BANISH TEACHER BURNOUT: THE SECRET OF LONG-TERM SUCCESS FOR EDUCATORS

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OVERVIEW

• The problem of burnout, its antecedents and consequences
• Work engagement as a desirable positive state: its antecedents and consequences
• How spiritual resources impact burnout and the positive state of work engagement
• Which spiritual resources are helpful
• How we can increase these helpful spiritual resources

KEY MESSAGE: Don’t separate your faith and your work
Explore relationships between *individual spiritual resources* and their relationships with *burnout* and *work engagement*.
**Burnout** is a work-related condition with three main symptom clusters:

- **emotional exhaustion (EE)**
  - *I’m not physically tired, I just can’t cope anymore.*

- **depersonalisation / cynicism (DP)** &
  - *I treat you like a number not like a ‘real’ person*

- **reduced sense of personal accomplishment (PA).**
  - *I don’t feel like I’m getting anywhere or doing anything important*

See Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter (2001)
Consequences of burnout can be devastating:

- poor physical health
- conflicts with colleagues
- declining professional commitment *(going through the motions)*
- reduced job satisfaction/performance *(just not getting work done – loss of motivation and momentum)*
- higher turnover intentions
- reduced self esteem &
- poorer overall life satisfaction
  - Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter (2001)
Studies of Australian teachers show some key areas of work stress associated with burnout:

- Emotional challenges (students, parents, colleagues)
- Government requirements that increase workload
- Unsupportive or untrustworthy school administrators
  - Timms, Graham & Caltabiano (2006)
WHEN BURNOUT OCCURS

- On exit from theological college religious workers are moderately burned out
- Twelve months later burnout scores increase (EE and DEP) with PA still at moderate levels
- Burnout seems greater amongst younger workers under 40, but evidence is not conclusive (Miner et al., 2015)
WORK ENGAGEMENT

“a persistent and positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.”

(Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002, p.74)
THE JOB DEMANDS-RESOURCES MODEL

**Health impairment process**
- Job Demands
  - Burnout
    - Exhaustion
    - Cynicism
    - Low personal accomplishment
  - Negative work Performance Indicators

**Motivational process**
- Job Resources
  - Engagement
    - Vigour
    - Dedication
    - Absorption
  - Positive work Performance Indicators
- Personal Resources
SPIRITUAL RESOURCES IN THE JD-R MODEL

Health impairment process

- Job Demands
- Burnout
- Negative work Performance Indicators

Motivational process

- Spiritual Resources
- Job Resources
- Engagement
- Positive work Performance Indicators

CRICOS Code 02664K
SPIRITUAL RESOURCES AND BURNOUT – WHAT WE KNOW

• Amongst church leaders, attachment to God and a ministry orientation to coping via God ‘within’ both predict burnout.

• A secure attachment to God allows the leader to use a healthy internal style of coping and thus reduce burnout.
  • Based on 2011 NCLS data, publication by Miner et al. (2015)

• A sense of calling and collaborative prayer ‘with God’ help sustain teachers facing stress and burnout
  • See qualitative study by Anita Levine, 2011.
# Attachment to God

Monotheistic traditions’ concept of a Divine other meets criteria for an attachment relationship (Kirkpatrick, 2005)

Beck & McDonald (2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model of Other: Avoidance of Intimacy</th>
<th>Model of Self: Anxiety about Abandonment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secure (Low anxiety, low avoidance)</td>
<td>Preoccupied (High anxiety, low avoidance)</td>
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<td>Dismissive (Low anxiety, high avoidance)</td>
<td>Fearful (High anxiety, high avoidance)</td>
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THE INTER-RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SPIRITUAL RESOURCES AND WELL-BEING AT WORK

Explore relationships between individual spiritual resources and their relationships with work engagement.
Aspects of the work environment that:
- Promote the accomplishment of work goals;
- Reduce job demands and their associated costs; and
- Stimulate personal growth and development
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RESOURCES ANTECEDENT TO WORK ENGAGEMENT

Aspects of the self that are:

• Linked with resilience; and
• Increase a perceived ability to successfully control the environment

Personal Resources

Work Engagement

Job Resources
RESOURCES ANTECEDENT TO WORK ENGAGEMENT: WHAT'S NEW

Spiritual/religious beliefs, practices and experiences that:
• Enhance a person’s resilience; and
• Increase perceived ability to successfully control the environment

Spiritual Resources

Work Engagement

Job Resources
RESOURCES ANTECEDENT TO WORK ENGAGEMENT: MORE NEW ELEMENTS

- Securely attached to God
- Religious coping

Spiritual Resources → Work Engagement

Job Resources → Work Engagement
Pargament et al. (1988) differentiated three broad styles of religious coping behaviors:

1. Deferring
2. Self Directed
3. Collaborative - the decision by the individual to share responsibility with God for solving the problem
STUDY HYPOTHESES

