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Teaching On The Edge: The Impact Of Perceived School Climate And Sense Of Self-Efficacy On Burnout Among Pakistani Educators

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Abstract
Given the escalating educational demands and resources constraints, the objective of the study was to explore the intervening role of teacher's self-efficacy between perceived school climate and burnout among Pakistani school teachers. The sample consisted of 355 school teachers from public and private schools in Islamabad, Pakistan. Measures used for data collection includes; Revised-school level environment questionnaire, Teachers sense of self-efficacy, and Teachers burnout scale. Mediation analysis results through structural equation modeling (SEM) showed that self-efficacy was a significant mediator between perceived school climate and burnout among Pakistani school teachers. The present study underscores the need for fostering positive school climates and enhancing teacher self-efficacy to effectively combat burnout and improve educational quality.

Keywords: School Climate, Teacher Burnout, Teacher sense of self-efficacy, Pakistani School Teachers

Introduction

Teacher burnout is acknowledged as an internationally universal issue (Johnson et al., 2005), as evidenced by research conducted across various countries. For instance, studies from Canada (Fernet et al., 2012), Australia (Dorman, 2003), Norway (Skaalvik, & Skaalvik 2009), parts of Europe (Loonstra et al., 2009), and the United States (Fisher, 2011) have consistently reported burnout among school teachers and classified teaching as an at-risk profession. Various factors have been found associated with the phenomenon of teacher burnout such as teaching for long hours (Jomuad et al., 2021), Poor scheduling forcing teachers to work on non-working days (Gorblyansky et al., 2020), and social support's absence (Xiaofeng, 2021). In the context of Pakistan, a developing country, Naheed et al. (2000) highlighted that the teaching profession is particularly stressful due to factors such as pay structure, school environment, general status, workload, and working conditions. Hanif, et al. (2011) report that despite the lack of a standardized school system across the country, there is a lack of attention given to identifying job-related factors that act as a predictor for stress among teachers. Additionally, a research comparing private and government schools in Pakistan has revealed disparities in terms of student performance (Siddiqui & Gorard, 2017), quality of teaching, infrastructure, school resources, and the overall school system, further emphasizing the need to address and alleviate teacher burnout and its contributing factors within the Pakistani school system.

Lately, the topic of the relationship between school climate and teacher burnout has garnered substantial attention from researchers globally (Dorman, 2003; Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Capone et al., 2019; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Pietarinen et al., 2013; Sanford & Kaila, 2017).). However, the majority of these studies have been conducted in developed countries. Consequently, their findings may not be directly applicable to schools in developing countries such as Pakistan, due to significant cultural differences and variations in contextual factors, educational systems, teacher training, and working conditions (Pietarinen et al., 2013). The existence and prevalence of both private and government schools in Pakistan reflect the diversity within the educational system, which may contribute to significant disparities between schools. Research studies also suggest that government schools in Pakistan are still struggling to meet the needs and provide facilities compared to their private counterparts (Siddiqui, 2017). Keeping in view this heterogeneous nature of school systems, it is plausible to claim that the school organizational factor e.g. school climate, may have a more direct and stronger impact on burnout among Pakistani school teachers.

Bronfenbrenner's Social-Ecological Model is the theoretical framework employed in this study, to understand burnout among school teachers and how it relates to perceived school climate and teacher sense of self-efficacy. This model helps in understanding the interactive effect between an individual's personal and environmental factors (Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020). Bronfenbrenner's Social-Ecological Model posits that an individual's factors are persistently being shaped by the interaction with his/her environmental factors. Within this framework, school climate is considered as an environmental factor, while the teacher's burnout and self-efficacy are considered as a personal factor. The model highlights the importance of social context and its influence on a person's development. By employing this theoretical framework, it is possible to empirically examine the relationships between the study variables.

Teacher Burnout

Maslach et al. (2001) define burnout as a prolonged reaction to chronic emotional and interpersonal nature of job stressors. This phenomenon is recognized as complex, encompassing multiple levels, including individual, institutional, and organizational dimensions. Burnout is characterized by its mental, emotional, and physical aspects and is associated with a negative attitude towards one's career, life, or interpersonal relationships (Akbaba, 2014). Maslach (1982) proposed three component-structure factors of burnout; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.

