

2011

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### Recommended Citation

Bas, G. (2011). Teacher student control ideology and burnout: their correlation. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(4).  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2011v36n4.2>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.  
<http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol36/iss4/6>

## Teacher student control ideology and burnout: their correlation

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*Abstract: The purpose of this study is to examine the correlation between elementary teachers' student control ideologies and their perceived burnout levels and to determine to what extent teachers' student control ideologies predict their burnout. Three hundred and seventy-six teachers from 12 elementary schools in Nigde, Turkey participated in the study. Teachers were chosen by the three-layer group sampling method according to the socioeconomic structures of their districts. In this study, the Student Control Ideology Scale and the Maslach Burnout Inventory were used to collect data to answer the research questions. The correlative investigation model was adopted in the research and SPSS 17.0 was used to analyse the data gathered. Pearson moment's correlation coefficient analysis showed that there were some negative significant correlations among teachers' student control ideologies and their perceived burnout levels. It was also found that teachers' student control ideologies were significant predictors of their burnout levels and approximately 17 per cent of the total variance for teachers' burnout was explained by their student control ideologies.*

### Introduction

The work of teachers today is multifaceted, as they undertake not only teaching but also matters associated with curriculum, students, parents, the school community and departmental initiatives (Pillay, Goddard & Wilss, 2005). In this sense, it can be said that teachers have to cope with a wide range of problems in school. Student control ideology (discipline) has been a persistent problem for teachers for decades (Lunenburg, 1991). In this sense, the importance of student control ideology in schools is not surprising since schools are people-developing or people-changing organisations (Lunenburg, 1984, 1990; Hoy, 2001, 2007; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008).

Student control studies began with a case study of a junior high school in central Pennsylvania by Donald J. Willower (Willower, Eidel & Hoy, 1973; Hoy, 2001, 2007). Willower, Eidel & Hoy (1973) sought to define teachers' perceptions about student control (discipline) in the classroom and they and other, later researchers conceptualised student control along a continuum from custodial to humanistic (Lunenburg, 1990; Hoy, 2001; Lunenburg & Cadavid, 1992; Rideout & Morton, 2010).

Organisations that adopt custodial control ideologies exert high levels of control to maintain their rules. Students are considered as individuals who need to be controlled by sanctions based restrictions, since they are irresponsible and undisciplined in terms of the way

in which they behave, dress, appear, etc. (Willower, Eidel & Hoy, 1973; Hoy & Forsyth, 1986; Hoy, 2001; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008).

Teachers with custodial ideologies stress the maintenance of order, impersonality, one-way downward communication, distrust of students, and a punitive, moralistic attitude toward student control (Lunenburg, 1990; Cadavid & Lunenburg, 1991; Lunenburg & Cadavid, 1992; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). They tend not to understand their students' behaviours and attitudes. Instead, they maintain a rigid student-teacher status hierarchy. Students must accept the decisions of these teachers without question. Student misbehaviour is viewed as a personal affront; students are perceived as irresponsible and undisciplined persons who must be controlled through punitive sanctions. Impersonality, pessimism and watchful mistrust characterise the atmosphere of the custodial school (Cadavid & Lunenburg, 1991; Lunenburg & Cadavid, 1992).

On the other hand, the humanistic model conceives of the school as an educational community in which students learn through cooperative interaction and experience (Cadavid & Lunenburg, 1991). According to the humanistic control ideology, students' learning and behaviours are considered psychologically and sociologically rather than morally (Hoy, 1969; Cadavid & Lunenburg, 1991; Lunenburg, 1991; Lunenburg & Cadavid, 1992). Self-discipline is substituted for strict teacher control. The humanistic orientation leads teachers to encourage a democratic atmosphere, with its attendant flexibility in status and rules, sensitivity to others, open communication and increased student self-determination.

Teachers build close relations with students and sustain positive friendships with them. They guide self-discipline rather than imposing discipline on students (Lunenburg, 1990; Cadavid & Lunenburg, 1991; Lunenburg & Cadavid, 1992; Hoy, 2001; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). The climate seeks to meet the needs of every student and student individualism is emphasised (Hoy, 2001). Both teachers and students are willing to act of their own volition and to accept responsibility for their actions (Lunenburg & Cadavid, 1992).

