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Testing the balanced affect model of clergy work-related psychological health: Replication
among Anglican clergy in Wales

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Abstract

Drawing on the classic model of balanced affect, the Francis Burnout Inventory (FBI) conceptualised good work-related psychological health among clergy in terms of negative affect being balanced by positive affect. In the FBI negative affect is assessed by the Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry (SEEM) and positive affect is assessed by the Satisfaction in Ministry Scale (SIMS). In support of the idea of balanced affect, previous work had shown a significant interaction between the effects of SEEM and SIMS scores in predicting individual differences as an independent measure of burnout. The present study extends previous research among a sample of 358 Anglican priests in Wales who completed the FBI together with an index of thoughts of leaving ministry as an independent measure of burnout. These data found a significant interaction between the effects of SEEM and SIMS scores confirming that the mitigating effects of satisfaction in ministry on thoughts of leaving ministry increased with increasing levels of negative affect.

Keywords: Balanced affect, Anglican clergy, exhaustion, satisfaction, leaving ministry

Introduction

The Francis Burnout Inventory (FBI), introduced by Francis, Kaldor, Robbins, and Castle (2005) offers an alternative model of work-related psychological health to that proposed by the longer-established Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), introduced by Maslach and Jackson (1986). Both models are now well established in research among clergy. For example, the Maslach Burnout Inventory has been used in recent studies by Parker and Martin (2011), Joseph, Luyten, Correlyn, and de Witte (2011), Rossetti (2011), Crea and Francis (2015), and Adams, Hough, Proeschold-Bell, Yao, and Kolkin (2016). The Francis Burnout Inventory has been used in recent studies by Francis, Gubb, and Robbins (2012), Barnard and Curry (2012), Randall (2013a, 2013b, 2015), Francis, Laycock, and Brewster (2015), Sterland (2015), Francis and Crea (2015), and Durkee-Lloyd (2016).

The differences between the two models of burnout proposed by the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Francis Burnout Inventory are not only matters of conceptual and scientific interest. The differences between the two models carry implications for understanding the psychological dynamics of burnout and for proposing intervention of a remedial or preventative nature. Maslach conceptualises and measures burnout in terms of three component constructs which are described as emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and low personal accomplishment. According to Maslach's conceptualisation the relationship among these three components is sequential. According to this model emotional exhaustion is the lead and primary indicator of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Emotional exhaustion then leads to depersonalisation, and depersonalisation leads to the loss of the sense of accomplishment. The strength of this model is that it generates theories regarding the progressive development of the symptoms of burnout. The weakness is that the model does not offer clear insights into remedial or preventative strategies. It may just not be easy to remove the causes of emotional burnout with which clergy are routinely faced day-by-day.

Francis conceptualises and measures burnout in terms of two component constructs which are described as emotional exhaustion and satisfaction in ministry. According to Francis' conceptualisation the relationship between these two components is described as one of balanced affect. The two components are not related sequentially but are viewed as contemporaneous and orthogonal. The notion of balanced affect has its roots in the classic theories of Bradburn (1969). According to Bradburn's theories positive affect and negative affect are not opposite poles of a single continuum but independent psychological phenomena. In this sense it is reasonable and possible for an individual to record both high levels of positive affect and high levels of negative affect. Within the Francis Burnout Inventory, positive affect is operationalised in terms of the Satisfaction in Ministry Scale and negative affect is operationalised in terms of the Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry. In this sense it is reasonable and possible for individual clergy to record both high levels of satisfaction in ministry and high levels of emotional exhaustion in ministry. According to Bradburn's theories high levels of positive affect are able to offset high levels of negative affect. The strength of the model is that it generates theories about how the problems of poor work-related psychological health or burnout among clergy may be addressed in terms of remedial and preventative strategies. Even when it may not be possible to reduce the causes of emotional exhaustion in ministry, it may be possible to explore ways of compensating for high levels of emotional exhaustion by maximising strategies for enhancing the sense of satisfaction in ministry.

