

The Effectiveness of an Acceptance and Commitment-Based Program in Improving Competencies and Reducing Job Anxiety Among Primary School Principals.

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Abstract

The study aimed to verify the effectiveness of a program based on acceptance and commitment in improving personal and administrative competencies and reducing job anxiety, and the continuity of the program's effectiveness during the follow-up period.

The basic study sample consisted of (16) primary school principals in the Luxor Governorate Education Directorate, and their ages ranged from (35-55) with an average age of (43.0) years, and a standard deviation of (8.79).

The following tools were applied: the Personal and Administrative Competencies Scale for Primary School Principals (prepared by: the researcher), the Job Anxiety Scale for Primary School Principals (prepared by: the researcher), the program based on commitment and acceptance (prepared by: the researcher).

The results of the study concluded that the program based on acceptance and commitment was effective in improving personal and administrative competencies and reducing job anxiety, and the program's effectiveness continued during the follow-up period.

Keywords: Personal and administrative competencies, job anxiety, acceptance and commitment, primary school principals

Introduction

The importance of education is no longer a matter of debate in any region of the world. Contemporary international experience has proven beyond doubt that the beginning of

true progress is education, and that all countries that have advanced in all fields have advanced through education. Indeed, advanced countries themselves place education at the top of their programs and policies, with regard to continuous review and development.

The education sector today faces numerous difficulties and challenges, foremost among which is the ability to keep pace with the global developments witnessed in light of the information and communications technology revolution. This is in addition to the ability to effect change in educational systems in a way that ensures improved outcomes for the educational process. School principals are among the most influential elements in managing this sector and dealing with these challenges, due to their direct interaction in the field.

In light of the changes witnessed in this era, the effects of which have been reflected in the concept of education, its nature and methods, and the evolution of the view of education as one of the technical professions that require those who practice it to have many capabilities and precise powers. With the many tasks and responsibilities placed on the shoulders of primary school principals, and the difficulty and complexity of the roles they perform, With the changing nature of the groups they deal with, their role is no longer as easy as it was in the past, and it has become normal for school principals to face many problems and professional pressures, the effects of which negatively impact their performance.

The personal and administrative competencies required for an educational director are: the ability to innovate, sense problems and develop appropriate solutions, the ability to carry out administrative work requirements such as drawing up general policies and planning the educational process, and the ability to deal with others and form a society whose motto is cooperation and integration. Specialized knowledge and analytical ability within the field of this knowledge enable the use of sufficient personal and professional administrative competencies (Hafez Faraj, 2012).

Job anxiety is a situational anxiety that occurs as a result of negative experiences such as harassment by supervisors and colleagues, threats from certain people in the workplace, the presence of a form of job exploitation, and the threat of dismissal or non-extension of the contract (Hynes, 2007). Job anxiety may also occur as a result of the person's conviction that the type of work or working conditions pose a risk to his health, an increase in the workload, the lack of competence to complete tasks, and fear of future structural changes.

Acceptance and commitment therapy is one of the most important behavioral therapies that emerged through the third wave of cognitive behavioral therapies, which aims to treat many disorders such as psychological stress, anxiety, and depression (Harris, 2007, p. 31), and reduce occupational anxiety and improve the quality of life (Hayes et al., 2012). Its effectiveness in treating occupational anxiety is equivalent to the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy (Blutt, 2014).

Research Problem

The researcher's understanding of the research problem stemmed from his work in the field of education, where he observed that primary school principals may experience job anxiety due to the expiration of the term of office specified by the executive regulations of Chapter Seven of Education Law No. (139) of 1981. ...and amended by Law No. (93) of 2012 in Article No. (10), which stipulated that the school principal's term of office shall be for a period of two years, renewable. As a result of specifying that term for school principals, they have lost confidence in themselves and have become reluctant to perform functional and administrative tasks of planning, renewal and innovation, and they are unable to employ their abilities and capabilities in a good manner.

In order for the school principal to succeed in performing the tasks assigned to him with precision and mastery, he needs to acquire a set of competencies: such as technical competencies that enable him to exercise his educational leadership role, and human competencies that enable him to deal with others. And the administrative competencies that enable him to plan work, direct and arrange priorities and anticipate the future, and that school management is a process that requires intellectual/cognitive competencies, human competencies, in addition to technical competencies (Laila Abdel Halim, 2010)

In this regard, the results of the study (1992) by Nelson and Prindle concluded that there are obstacles in the field of caring for the gifted, represented by the lack of high skills among managers in the field of guiding the gifted. The results of John Creda (2004) indicated that school principals need to be trained in personal competencies. And administrative planning related to planning, implementation, evaluation and follow-up. The results of the study by Hadeel Muhammad (2011) concluded that the degree of availability of personal and administrative competencies for primary school principals in Madaba Governorate from the teachers' point of view was average.

