um intervalo de 3 meses; ambos os instrumentos foram apresentados na sua versão portuguesa. Os resultados apontam para a estabilidade dos estilos de ensino e da dimensão 'falta de realização pessoal' do *burnout*, mas não do desgaste emocional. Além disso, encontrámos associações negativas entre ensino autoritativo e *burnout* e associações positivas entre ensino permissivo e *burnout*. Apenas a faceta do *burnout* respeitante a falta de realização pessoal foi significativamente prevista pelo ensino autoritário e permissivo. As implicações deste estudo sugerem a importância de prevenir o *burnout*, nomeadamente auxiliando os professores no desenvolvimento de estilos de ensino mais eficazes (por exemplo, autoritativos). O estilo autoritativo é considerado ideal, tendo em vista sua correlação com níveis mais elevados de realização profissional e menores níveis de exaustão emocional.

Palavras-chave: Estilos de ensino; Burnout; Exaustão emocional; Realização pessoal.

Over the last decades, there has been an increasing research focus on teachers' burnout (i.e., teachers' experience of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and perceived lowered personal accomplishment), which impacts on their professional activity (Aloe, Amo, & Shanahan, 2014; Butler, 2007; Evers, Tomic, & Brouwers, 2004; Lauermaann & König, 2016; Maslach, 2003). Teachers tend to have higher levels of burnout than other workers in the field of human services (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), which consists in one of the reasons for leaving the profession (Aloe et al., 2013). Estimates in the Europe are that 25%-30% of teachers experience burnout (Tschiesner, Tauber, Martina, & Farneti, 2014). The increasing diversity in school context, the decreasing levels of parental involvement, and major changes in school policies are potential factors affecting teacher burnout (Aloe et al., 2014). It may also be the case that teachers feel unprepared to deal with classroom management (Melnick & Meister, 2008). Results from a multivariate meta-analysis on sixteen studies showed that there is a significant relation between classroom management self-efficacy and burnout; alternatively, when teachers have a greater sense of classroom management self-efficacy, they also feel more accomplished (Aloe et al., 2014).

Classroom management may be practiced through different teaching styles, which may be conceptualized based on the three parental styles. The parents' practices are classified as permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative and the differences between categories are based on how parents control children's behavior (Baumrind, 1966). Little control is applied by permissive parents in opposition to

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authoritarian parents who apply rigid rules and expect children to obey them without questioning or else they will get punished. Authoritative parents implement rules but explain to their children the basis for these rules and expect children to internalize the standards of behavior instead of acting based on fear of punishment. Recent studies propose that teaching styles may be considered based on the same typology either when considering the perspective of college students (Bassett, Snyder, Rogers, & Collins, 2013) or the perspective of teachers (Barni, Russo, & Danioni, 2018; Carlos, Carvalhais, & Vagos, 2020).

The association between diverse ways of managing classroom, based on parenting styles (Baumrind, 1966), and burnout has not, however, to our knowledge, been previously investigated. By applying the framework of parenting styles to classroom management (Bassett et al., 2013), three teaching styles may be contrasted: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Authoritative teachers show interest and affection for their students, and place limits while encouraging the students' independence. The authoritarian teacher expects that students pay attention at classes as the way to acquire knowledge and act according to a restrictive discipline. The permissive teacher disconnects from students, their needs and classroom management (Barni et al., 2018). The authoritative teaching style has been associated with better outcomes among elementary and middle school students (Walker, 2009; Wentzel, 2002) and university students (Bassett et al., 2013). Still, little is known about how specific classroom management styles may associate with burnout among teachers over time.

The present study explored the relationship between teacher's classroom management styles and teachers' burnout using a short-term (i.e., three months) longitudinal study. We expected teaching styles to be stable over this period. In addition, we expected that teaching styles predicted burnout over time. Specifically, we expected that an authoritative style would predict less burnout, whereas an authoritarian or permissive style would predict higher burnout.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 73 Portuguese teachers, mostly female ($n = 66$, 90.4%) and married ($n = 58$, 79.5%). They taught compulsory grades in public schools in the north and center regions of Portugal for an average of 24.28 years ($SD = 6.66$); men and women had, on average, similar years of past teaching experience. Participants' age ranged from 34 to 61 years old ($M = 24.29$, $SD = 6.64$); men were significantly, $t(71) = 53.407$, $p < .001$, older ($M = 52.43$, $DP = 6.87$) than women ($M = 48.18$, $DP = 6.87$). Most of these teachers ($n = 69$, 94.5%) referred they were not at the time of the study or had in the past received psychological counselling. All participants filled in the research instruments in two time-points (cf. Instruments and Procedure section respectively).