In recent years, educators have become increasingly interested in the problems of teachers' stress and burnout (Cherniss, 1980; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Dworkin, 1987; Gold & Roth, 1993; Abel & Sewell, 1999; Dworkin, Saha & Hill, 2003). The concept of burnout originated in the writings of the psychologist H. J. Freudenberger (1974) who coined the term 'burnout' to characterise a malady experienced by human service professionals who appeared to wear out or reach a stage at which they were no longer able to perform their tasks effectively, and sometimes even to care about their clients.

Research on burnout syndrome has generally come from a psychological orientation, which views burnout as a failure to cope with job stress. This approach defines burnout as a loss of idealism and enthusiasm for work that is manifested by exhaustion, depersonalisation, depression, low morale and emotional withdrawal (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Maslach (1993, 20) describes burnout as 'a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur amongst individuals who work with other people in some capacity.' In this sense, emotional exhaustion is characterised by a lack of energy and a feeling that one's emotional resources have been used up (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001).

Depersonalisation is the development of negative and cynical attitudes and feelings toward others (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, 1993). On the other hand, reduced personal accomplishment can be described as a person's negative self-evaluation in relation to his or her job performance (Leiter, 1992; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Burnout directly affects professional lives of teachers in their work, particularly through its effects on their emotional wellbeing (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Cadavid & Lunenburg, 1991; Leiter, 1992; Maslach, 1993; Berg, 1994; Burke & Greenglass, 1995).

Teacher burnout is an ongoing problem in school systems throughout the world. When teachers experience burnout, they become less effective and often leave the profession (Bevis, 2008). According to Truch (1980), 90 per cent of all teachers had experienced some level of burnout. Similar studies by Dworkin (1987) and Schlenker (1987) showed that more than 25 per cent of teachers were experiencing severe levels of burnout in their jobs. In this regard, Cam (1992) carried out a study on burnout in which he considered some behavioural indicators such as irritability, doubt and anxiety over a number of issues, job dissatisfaction, unpunctuality, despair, role conflict, sense of failure and being cynical and accusatory.

The unwillingness of students to work toward learning is a major cause of teacher despair and dissatisfaction. Teachers, in general, are motivated strongly to strive and achieve a sense of competence and psychological success in their work, but their efforts may become frustrated by work settings characterised by unpredictability and lack of personal control. When teachers feel ineffective, unsuccessful and powerless, the result may be a learnt helplessness. This condition occurs after repeated failure and despair. Learnt helplessness leads to positive, defensive coping behaviour (Cherniss, 1980; Cadavid & Lunenburg, 1991; Lunenburg & Cadavid, 1992).

There are some studies both on pupil control ideology (Hoy, 1967, 1969, 2001; Jones & Harty, 1980; Lunenburg, 1984; Schmidt, 1992; Yilmaz, 2002, 2007, 2009; Beycioglu, Konan & Aslan, 2007; Willower, Eidel & Hoy, 1973; Multhauf, Willower & Licata, 1978; Jones & Blakenship, 1972; Lunenburg, 1991; Okafor, 2006; Rideout & Windle, 2010) and teacher burnout (Cedoline, 1982; Dworkin, 1987; Gold & Roth, 1993; Berg, 1994; Burke & Greenglass, 1995; Burke, Greenglass & Scharzer, 1996; Whiteman, Young & Fisher, 1996; Bryne, 1998; Gursel, Sunbul & Sari, 2002; Sunbul, 2003; Pillay, Goddard & Wilss, 2005; Ozdemir, 2007; Yavuz, 2009) in the literature. However, there are few studies on the correlation of teacher student control ideology and teacher burnout (Lunenburg & Cadavid, 1992; Abaci & Kalkan, 1999) in the literature. In this context, the aim of the current study is to determine the correlation between elementary school teachers' student control ideologies and their burnout levels. In order to establish a correlation between control ideologies and burnout levels, the following questions were posed in the study:

1. Is there a significant correlation between teachers' student control ideologies and their burnout levels?
2. What is the predictive level of teachers' student control ideologies for their burnout levels?

The study sought to improve the understanding of teacher burnout and its prevention and the role of intervention practices in school organisation. The findings provide information for policy makers concerned with school administration as well as insights that may be relevant to similar studies elsewhere.