Pakistani Context on Teacher Burnout

The existing literature review suggests that the predominant focus of Pakistani studies conducted in the area of burnout among school teachers centers around assessing the role of demographic factors, often neglecting the impact of school contextual factors. For instance, Shaheen and Mahmood, (2015) reported the presence of burnout among government school teachers with varied intensities, along with significant gender differences in teacher burnout levels. Similarly, Shaheen and Mahmood (2016) found significant differences in teacher burnout levels and demographic including gender, marital status, age, locale, Level of qualification, and experience in Punjab. A study conducted by Naz et al. (2017), assessed the association of teacher self-efficacy with burnout among college teachers, revealing a significant negative relationship between the two, with female teachers showing higher teacher self-efficacy beliefs and male teachers experiencing higher burnout. To the author's knowledge, the only published study which has included school factors as an antecedent of teacher burnout in Pakistan was conducted by Shaheen,(2014) in Lahore. This study reported low to moderate levels of burnout among teachers and found a correlation between the availability of school facilities and teachers' levels of internal involvement.

School Climate

Since the last two decades, the significance of school climate has been increasingly a crucial factor in the school's overall functioning. Despite extensive research on school climate and its contributions to educational reform, a universally accepted definition remains elusive. This lack of consensus has contributed to the complexity of defining and measuring the phenomenon of school climate (Thapa et al, 2013). Existing studies have employed a range of definitions to capture the multifaceted nature of school climate.

The current study specifically examines school climate as perceived by teachers, adopting a definition that emphasizes the psychosocial context of their work environment: the psychosocial context in which teachers work and teach (Johnson et al., 2007). While acknowledging that school climate encompasses various aspects, including physical conditions, this research focuses primarily on the psychosocial dimensions of teachers' school environments.

Research has consistently shown that school climate is linked to significant outcomes for both students and teachers. For teachers, a significant role of a poor sense of community and a lack of social support within school organizations are central predictors of teacher burnout (Pietarinen et al., 2013, Lim & Eo 2014). Grayson and Alvarez (2008) reported that less community involvement and poor student-peer relationship were found related to teacher's emotional exhaustion whereas teacher's dissatisfaction with school administration was found related to teacher's negative attitudes toward students. Lim and Eo (2014) have reported that higher levels of successful dialogue between teachers and their colleagues were related to lower teacher burnout levels, a finding supported by Droogenbroeck et al. (2014), who also noted that positive relationships with colleagues were negatively related to teacher burnout. Additionally, relationships of teachers with their students, parents, and administrative staff have been associated with the depersonalization dimension of burnout. Bellingrath, et al. (2009) have found an association between mental health factors, such as anxiety and depression, and an unfavorable working climate. A school consists of many factors that shape its climate, such as the school's location, type, and student-related factors. These factors collectively impact the climate where students learn and teachers work, thereby shaping the overall school climate (Meristo & Eisenschmidt, 2014).

Teacher Self-efficacy

Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) define teacher self-efficacy as the extent to which a teacher has confidence in his/her ability to fulfill the teaching tasks and professional duties to attain given educational goals. This construct is experienced at the individual level (Klassen et al., 2011), and it is based on four information sources; vicarious experience, somatic and emotional states, social persuasion, and mastery experiences (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

Existing literature indicates a robust link between teacher self-efficacy and various significant outcomes for both teachers and students. Research consistently reports a positive association of teacher self-efficacy beliefs with a range of instructional outcomes, teacher's well-being, job satisfaction and commitment, teacher's effectiveness, teacher engagement, and reduced intention to leave a job. For students higher teacher self-efficacy is associated with enhanced student engagement, student self-efficacy, student achievement, and motivation (Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2007, 2010, 2014; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Klassen & Tze, 2014). Moreover, cross-national studies have well-documented that elevated teacher self-efficacy predicts reduced burnout levels. (Brown, 2012; Yu et al, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007, 2010) Additionally, research has also indicated that teacher sense of self-efficacy tends to be influenced by the environmental factors such as the availability of school resources and support within the school system, can influence teacher self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

Bandura (2006) proposes that self-efficacy beliefs are learned rather than inherent personality traits. He further contends that one's self-efficacy may be shaped by the context in which the individual performs a given task (Bandura, 2012). In the educational setting, School climate can serve as a contextual factor that can have an impact on the teacher's sense of self-efficacy. From this viewpoint, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the teacher's sense of self-efficacy is partially contingent upon the contextual factors present within their school environment. This study has focused largely on the social view of

burnout among school teachers, incorporating both individual teacher factors and psychosocial aspects of school climate as predictors of teacher burnout and its sub-dimensions.
The study aimed to explore the intervening role of teacher's self-efficacy between perceived school climate and burnout among school teachers in Pakistani context. And, to assess the relative contribution of demographic factors.

Method

Participants and Procedure

A cross-sectional study was conducted on a convenience sample of 355 school teachers (82 men and 273 women), with a mean age of 37.74 years and a standard deviation of 8.74. The participants were drawn from public and private schools in Islamabad, with inclusion criteria requiring at least one year of teaching experience and no current administrative role. All participants had a minimum education level of a two-year bachelor's degree. Teachers from special education schools were excluded from the study. Permissions were obtained from relevant authorities of the school education, and informed consent was secured from participants before data collection began.

