The Mediating Role of Teaching Quality and Student Engagement between Teacher Mental Health and Learning Outcomes of Students with ASD

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BACKGROUND

Burnout • Teacher stress and burnout have a detrimental effect on the stability of the teaching workforce for students with disabilities, including students with ASD (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). • Teaching students with autism poses the most stress in comparison to teaching other groups of students with disabilities (Kokkinis & Davanguru, 2009).

Teacher Burnout Model • Maslach and Leiter (1999) proposed a working model of teacher burnout (see Figure 1).

Definitions • Teacher stress is defined as “conditions of negative effects” (e.g., frustration and anxiety) that result from aspects of the job and that are perceived by teachers as a threat to their psychological or physical well-being (Abel & Murray, 1996). It includes three components: • Exhaustion (EE): Feeling emotionally overextended and exhausted. • Depersonalization (DP): Cynical, detached responses towards students. • Personal accomplishment (PA): A belief of competence and successful achievement (Maslach & Leiter, 1999).

Gap in the Literature • Limited understanding of the direct/indirect effects of teacher burnout and stress on the learning of students with ASD.

PURPOSE

• The study sought to answer two research questions: • How does burnout and stress impact teaching quality, student engagement, and individual educational program outcomes? • Do teaching quality and student engagement mediate the association between burnout and stress and educational outcomes?

METHOD

Participants • The data are from a secondary analysis of two randomized controlled trials of a parent-teacher consultation called the Collaborative Model for Promoting Competence and Success (COMPASS), Ruble, Dalrymple, and McGrew, 2010, Ruble, McGrew, Toland, and Jang, 2013. • 79 special education teachers and one student with ASD selected randomly from each teacher’s caseload.

Correlations among variables: • Teacher stress and the three burnout components were significantly correlated with each other (r = -.27 to -.50, p < .001). • Teacher stress was correlated with teaching quality (r = -.44, p < .001) and student engagement (r = -.31, p = .006).

Multivariate Regression Analyses • Effects of Burnout and Stress on Teaching Quality • Teacher stress was the only significant predictor of decreased teaching quality (β = -.07, SE = .04, 95% CI: -.18, .04). Subjects' teaching quality was assessed using the Teaching Quality Scale (TQL; Greer, 1997). • Effects of Burnout and Stress on Student Engagement and IEP Outcomes • Student engagement: Teacher stress was the only significant predictor (β = .03, SE = .01, 95% CI: .01, .06). Student engagement was measured using the Personal Accomplishment Scale (PA) of the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBI-ES; Maslach et al., 1997). • IEP Outcomes: Personal accomplishment was the only significant predictor (β = .06, SE = .01, 95% CI: .05, .07).

RESULTS

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RESULTS CONT

Mediation Analyses • A test of serial mediation was performed using the PROCESS procedure for SPSS separately for each of the three burnout subscales and for stress (Hayes, 2012). • Burnout-Emotional exhaustion-Emotional exhaustion ➔ Student Engagement ➔ IEP Outcomes (indirect effect = .08, SE = .05, 95% CI: .20, .01). • Burnout-Depersonalization, Depersonalization ➔ Teaching Quality ➔ Student Engagement ➔ IEP Outcomes (indirect effect = .06, SE = .05, 95% CI: .21, .01). • Burnout-Personal accomplishment. No mediation (total indirect effect = .07, SE = .08, 95% CI: .02, .06), however there was a direct effect (direct effects = .33, SE = .15, 95% CI: .65, .85). • Stress. Teacher Stress ➔ Teaching Quality ➔ Student Engagement ➔ IEP Outcomes (indirect effect = -.0007, SE = .04, 95% CI: -.01, .01).

DISCUSSION

• This is the first study to demonstrate the direct and indirect effects of special education teacher burnout/stress on teaching quality, student engagement, and IEP outcomes of students with ASD. • Teacher burnout (i.e., personal accomplishment) assessed at the beginning of the school year predicted the learning outcomes of students with ASD at the end of the school year. • Burnout (i.e., personal accomplishment) may be a more important factor when predicting long-term distal outcomes, whereas stress may be a more significant predictor of proximal teaching quality and student engagement (differential effect). • Teaching quality and student engagement are two important mediating mechanisms between burnout/stress and the learning outcomes of students with ASD.

CONCLUSIONS

• Teacher burnout and stress are not only intrapersonal and fiscal issues for teachers and administrators, but are problems that affect students with ASD at the classroom level.

MAIN REFERENCES