Measurements

Teaching Styles Questionnaire (TSQ). The TSQ intends to address three teaching styles (i.e., authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive) and results from adapting the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 2001; Portuguese version Pedro, Carapito, & Ribeiro, 2015) to a school context. Preliminary analyses on its internal structure provides evidence on a 21-item three-style factor structure and on the reliability and construct validity of those factors (Carlos et al., 2020). At time 1 and 2 of data collection, respectively, the internal consistency of those teaching styles were: $\alpha = .85$ and $.86$ for authoritative, $\alpha = .55$ and $.16$ for authoritarian, and $\alpha = .57$ and $.67$ for permissive; due to its unacceptable internal consistency value, data for time 2 for the authoritarian style was not considered in the current work.

Questionário de Burnout para Professores (CBP-R). The CBP-R (Moreno-Jiménez, Hernández & Gutiérrez, 2000; Portuguese version by Patrão, Rita & Maroco, 2012) intends to assess stress and burnout in teachers. It consists of 66 items that are organized into 6 dimensions, only one of which (i.e., burnout) was psychometrically validated by Patrão, Rita, and Maroco (2012) with a Portuguese sample. This work confirmed a three-factor structure for burnout, namely emotional exhaustion, lowered personal accomplishment and depersonalization, and adequate reliability of those three-factors; the burnout dimension and its factors were the ones used in the current work. Emotional exhaustion represents a personal level of burnout and comprises feelings of being emotionally and physically overwhelmed, unable to use other resources to cope with demanding tasks and time pressure. Depersonalization refers to a social level of burnout and is characterized by intentional detachment from others, namely colleagues or students. The lowered personal accomplishment withstands a professional level of burnout and consists of a sense of inefficacy and a perceived lowered achievement of professional goals (Aloe et al., 2014; Maslach et al., 2001). The emotional exhaustion ($\alpha = .81$ at Time 1; $\alpha = .79$ at Time 2) and lowered

personal accomplishment ($\alpha = .77$ at Time 1; $\alpha = .79$ at Time 2) were considered for the present study. The depersonalization factor was not considered given that it presented internal consistency values lower than .50.

Procedure

The sample was recruited based on geographic convenience. After the school board had approved the study, participants were approached individually in order to explain the main goals and procedures of the study and ask for informed consent and voluntary and confidential participation. Using a short-term longitudinal study, teachers filled in the questionnaire at times 1 and 2, between which occurred a three-month gap. One hundred and twenty-five questionnaires were distributed in the first data collection moment (i.e., time 1), of which 115 were returned. In the second moment of data collection (i.e., time 2), 115 questionnaires were distributed but only 73 were returned; participants who are engaged in both data collection moments comprised the sample for the current work.

Non-parametric analyses were used via the IBM SPSS 24. Specifically, we conducted mean level comparisons between times 1 and 2, correlated data collected from times 1 and 2, and performed hierarchical regression analyses. For these last analyses, the dependent variables were each burnout dimension taken from time 2, whereas the independent variables were the teaching styles taken from time 1.

RESULTS

Stability of teaching styles and burnout over time

No significant differences were found between measures of teaching styles over time (i.e., $z = -.09$, $p = .92$ for authoritarian and $z = -.51$, $p = .61$ for permissive⁵). No differences were likewise found for lowered personal accomplishment, $z = -1.03$, $p = .30$, but emotional exhaustion seems to significantly decrease over time, $z = 2.28$, $p = .02$ ($M = 20.49$, $SD = 6.74$ at time 1 and $M = 19.38$, $SD = 5.81$ at Time 2).

Associations between teaching styles and burnout over time

Teaching styles taken from time 1 showed large correlation to themselves as taken from time 2 (i.e., $r_s = .64$, $p < .001$ for authoritarian and $r_s = .63$, $p < .001$ for permissive); the same was found for emotional exhaustion, $r_s = .86$, $p < .001$, and lowered personal accomplishment, $r_s = .81$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, the authoritative teaching style at time 1 correlated negatively with emotional exhaustion, $r_s = -.26$, $p = .027$, and lowered personal accomplishment, $r_s = -.26$, $p = .028$, at time 2, whereas the permissive teaching style at time 1 correlated positively with emotional exhaustion, $r_s = .27$, $p = .023$, and lowered personal accomplishment at time 2, $r_s = .37$, $p = .001$.

