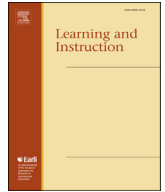




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Learning and Instruction

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/learninstruc

Integrating the light and dark sides of student engagement using person-oriented and situation-specific approaches

Katariina Salmela-Aro ^{a, *}, Julia Moeller ^a, Barbara Schneider ^b, Justina Spicer ^b,
Jari Lavonen ^a

^a University of Helsinki, Finland

^b Michigan State University, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 April 2015

Received in revised form

31 December 2015

Accepted 4 January 2016

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Schoolwork engagement

School burnout

Demands-resources model

Person-oriented approach

Situational measures

ABSTRACT

This study contributes to the research on student engagement in three ways: 1) by combining questionnaire and situational measures of engagement using the Experience Sampling Method (ESM), 2) by applying a demands-resources model to describe the positive and negative aspects of student engagement, and 3) by adopting a person-oriented approach to describe subgroups of students with different profiles of engagement and burnout symptoms. Two studies were conducted: sample one comprised 255 US high school students (45.5% female, 9th – 12th grade), and sample two 188 Finnish comprehensive and high school students (59.6% female, 9th to 10th grade). Latent profile analyses (LPA) of person-level measures of schoolwork engagement and burnout in the US and Finland revealed four profiles: 1) engaged, 2) engaged-exhausted, 3) moderately burned out (risk for burnout) and 4) burned out. These four groups were identified in both samples, but differed in their prevalence. The groups differed in their state experiences of situational demands, resources and engagement at school. Engagement is not wholly an experience of ‘flourishing’: some students experienced elevated levels of both engagement and burnout. Thus, positive and negative aspects of engagement should be studied and modeled together.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

This study describes three new directions in the research on schoolwork engagement (Salmela-Aro & Upadaya, 2012) and burnout (Salmela-Aro, Kiuru, Leskinen, & Nurmi, 2009). First, we introduce situation-specific measures of malleable aspects of engagement. Second, we describe the demands-resources model applied to the present research on student engagement, emphasizing how insightful and necessary it is to analyze the positive aspects of engagement along with exhaustive experiences and symptoms of school-related burnout. Finally, we show how new insights can be gained through person-oriented analyses combining engagement and burnout.

1. Integrating positive and negative aspects of engagement in a demands-resources model

Student engagement is a multifaceted construct that describes malleable aspects of motivation and behavior that are beneficial for

learning and adjustment in the school context. This broad concept comprises emotional, cognitive and behavioral aspects. The present study mainly focuses on the emotional engagement. Emotional engagement can be defined as student reactions to teachers, classmates, and school-related experiences, including, among others, affect, identification, belonging, and value (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Wang & Degol, 2013). For instance, some researchers have described emotional engagement as a student’s feeling that learning in school is essential and interesting and that school education is an instrument for achieving personal goals (Finn, 1989; Voelkl, 1997). Wang and Peck (2013) measured emotional engagement defined as happiness and interest and found that students with low emotional but high cognitive and behavioral engagement suffered increased rates of depression compared with peers. Intrinsic and emotional experiences are emphasized in the definition of schoolwork engagement used in the present study: Salmela-Aro and Upadaya (2012) adapted measures of work engagement to the school context, defining schoolwork engagement as the experience of energy, dedication and absorption at school. Whereas energy refers to feeling energetic, active and vigorous when doing school-related tasks,

* Corresponding author. Cicero Learning, Institute of Behavioral Sciences, P.O. Box 9, University of Helsinki, FI-00014, Finland.

E-mail address: katariina.salmela-aro@helsinki.fi (K. Salmela-Aro).

dedication describes the experience of school-related work as meaningful and inspiring, and absorption describes experiences of deep involvement, concentration and working intensively applied in this study.

While engagement is often described as a positive, 'flourishing' experience (Reschly, Huebner, Appleton, & Antaramian, 2008), several researchers have pointed out that, in order to achieve a holistic explanation for relevant outcomes, engagement should also be considered in combination with negative experiences. The emotional engagement literature distinguishes between positive emotional student engagement (e.g. interest, happiness, joy) and negative disengagement (e.g. anxiety, sadness, stress), and it has been shown that both constructs are empirically distinct and contribute uniquely to the explanations of relevant outcomes (Jimerson, Campos, & Greif, 2003; Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Kinderman, 2008). In line with this distinction between positive and negative aspects of emotional engagement, the demands-resources model describes two different psychological processes: a positive process of resources leading to engagement, positive outcomes and well-being, and a negative process of demands leading to strain, disengagement, and symptoms of exhaustion and even burnout (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2014; see also Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Recent studies have adapted the demands-resources model to the study of disengagement and burnout in the school context, defining burnout as a feeling of exhaustion and indifference towards school-related work, and feelings of inadequacy as a student (Salmela-Aro, Kiuru et al., 2009). School burnout describes a continuous process of feeling overwhelmed, lacking enjoyment and seeing little value in school-related work tasks and has been found to predict later decline in schoolwork engagement, impaired well-being and maladjustment at school (Salmela-Aro & Upadaya, 2012; Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2014). The negative emotional processes described by the construct of school burnout resemble those of the concept of emotional disengagement in school. Both low emotional engagement and school burnout are linked to symptoms of depressive symptoms (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2014). A longitudinal cross-lagged study revealed that school burnout predicted depressive symptoms rather than vice versa (Salmela-Aro, Savolainen, & Holopainen, 2009). In the present study, we use the construct of school burnout to describe the maladaptive characteristics of negative emotional processes in school, and the construct of schoolwork engagement to describe adaptive positive emotional processes in school.