The first study to test the validity of the balance affect model of clergy burnout was reported by Francis, Village, Robbins, and Wulff (2011) among clergy serving in the Presbyterian Church (USA). The strategy adopted by this study examined the incremental impact on independent measures of burnout of the interaction term created by the product of the two measures of negative affect (Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry) and positive

affect (Satisfaction in Ministry Scale) after taking into account the impact of these two factors considered separately. The two independent measures of burnout employed in this study were self-perceived physical health and self-perceived burnout. Self-perceived physical health was assessed by the question: ‘How would you rate your overall health at the present time?’ with the following four response options: excellent, good, fair, and poor. Self-perceived burnout was assessed by the question: ‘To what extent do you think you are suffering from burnout in your current call?’ with the following four response options: to a great extent, to some extent, to a small extent, and not at all. Consistent with the theory of balanced affect, the data demonstrated that the mitigating effects of positive affect on burnout increased with increasing levels of negative affect.

In a second study, Francis, Village, Bruce, and Woolever (2015) drew on data provided by 622 clergy who completed the Leaders Survey within the US Congregational Life Survey. This study developed two new measures of positive affect (Satisfaction in Ministerial Life Index), and negative affect (Emotional Exhaustion in Ministerial Life Index), as well as a new independent measure of burnout (Likelihood of Leaving Ministry Index). Crucially for supporting the construct validity of the notion of balanced affect, the data demonstrated a significant interaction effect between positive affect and negative affect on the independent measure of burnout, again showing the mitigating effects of positive affect on burnout increased with increasing levels of negative affect.

In two further studies, Francis, Crea, and Laycock (2017) drew on data provided by 61 religious sisters and 95 priests, and Francis, Laycock, and Crea (in press) drew on data provided by 155 priests serving within the Roman Catholic Church in Italy. These studies employed the two measures proposed by the Francis Burnout Inventory (SEEM and SIMS), as well as the Purpose in Life Scale (Robbins & Francis, 2000) as an independent measure of burnout. In both cases there was a significant interaction between the effects of SEEM and

SIMS scores on scores recorded on the Purpose in Life Scale, confirming that the mitigating effects of satisfaction in ministry on purpose in life increased with increasing levels of negative affect.

Replication

Replication studies have sometimes been considered at best as unnecessary luxury and at worst a distraction from the primary scientific pursuit of generating new knowledge. The much publicised Replication Project within the broad field of psychology (see Fradera, 2015) has cast serious doubt on this dismissive approach to the scientific discipline of replication. Against this background of the Replication Project, the present study takes the view that there is real value in building on the four studies reported by Francis, Village, Robbins, and Wulff (2011), Francis, Village, Bruce, and Woolever (2015), Francis, Crea, and Laycock (2017), and Francis, Laycock, and Crea (in press), by replicating their basic research design and by extending it among a differently conceived population. While the first two studies were conducted in the USA, and the third study in Italy, the present study set out to test these findings among a different group of Anglican clergy in Wales.

Method

Procedure

A questionnaire was posted to all licensed Anglican clergy serving in parochial ministry in the Church in Wales. Participation was entirely voluntary and participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. A response rate of 54% produced 358 replies from clergy who had completed the relevant measures that form the basis for the present analyses.

Participants

The 358 participants comprised 260 clergymen, 91 clergywomen, and 7 clergy who did not disclose their sex; 4 clergy under the age of thirty, 22 in their thirties, 59 in their forties, 164 in their fifties, 101 in their sixties, 7 in their seventies, and 1 who did not disclose

his or her age. The majority (255) of the participants were married, 61 were single, 17 were divorced, 11 were divorced and remarried, 11 were widowed, 2 were separated, and 1 did not disclose marital status.

Measures

Work-related psychological health was assessed by the two scales reported by the Francis Burnout Inventory (FBI: Francis, Kaldor, Robbins, & Castle, 2005). This 22-item instrument comprises the Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry (SEEM) and the Satisfaction in Ministry Scale (SIMS). Each item is assessed on a five-point scale: ranging from agree strongly (5) to disagree strongly (1).

Thoughts of leaving ministry were assessed by the question, 'Have you since ordination considered leaving ministry?', with the four options: no (1), once or twice (2), several times (3), and frequently (4).

