Reviewer's report

Title: What is the influence of socio-professional environment on burnout in teachers? A French study

Version: 2 Date: 8 October 2008

Reviewer: Kirsi Ahola

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions

Comments on the abstract

1. The response rates and selection process should be mentioned in the abstract. The data analysis should also be shortly described.

Comments on the introduction

2. In a scientific paper, when a statement is made or previous studies are discussed, a reference is needed. Now references are lacking throughout the paper.

3. In the beginning of the introduction, the burnout phenomenon should be briefly described and the theoretical basis of this paper introduced. Now the theoretical background is totally lacking.

4. When age and gender as correlates of burnout are introduced, a reference is needed, and most preferably a population-based reference, for example Ahola et al. 2006 and Lindblom et al. 2006. Even though age and gender are related to burnout, it cannot be said that they are determining factors. There is not enough longitudinal evidence or theoretical basis to state that.

5. All factors associated with burnout (and to be studied) have to be given references: level of teaching, ZEPs etc.

6. Now the most important factors according to burnout literature, the psychosocial characteristics of work, are not decently introduced, but just listed here.

7. In the aims section, no grounds are presented regarding why these factors are included. It appears that all factors in the questionnaire are included. It is probable that with so many factors a few statistically significant effects are bound to be found on a basis of pure chance.

Comments on the methods

8. The selection process is described too vaguely. Because the loss of participants is high and selection has been made, the process has to be
described as exactly as possible with grounded justifications.

9. Why are the burnout sum scores not standardised or averaged?

10. There is inaccuracy in the last paragraph of "Measurement of burnout" chapter. Christina Maslach has recommended using the dimensional sum scores and therefore most authors do not recommend using cut points. Some only suggest a way to do so if they find it necessary.

11. In the Variables studied -paragraph all references are missing. The exact questions, variables, and their classifications have to be described in detail.

12. In the statistical analysis paragraph, it is left open, for what are the odds ratios calculated.

Comments on the results

13. Why is the descriptive information given only regarding gender? In my opinion, the whole sample should be described first according to the relevant variables. In addition, the table (and description) of burnout x socio-professional factors would be informative.

14. It is unclear what does it mean to have a high score for burnout. Is it those in the highest quartile? And in the quartile of what (individual dimensions)? These issues have to be described (and named) clearly in the methods section.

15. It should be informative enough to present the factors which were significantly related to burnout in the multivariate model chapter. Now there is too much redundancy in the results section.

Comments on the discussion

16. Now the same things are presented three times: first in the results, then in the discussion, and then again in the conclusions. In the discussion section, the main findings should be summarized and then compared to previous findings on teachers, and then explained or elaborated in the light of existing theoretical models on burnout.

17. The limitations section does not deal with the limitations of this study, for example of low response rate and selection and their effects of the results, reversed causality, the reliance on self-report methods and the resulting common method bias. There are also newer instruments to assess teacher burnout. Why were, for example, the MBI-HSS not used?

18. In the discussion section, gender differences are described even though it was not mentioned as an aim or in the methods of this study to analyse results by gender. If the analyses are to be made gender-wise, it has to be justified in the introduction, it has to be described in the methods, and then the results in the tables has to be presented by gender.

19. An important issue to discuss, which is now totally lacking, would be, what
burnout means when the sub dimensional scores are analysed only separately.

Minor essential revisions

Comments on the abstract

20. In my opinion, the results related to the school level are not central enough to be highlighted in the abstract. Because there are so many results, I would only list here which associations were statistically significant in the adjusted multivariate model.

21. State the results in past tense.

Comments on the methods

22. First paragraph of the "Measurement of burnout" chapter belongs to the next chapter.

Comments on the results

23. The term "mutualist" is unclear to me.

24. The results concerning depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment should be presented the other way round: Gender etc. were related to depersonalization, as is done regarding exhaustion.

Discretionary revisions

Comments on the title

25. The subtitle of "A French study" is not very informative. "A representative occupational cohort study" would be better.

Comments on the abstract

26. The term "health care insurance based study" is un-informative. This is a register-based study.

27. In the conclusion section, it is unnecessary to refer to results anymore. It can be stated that "Burnout is related to ...".

Comments on the introduction

28. It is not necessary to write this kind of scientific paper with a process or historical perspective. For example, in page 3 paragraph 2 just state that "Vanderberghe and Huberman (1999) reported that...".

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
None declared