## **Method**

The researcher used 'the correlative investigation model' (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006), which is one of the most commonly-applied models in the literature (Cohen et al., 2003). This model is used to determine the correlation between different variables in educational and social research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000) and aims to identify the existence or level of coordinated change between two or more variables (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

### **Population and sampling**

The population of this study consisted of 798 teachers working in elementary schools during the 2010-2011 academic year within the borders of Nigde and its districts. In order to detect the sampling of the study, elementary schools in cosmos, 376 elementary school teachers, who work in 12 public elementary schools were chosen according to three-layer group sampling method according to socio-economic structure (high-middle-low) of their region, volunteered to participate in the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) . The subjects were assured for the anonymity and confidentiality for their responses in the study.

#### **Data collection instruments**

The Student Control Ideology Scale (Willower, Eidel & Hoy, 1973) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) were used in the study.

#### ***Student Control Ideology Scale***

The Student Control Ideology Scale was developed by Willower, Eidel & Hoy (1973) and adapted and translated into Turkish by Yilmaz (2002). The scale is one dimensional and consists of 20 items. The higher the total score on the Scale, the higher the level of custodial student control ideology of the teacher. The Cronbach's alpha level of the scale was calculated as .72 (Yimaz, 2002).

#### ***Maslach Burnout Inventory***

The Maslach Burnout Inventory is commonly used to measure professional burnout. In this study, burnout was assessed using the Turkish version (Ergin, 1992). Like the original version (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), the Turkish version also contains three sub-dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment) and 22 items (Ergin, 1992). The Inventory yields three separate scores for each sub-dimension; the higher the score on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation sub-dimensions, the higher the level of burnout. The reduced personal accomplishment sub-dimension was scored in the opposite direction, so that the lower the score, the higher the level of burnout. The Cronbach's alpha levels representing the internal consistency of the sub-dimensions were .83 (emotional exhaustion), .73 (depersonalisation) and .64 (reduced personal accomplishment). General Cronbach's alpha level of the inventory was calculated as .87 (Ergin, 1992).

#### **Data Analysis**

Pearson moment's correlation coefficient analysis was used to determine the correlation between variables and regression analysis to determine the prediction level of teachers' student control ideologies for their burnout levels.

## Results

The correlation between teachers' student control ideologies and their burnout levels is presented in Table 1:

Burnout Dimensions		Pupil Control Ideology
Emotional Exhaustion	<i>r</i>	-,363**
Reduced Personal Accomplishment	<i>r</i>	-,302**
Depersonalisation	<i>r</i>	-,387**

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**Table 1: Correlations Matrix of Student Control Ideology for Burnout**

The results obtained indicated that there was a significant negative correlation between teachers' student control ideologies and emotional exhaustion ( $r = -.363, p < .01$ ). A significant negative correlation was also found between student control ideology and reduced personal accomplishment ( $r = -.302, p < .01$ ) and between student control ideology and depersonalisation ( $r = -.387, p < .01$ ). As an increase in the total score on the student control ideology scale represents a more custodial student control ideology, it may be stated that the more the custodial student control ideology occurs, the more emotional exhaustion is observed.

In the same way, it may also be suggested that the more the views of elementary school teachers about the student control ideology occur, the more depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment are observed. An increase in the total score on the student control ideology scale represents a more custodial ideology, so it may be suggested that the more the custodial ideology occurs, the more depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment are observed. These correlations indicate that student control ideology is related significantly to all sub-dimensions of teacher burnout. Simple regression analysis was used in order to measure the prediction level of teachers' student control ideologies for their burnout levels and the results are presented in Table 2:

Model	B	Sh <sub>x</sub>	$\beta$	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	91,179	1,761		51,764	,000
Emotional exhaustion	-,163	,168	-,105	-,973	,332
Reduced personal accomplishment	-,267	,149	-,133	-1,788	,075
Depersonalisation	-,612	,271	-,239	-2,262	,025

Note:  $\eta = 376, R = .413, R^2 = .171, F(3.208) = 14.268, p = .000$

**Table 2: Prediction of Student Control Ideology for Dimensions of Burnout**

Table 2 indicates that teachers' student control ideology was a significant predictor of their perceived burnout levels and approximately 17 per cent of the total variance for teachers' burnout was explained by their student control ideologies ( $R = .413, R^2 = .171, p < .01$ ). In the light of the data, it can be stated that teachers' student control ideologies appear to be significant predictors of their burnout levels.