Data analysis

The data were analysed by means of the SPSS statistical package using the reliability, correlation, factor and regression routines.

Results

The two scales proposed by the Francis Burnout Inventory both achieved satisfactory levels of internal consistency reliability (Cronbach, 1951) and factor structure, as reported in tables 1 and 2. The independent measure of burnout demonstrated that 63.7% of the clergy had never considered leaving ministry since ordination, while 24.9% had considered leaving ministry once or twice, 7.3% had considered doing so several times, and 4.2% had considered doing so frequently.

- insert table 1 and 2 about here -

Table 1 presents the scale properties of the Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry (SEEM) in terms of the correlations between each individual item and the sum of the other

ten items, factor loadings on the first factor extracted by principal component analysis, and the item endorsement (as the sum of the agree strongly and agree response). These items generate an alpha coefficient of .85. In terms of indicators of emotional exhaustion, some idea of the extent of the problem is provided by the following example statistics. Around two-fifths of the clergy reported that they feel drained by their ministry roles (38%), and that they find themselves frustrated in their attempts to accomplish tasks important to them (44%). A third or more of the clergy reported that fatigue and irritation are part of their daily experience (35%) and that they find themselves spending less and less time with those among whom they minister (33%).

Table 2 presents the scale properties of the Satisfaction in Ministry Scale (SIMS) in terms of the correlations between each individual item and the sum of the other ten items, factor loadings on the first factor extracted by principal component analysis, and the item endorsement (as the sum of the agree strongly and agree responses). These items generate an alpha coefficient of .84. In terms of indicators of satisfaction in ministry, the following example statistics provide some indication of the extent to which the negative affect of emotional exhaustion is being off-set by positive affect. Over three-quarters of the clergy report that they are really glad that they entered ministry (86%), that they gain a lot of personal satisfaction from working with people in their current ministry (87%), that they feel that their pastoral ministry has a positive influence on people's lives (80%), that they gain a lot of personal satisfaction from fulfilling their functions in ministry (84%) and that they feel their ministry is really appreciated by people (80%).

The third step in data analysis examines the mean scores recorded by clergymen and by clergywomen on the single item measure of leaving ministry on the Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry (SEEM), and the Satisfaction in Ministry Scale (SIMS). The data presented in table 3 demonstrate that clergymen record significantly higher scores than

clergywomen in terms of emotional exhaustion, but there are no sex differences in the other two variables.

- insert tables 3 and 4 -

The fourth step in data analysis examines the bivariate correlations between the key variables. Given the significant sex differences, table 4 presents these associations in terms of partial correlations controlling for sex differences. These data demonstrate a significant negative correlation between emotional exhaustion in ministry and satisfaction in ministry of a size that shows these two variables to be closely associated but not merely mirror images one of the other. These data also demonstrate that the independent measure of burnout (thoughts of leaving ministry) is significantly positively correlated with emotional exhaustion and significantly negatively correlated with satisfaction in ministry.

- insert table 5 about here -

The fifth and final step in data analysis examines the notion of balanced affect. To test this notion, the effects of SEEM and SIMS scores on the independent measure of burnout were tested in a multiple regression model in which SEEM and SIMS scores were allowed to interact. The data presented in table 5 demonstrate that the interaction term is statistically significant in terms of thoughts of leaving ministry. The interaction term suggests that the mitigating effects of satisfaction in ministry on burnout were greater when the level of emotional exhaustion was higher.

Conclusion

The primary aim of the present study was to test the coherence of the balanced-affect model of professional burnout proposed by the Francis Burnout Inventory among a sample of Anglican clergy serving in the Church in Wales. This aim was met by identifying an independent indicator of burnout and by examining the effects of the interaction term of the two measures of positive affect and negative affect proposed by the Francis Burnout

Inventory in predicting individual differences in scores recorded on this independent measure. Using thoughts of leaving ministry as an independent measure of burnout, the data confirmed the statistical significance of that interaction term. As clergy became more emotionally exhausted, their thoughts of leaving ministry increased, but the effect of emotional exhaustion on thoughts of leaving ministry was somewhat mitigated when clergy maintained a higher sense of satisfaction in their ministry.