The first rank was for “competencies in managing financial and material resources”, the second rank was for “personal and administrative human competencies”, and the last rank was for “evaluation competencies”. The results of the study (Bolanle 2013) showed that personal and administrative competencies are largely available among secondary school principals.

There is also a relationship between the occurrence of job anxiety and both job demands and job control (Rehman & Rehman, 2009). The results of the Muschala study (2008) concluded that 58% of a sample consisting of (230) workers had ongoing anxiety problems resulting from work pressures, and that 38% had their health severely affected by the workplace.

Given the importance of the role of primary school principals in the educational field and the plans and programs they provide that help ensure the success of the educational process, it is necessary to pay attention to them and provide them with the appropriate environment so that they become more attached to their work and profession.

Based on the above and in light of the lack of Arab studies that addressed improving personal and administrative competencies and reducing job anxiety among primary school principals, the current study is an attempt to improve personal and administrative competencies and reduce job anxiety among primary school principals.

Therefore, the study problem can be formulated in the following questions:

- 1- Are there differences between the mean scores of the experimental group members on the personal and administrative competencies scale in the pre- and post-tests?
- 2- Are there differences between the mean scores of the experimental group members on the personal and administrative competencies scale in the post- and post-tests?
- Are there differences between the mean scores of the experimental group members on the job anxiety scale in the pre- and post-tests?
- 4-Are there differences between the mean scores of the experimental group members on the job anxiety scale in the post- and post-tests?

Study objectives

The study aims to verify the effectiveness of an acceptance and commitment-based program in improving personal and managerial competencies and reducing job anxiety, and to verify the program's continued effectiveness during the follow-up period.

Importance of the Study

- 1- The importance of the study stems from the Ministry of Education's interest in developing education and advancing the educational system, and the state's significant support in this area to meet current and future needs. The school principal is the primary implementer of the development policy, and the school's development depends on him.
- 2- There is a dearth of previous studies that have addressed intervention programs to improve personal and managerial competencies and reduce job anxiety.
- 3- The program is based on acceptance and commitment, and its application to the study group helps provide primary school principals with positive skills and knowledge that will help them improve the educational process in general.
- 4-The results of the study are useful to curriculum developers, decision makers, and supervisors in understanding the reality of school principals, in order to arrive at appropriate solutions and provide a suitable climate free from job anxiety.

Study terminology

- 1-Personal and Administrative Competencies: Al-Duraj Muhammad (2005, p. 120) defines personal and administrative competencies as acquired abilities that enable behavior and action within a specific context. They consist of complexly integrated knowledge, skills, and attitudes, which the individual employs to confront any problem and find solutions.
 - 2- Job Anxiety: Jones et al. (2016) define job anxiety as "a state of tension, fear of the future, and a sense of threat and agitation experienced by an individual, resulting in a negative impact on their performance."
 - 3-Director of Primary Education: Muhammad Ismail (1999, p. 369) defines it as "the person officially appointed in the school to be responsible for all aspects of administrative, technical and social work within the school, and he is the first person responsible for taking appropriate measures to achieve the school's goals in coordination with the higher educational administrations."
- Acceptance and commitment: Hayes et al (2006, p. 8) defines it as "one of the third wave models of cognitive behavioral therapy, based on increasing psychological flexibility and the ability to connect to the present moment, and the psychological

reactions you produce as a fully aware person, and your psychological reaction depends on the situation."

This is to continue it or change behavior for valuable purposes, and it depends on six basic techniques, which are: acceptance, cognitive separation, connection to the present moment (presence), the self in context, value orientation, and commitment.

Study Limitations

1- Objective Limits: The study is limited to examining acceptance and commitment to improving competencies and reducing job anxiety among primary school principals.

2- Methodological Limits: The study uses an experimental approach with a single-group design and multiple measurements (pre-, post-, and follow-up). The independent variable is (the program based on acceptance and commitment therapy), improving personal and administrative competencies (first dependent variable), and job anxiety (second dependent variable).

3-Human Limits: The primary study sample consisted of (16) primary school principals in the Luxor Governorate Education Directorate, with ages ranging from (35-55), with an average age of (43.0) years and a standard deviation of (8.79).

4-Time Limits: The study was implemented during the 2022/2023 academic year.

5- Spatial boundaries: The study was conducted in the following schools: El Tod Educational Administration, Armant Educational Administration, and Qurna Educational Administration, all in primary schools in Luxor Governorate.

6- The study was also defined using the following tools:

A- Family socioeconomic level scale prepared by: (Abdul Aziz Al-Shakhs, 2013).

B- Personal and Administrative Competency Scale for Primary School Principals (prepared by: the researcher).

C- Job Anxiety Scale for Primary School Principals (prepared by: the researcher).

D- Therapeutic Program Based on Commitment and Acceptance (prepared by: the researcher).

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