## Conclusions and discussion

The Turkish Education System seems to be teacher-centred (Sisman & Turan, 2004). So, the teacher-centred structure of the Turkish Education System is effective on the result obtained in the study. In this sense, it is apparent that there were significant correlations between the student control ideologies of elementary school teachers and their burnout levels in this

study. It was also found that their student control ideologies appeared to be significant predictors of their burnout levels.

Custodial teachers were found to experience depersonalisation, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion more often. In studies carried out by Lunenburg & Cadavid (1992) and Abaci & Kalkan (1999), it was found that teacher burnout was related to custodial student control ideology. Additional analysis revealed that custodial teachers were found more often to experience depersonalisation feelings and to frequently experience a lack of personal accomplishment (Lunenburg & Cadavid, 1992; Abaci & Kalkan, 1999). Willower, Eidel & Hoy (1973) claimed that teachers with custodial student control orientations tended to perceive students as irresponsible, non-trusting and undisciplined. In a similar study by Friedman (1995), it was found out that custodial teachers tended to be more burnt out. On the other hand, it was also found out that teachers with custodial student control ideologies felt more anxiety than 'humanistic' teachers (Docking, 1985). Ozdemir (2007) found that as the classroom management efficacy of teachers increases, their burnout levels decrease, so that it is possible to state that burnout is linked closely to the efficacy of the classroom management of teachers.

Kanungo & Aycaan (1997) found that public administration in Turkey was performed through traditional structures, so it can be said that Turkish society mostly tends to a traditional view of administration. This affects schools and teachers so that teachers tend to adopt custodial student control ideologies in their classrooms. On the other hand, Lunenburg & Mankowski (2000) found out a significant correlation between a high degree of school bureaucratisation and custodialism in student control orientation and behaviour, so custodialism in student control orientation is related to a high incidence of rules and regulations, hierarchical authority, centralisation of control and impersonality.

According to Weick (1976), schools are loosely-coupled organisations and strict bureaucratisation and custodialism cannot be accepted, since the main focus of both schools and the education system is on human beings and the future of a society and a country. In this regard, schools are seen as loosely-coupled systems (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). So, loosely-coupled school systems require a democratic atmosphere. This sees students as being capable of self-discipline and being treated accordingly, and requires teachers with humanistic student control ideologies (Helsel, 1993). Schools are organisations in which knowledge is constantly reproduced and both teachers and students play an active role in the learning-teaching process. In classrooms where a positive climate exists, there will be a democratic environment and student-centred learning process (Hoy & Forsyth, 1986; Okafor, 2006; Donmez, 2007; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Yilmaz, 2009).

According to Lunenburg & O'Reilly (1974), its student control ideology is a useful measure of the climate of a school; humanism is associated with openness in organisational climate. Whereas, custodialism is associated with a classroom atmosphere with a rigid and highly controlling setting concerned primarily with the maintenance of order (Willower, Eidel & Hoy, 1973). Student control ideologies are also associated with the quality of school life (Lunenburg & Schmidt, 1989; Schmidt, 1992). In this sense, quality schools are viewed as an educational community in which the students learn through cooperative interaction and experience (Agne, Greenwood & Millar, 1994). In a comprehensive study of school climate and alienation of students, Hoy (1972) reported that the more custodial and closed the school climate, the greater the students' sense of alienation.

Diebert & Hoy (1977) found a significant correlation between a humanistic school climate and high levels of self-actualisation among the students. Similarly, some studies report that in classrooms that adopt humanistic student control ideologies, students have higher self-concepts as learners (Lunenburg, 1983) and more positive attitudes toward teachers (Lunenburg & Stouten, 1983). Studies have also indicated that teacher efficacy is

related with their beliefs about control which makes an important contribution to indicate the control ideology of the teacher (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). It has been found that teachers who perceive themselves as competent adopt more humanistic orientations in classroom management (Emmer & Hickman, 1991).

According to Lunenburg & Cadavid (1992), if an educational system strives for excellence, teachers' mental health should be a priority, since they are the active agents in achieving excellence among students. Thus, it is recommended that teachers should be provided with assistance to better apply humanistic classroom orientations. Smaller class sizes would also be helpful: crowded classrooms make teachers more likely to apply custodial orientations and their management less effective in such classrooms (Erdogan et al., 2010).

The reasons for teacher burnout could be examined with different variables and correlations determined. The physical atmosphere of classrooms may prevent teachers from applying humanistic classroom orientations. On the other hand, school principals and educational supervisors should support teachers with their student control orientations and provide guidance.

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