This paper also drew attention to information generated by the measures of positive affect and of negative affect proposed by the Francis Burnout Inventory. These data suggest that Anglican clergy may be experiencing unhelpful levels of emotional exhaustion in ministry, alongside quite high levels of satisfaction in ministry.

Taken together, the four studies reported by Francis, Village, Robbins, and Wulff (2011), by Francis, Village, Bruce and Woolever (2015), by Francis, Crea, and Laycock (2017), by Francis, Laycock, and Crea (in press), and by the present study, suggest that the balanced affect model of professional burnout among clergy is not only conceptually coherent but also empirically verifiable. The security of this finding has been enhanced by the scientific discipline of replication studies. The practical implications of this finding for supporting the work-related psychological health of clergy are important. While those mandated with the professional and personal oversight of clergy may have a proper duty of care to lower the levels of emotional exhaustion experienced in ministry they may also have an equal duty of care to enhance the levels of satisfaction in ministry, and this latter task may prove to be both more achievable and more effective.

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Table 1

Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry (SEEM): Scale properties (N = 358)

	<i>r</i>	factor loading	%
I feel drained by fulfilling my ministry roles	.63	.75	38
Fatigue and irritation are part of my daily experience	.64	.72	35
I am invaded by sadness I can't explain	.56	.54	13
I am feeling negative or cynical about the people with whom I work	.58	.68	12
I always have enthusiasm for my work*	.41	.44	19
My humour has a cynical and biting tone	.41	.51	17
I find myself spending less and less time with those among whom I minister	.43	.54	33
I have been discouraged by the lack of personal support for me here	.53	.60	16
I find myself frustrated in my attempts to accomplish tasks important to me	.54	.53	44
I am less patient with those among whom I minister than I used to be	.54	.62	19
I am becoming less flexible in my dealings with those among whom I minister	.49	.65	13
alpha/percent of variance	.84	59.9%	

* This item has been reverse coded to compute the correlations, but not the percentage endorsement.

Table 2

Satisfaction in Ministry Scale (SIMS): Scale properties (N = 358)

	<i>r</i>	factor loading	%
I have accomplished many worthwhile things in my current ministry	.47	.39	71
I gain a lot of personal satisfaction from working with people in my current ministry	.57	.50	87
I deal very effectively with the problems of the people in my current ministry	.41	.52	40
I can easily understand how the people here feel about things	.28	.35	58
I feel very positive about my ministry here	.66	.62	73
I feel that my pastoral ministry has a positive influence of people's lives	.46	.48	80
I feel that my teaching ministry has a positive influence on people's faith	.36	.38	66
I feel that my ministry is really appreciated by people	.64	.54	80
I am really glad that I entered ministry	.55	.62	86
The ministry here gives real purpose and meaning to my life	.68	.74	77
I gain a lot of personal satisfaction from fulfilling my functions here	.70	.74	84
alpha/percent of variance	.85	53.4%	

Table 3

Mean scores for clergymen and clergywomen

Scale	male (260)		female (91)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> <
	mean	sd	mean	sd		
Emotional Exhaustion	28.12	7.28	26.49	6.44	2.0	.05
Satisfaction in Ministry	42.13	5.11	42.24	5.07	0.2	NS
Thoughts of Leaving	1.55	0.82	1.44	0.75	1.1	NS

Table 4

Correlation matrix controlling for sex differences (N = 358)

	SEEM	SIMS
Thoughts of leaving	.42***	-.32***
SIMS	-.62***	

Note: *** $p < 0.001$

Table 5

Multiple regression of burnout indicator against the SEEM and SIMS scales (N = 350)

	Thoughts of leaving		<i>P</i> <
	B	SE	
Constant	-1.752	1.276	.171
Sex	-0.039	0.086	.656
Age	-0.154	0.041	.001
SEEM	0.148	0.036	.001
SIMS	0.064	0.028	.023
SEEM * SIMS	-0.003	0.001	.003
<i>R</i> ² (adjusted)	.23		