Emotional exhaustion at time 2 was not significantly predicted by teaching styles at time 1, $r^2 = .10$, $F(3,72) = 2.65$, $p = .055$. Lowered personal accomplishment at time 2 was predicted by teaching styles at time 1, $r^2 = .17$, $F(3,72) = 4.79$, $p = .004$; the authoritative, $\beta = -.25$, $p = .027$, and permissive, $\beta = .34$, $p = .006$, styles were significant predictors, whereas the authoritarian style was not, $\beta = -.01$, $p = .91$. Multiple regression equation is 'Lowered personal accomplishment at time 2' = $21.195 + (-0.163 \text{'authoritative teaching style'}) + (1.033 \text{'permissive teaching style'}) + (-0.038 \text{'authoritarian teaching style'}) + 4.319$.

DISCUSSION

The current work intended to address the stability of teaching styles and burnout over a three-month period, and to investigate the impact that different teaching styles might have on experiencing burnout over time. Though burnout has been associated with several professional risk factors, its association with classroom management practices thought of as mirroring the styles of parent's interactions with children (Baumrind, 1966) in particular has not, to our knowledge, been previously addressed.

Our findings point to teaching styles being stable over time; in other words, teachers seem to employ similar classroom management behaviors throughout the school year. Even if teachers' preference for management practices may vary according to cultural and social contexts or students' age and grade level (cf. Uibu & Kikas, 2014), management styles as a pattern of behavior seem to be relatively stable. The manner of teaching is expressed by a style and could be considered as 'the image of character' of each teacher (Jarvis, 2002).

Similarly, teachers seem to experience similar levels of lowered personal accomplishment, though they seem less emotionally exhausted as the end of the school year approaches. Though burnout seems to be relatively stable over time (Peiró, González-Romá, Tordera, & Mañas, 2001), its emotional exhaustion facet may be more dependent on contextual changes, namely, in the current case, the moment of data

⁵ Similarly, no significant differences emerged for the authoritarian style ($z = -1.28$, $p = .20$).

collection. In other words, teacher may feel more exhausted from the beginning of the school year, which requires adaptations to new students and, in some cases, to new contents, to the middle of the school year, when those adaptations may be well underway and thus, be less demanding and provoke less stress. The assumption that emotional exhaustion may be more circumstance dependent (e.g., quantity of work experienced at a given time and/or time pressure) (Gomes & Quintão, 2011; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001) then lowered personal accomplishment may also underlie it not been significantly predicted by teaching styles.

Our results indicate a negative association between being an authoritative teacher and experiencing burnout; being such a teacher significantly predicted experiencing less lowered personal accomplishment. So, it may be the case that the benefits of this teaching style are not reflected only on better academic and personal outcomes among students from elementary to university grades (Bassett et al., 2013; Ertesvåg, 2011; Walker, 2009), but also on the mental health of teachers. Particularly, because an authoritative teacher is invested in managing its class, it may be the case that when teachers feel that they can manage the classroom, they also feel more accomplished (Aloe et al., 2014). Alternatively, we found that being a permissive teacher associated with higher levels of burnout, particularly in what concerns lowered personal accomplishment. The permissive teacher is not engaged with the classroom environment nor with her/his students' learning (Barni et al., 2018); in a sense, he/she may have given up on managing his/her class, due to low self-efficacy beliefs, which in turn can lead to higher levels of burnout (Aloe et al., 2014). It is also worth mentioning that teachers who experience burnout are more likely to create negative environments for their students (Lambert, McCarthy, O'Donnell, & Wang, 2009).

There were some limitations to this study that should be noticed. First, larger samples than in the present study may be necessary to add statistical power to the current analyses. The sample could also be more heterogeneous, namely concerning gender, as almost all our participants are women. Furthermore, relying on methods other than self-report may be useful, namely for understanding the associations between teaching styles (as they are manifested and observed by others, and not only self-perceived), teachers' mental health (namely but not restricted to burnout), and students' outcomes.

Nevertheless, the present short-term longitudinal study extends previous research addressing teaching styles and burnout, suggesting that more positive (i.e., authoritative) and less negative (i.e., permissive) styles may contribute to experiencing less burnout. Professional burnout may result from a mismatch between job demands and available resources to cope with these demands (Lauermann & König, 2016; Maslach et al., 2001), and so may be responsive to individual, group and/or organizational interventions (Gil-Monte, 2003). Though our findings support the relevance of personal interventions, peer support and a shared and participative environment should not be overlooked, as they could also be important to lighten the burden usually described by teachers.

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