The demands-resources model suggests that study-related resources are the most important predictors of schoolwork engagement, while study-related demands are central determinants of school burnout (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2014). We define study demands as what the school requires students to do or to achieve, the challenges that motivate students to invest effort, and the emotional costs that result from the perceived necessity to meet such expectations. Study resources are defined as the feeling that one is able to keep up with the demands and challenges of studying and meeting one's own learning goals and awareness of and confidence in one's level of skills. Thus, study resources refer to 'being able to', while study demands refer to 'being required to'. Personal resources, such as self-efficacy beliefs, facilitate schoolwork engagement and help students to meet their study targets and goals. Study resources are positively correlated with engagement, and study demands are positively correlated with school burnout.

2. Situational measures and fluctuations of student engagement

Although student engagement is conceptualized as malleable (Fredricks et al., 2004), it has mostly been assessed with rather

stable measures (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012). Using such scales, most research on engagement has focused on the differences between individuals and has treated day-to-day and moment-to-moment fluctuations in engagement and burnout as measurement error. The typical self-report questionnaires measuring engagement require individuals to aggregate in their own minds how they feel about school generally, that is, across a whole range of experiences. This approach is not only biased by student response bias and memory errors, but is also of little use in studying the *changeable* determinants of student engagement, which are of paramount interest to teachers. While it is informative to know students' levels of enduring school engagement and burnout, analysis of daily and situation-specific changes can inform of the reasons why these experiences change between situations, days, and contexts, and what teachers can do to promote their students' engagement.

One such approach is to gather repeated measurements of situational engagement in a representative sample of everyday life activities, for instance with smartphone applications that trigger short questionnaires several times a day (experience sampling method, ESM). ESM reduces response bias (Goetz, Bieg, Lüdtke, Pekrun, & Hall, 2013) and memory recall errors because it assesses experiences at the moments in which they occur. ESM also allows investigation of the influence of the context and other situational and short-term determinants, which helps to identify activities or environments that are particularly engaging, or exhaustive, effortful and frustrating (i.e. disengaging). Studies utilizing situational measures found daily fluctuations in engagement (Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012; Simbula, 2010), which indicates the necessity to study these malleable aspects with state measures in greater detail. Previous ESM studies have assessed situational engagement with state measures tapping situational interest, enjoyment, and concentration (Shernoff & Vandell, 2007). Other researchers have used items assessing current skills (= resources) and current challenges (= demands) to assess states of engagement. Feeling active and in control of a current activity were also found to be important aspects of emotional engagement at school (Engeser & Rheinberg, 2008; Pekrun, Elliot, & Maier, 2009). Disengaging and demanding moments can be assessed by asking students how stressed, anxious and bored they feel (Skinner et al., 2008).

3. School engagement and school burnout in Finland and the US

Our understanding of school engagement is limited by the fact that most of the research on emotional engagement at school has focused on adolescents in the United States. Therefore, this paper examines emotional engagement in two samples, one from the US and one from Finland. The Finnish culture values education and academic achievement, and Finnish schools employ heterogeneous grouping, the practice of keeping students of all ability levels in the same classroom. In Finland, students attain consistently high levels of academic achievement throughout secondary school (OECD, 2013). Less is known about their emotional engagement. The 2012 PISA survey found that Finland and the US ranked below the OECD average in terms of how many 15-year-old students felt happy at school. In the 65-country comparison, the US was ranked 48th, with almost 80% of students in the category happy, and Finland 60th, with less than 70% of students classified as happy (OECD, 2013). In addition, there is mounting evidence that Finnish students also have negative feelings about school (Linnakylä & Malin, 2008; Salmela-Aro & Tynkkynen, 2012). For instance, Salmela-Aro, Kiuru et al. (2009) found that many Finnish secondary school students felt inadequate as a student, exhausted by school,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6845757>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6845757>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)