1.1 Avoidance of intimacy with God will be negatively related to work engagement; and
1.2 Anxiety about abandonment by God will be negatively related to work engagement
2.1 Avoidance of intimacy with God and Anxiety about abandonment by God will be negatively related to Collaborative religious coping
2.4 Collaborative religious coping will be positively related to work engagement (i.e., CRC will partially mediate the relationship between attachment to God dimensions and WE)
METHOD
Participants:

*N: 617 participants returned complete surveys (response rate 54.1%)

Gender: 63.4% Male

Mean age: 49.9 years (*SD* = 13.3)

Mean tenure: 7.0 years (*SD* = 7.3)

Religious work roles:
- 42.6% Parish ministers
- 14.2% Cross-cultural workers
- 11.5% Chaplains
- 5.7% youth workers
- 26.0% others (denominational leaders, seminary lecturers, etc)
**Method**

Data analyses:

- Confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) testing the measurement model
- Structural equation modelling (SEM) to test hypothesized structural relationships.
- Using Mplus with the Maximum Likelihood Mean adjusted (MLM) estimator to account for some non-normality in the data
- Study hypotheses were tested by comparing a series of nested structural models

Covariates:
- Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness (i.e., Personality as measured by the Five Factor Model of personality)
RESULTS
MEASUREMENT MODEL RESULTS

- Cronbach’s Alpha for all scales were acceptable
- Measurement model achieved good fit statistics:
  SBS-$\chi^2$(706)= 1387.62; CFI= .93; TLI= .92; RMSEA= .04
- Correlations between all first order factors were significant and in the expected direction.
- There was a very high correlation between Neuroticism and Anxiety about Abandonment by God ($r = .65$)
RESULTS OF STRUCTURAL MODELS

Fully mediated and final model with superior fit:
SBS-$\chi^2$(732)= 1496.78; CFI= .92; TLI= .92; RMSEA= .04

Avoidance of intimacy with God

Collaborative Religious Coping

- .73***

Anxiety about abandonment by God

Work Engagement

.19***

NS.
DISCUSSION
ATG IS NOT A DIRECT INFLUENCE

- Dimensions of attachment to God unrelated to work engagement in the presence of religious coping and personality dimensions
Attachment to God acts as a key resource that manages or influences the development of other resources (i.e., religious coping), which have a direct effect on work engagement.

- Avoidance of intimacy about God
- Anxiety about abandonment by God

Collaborative Religious Coping

Work Engagement
• A sense of calling also has a direct impact on work engagement
  • Maureen Miner, Grant Bickerton, Martin Dowson & Sam Sterland (2015).

• The strength of spiritual resources on WE is 3X the strength of the job resource, performance feedback, among church leaders.

• Recent work indicates ATG also affects calling that in turn affects work engagement (Bickerton et al., forthcoming)
LIMITATIONS

• Measure of Attachment to God incapable of providing a measurement of a positive model of God
• Cross-sectional research design (though no indication of common method effect)
• Research was conducted with vocational religious workers
Religious workers, including Christian educators, can maintain work engagement by nurturing their spiritual resources.

Secure ATG is a foundational. Since ATG is a spiritual relationship, it can be nurtured by spiritual practices such as prayer and meditation on the ongoing love and care of God.

When ATG is secure, positive forms of spiritual coping can be developed. If collaborative coping is practiced, the individual will tend to take action consistent with their ability to control the situation and trust God for everything else.
HOW TO NURTURE A SECURE ATTACHMENT TO GOD

• If disturbed by trauma or crises so there is persistent insecure ATG, then seek help from a qualified counsellor/psychologist.

• If mildly insecure, then meditate on God’s love, God as refuge, God’s provision for our work & activities. Use imagery in your meditation.

• Read ONE bible verse and think about it; Pray one line of the Lord’s prayer.

• Seek a spiritual mentor or prayer partner to share experiences with God, and prayers of deep praise and adoration.
HOW TO NURTURE YOUR SENSE OF CALLING

- reflect on initial sense of calling, if any;
- meditate on biblical teaching about work as our God-given task and witness;
- praise God when you see fruit of your work, and thank him for calling you to it.
HOW TO INCREASE COLLABORATIVE COPING

• Practise the habit of brief prayers at times of sudden stress [take a moment to pause and pray];
• pray before work that your actions would be aligned with God’s purposes;
• think about your tasks as spiritual activities, and your choices as your work with God.
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FROM OUR RESEARCH

• Spiritual resources influence work engagement over and above personality dimensions

• Attachment to God appears to act as a key spiritual resource that influences and determines other spiritual resources that are directly related to work engagement.

• Don’t separate your faith from your work. Nurture your spiritual resources, and use them in your work.
SELECTED REFERENCES