Measures/Instruments

Revised-School Level Environment Questionnaire (R-SLEQ). The original School Level Environment Questionnaire (SLEQ), constructed by Fisher and Fraser (1991), comprised of 56 items and eight sub-scales. However, due to its long length and to minimize the time required to complete it, Johnson et al., (2007) developed a revised version of SLEQ. This R-SLEQ suggested the feasibility of a shorter version and retained only the five sub-scales out of the original eight sub-scales. For the present study, R-SLEQ was translated and adapted to the Urdu Language. The R-SLEQ was used to assess the perception of school teachers regarding their psychosocial-dimensions of the school environment. The statements are related to the working environment of the school in which they work. The scale consists of five sub-scales: Collaboration, Instructional Innovation, Decision making, School Relations, and Student relations. The R-SLEQ comprises of 21 statements, evaluated by a Likert scale with 5 response anchors strongly disagree, to strongly agree. The range of reported reliability of R-SLEQ for the five factors is 0.77 - 0.86.

Teachers Sense of Self-efficacy (TSES). The teacher sense of self-efficacy scale was developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001). This instrument was used to evaluate the teacher's beliefs and evaluation of their capabilities in the domains of classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement. The statements assessed the factors that cause the most difficulties in the daily school activities of the teachers. The scale consists of 24 statements. A Likert scale with nine anchors e.g. 1 (nothing) to 9 (a great deal), was used to rate their perception of self-efficacy. The range of reported reliability of TSES for the three factors is 0.87 - 0.91.

Teachers Burnout Scale. The Teachers Burnout Scale, developed by Seidman and Zager (1986) comprises of 21 statements, assessed by the Likert Scale. The Teachers Burnout Scale was used to assess burnout among school teachers. The statements in this scale are related to the teacher's personally experienced state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion. This scale has four sub-scales: Coping with Job-Related Stress, Career Satisfaction, Attitudes towards Students, and Perceived Administrative Support.

Data Analyses

The collected data was entered and analyzed in SPSS.27. The demographic variables were explored by computing their frequencies and percentages along with mean and standard deviations. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and normality tests were carried out for the perceived school climate, teacher sense of self-efficacy, and burnout. However, structural equation modeling (SEM) through AMOS version 26 was also carried out to investigate the mediating role of the sense of self-efficacy in the relationship between perceived school climate and burnout in school teachers.

Results

Table 1 *Descriptive Statistics of the Demographic Characteristics of the School Teachers (N=355)*

Variables	*n*	*%*
Gender		
Male	82	23.1 %
Female	273	76.9 %
Age		
26-35	134	37.7 %
36-45	131	36.9 %
46-60	90	25.3%
Marital Status		
Married	288	81.1 %
Single	67	18.9 %
Received any training		
Yes	285	80.3 %
No	70	19.7 %
Total years of Education		

14 years of Education (B.A/B.SC/B.ED)	73	20 %
16 years of Education(M.A/M.SC/M.ED/BS)	255	71 %
18 years of Education (M.S or ABOVE)	27	7 %
Years of Teaching Experience		
1 – 10 years	151	42 %
11 – 20 years	123	34 %
21 – 30 years	81	22 %
Type of School		
Public	244	68.7 %
Private	111	31.3 %
Total no. of grade being taught		
One	105	29 %
Two	120	33 %
More than two	130	36 %
Total no. of subjects being taught		
One	125	35.2 %
Two	125	35.2 %
More than two	105	29.6 %
Class in-charge		
Yes	222	62 %
No	133	37 %
Gender of students being taught		
Male	95	26 %
Female	70	19 %
Both	190	53 %

Table 1 presents the demographic details of the school teachers who participated in the study. The data includes Gender, Age, Marital Status, Number of Children, Education Level, Type of School, Number of Grades and Subjects Taught, Class-In Charge Status, and Gender of Students Taught. The sample was predominantly female (76.9%), with the majority aged 20-35 (37%), followed by 36-45 (36%) and 46-60 (25%). Most teachers were married (81.1%) and had more than two children (38%). Regarding education, 71% had 16 years of schooling, and 42% had 1-10 years of teaching experience. Most were from public schools (68.7%), taught more than two grades (36%), and handled one or two subjects equally (35.2% each). Additionally, 62% were class-in-charge, and 53% taught in coeducational settings.

Table 2 *Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis for the Perceived School Climate, Teacher Sense of Self-efficacy and Burnout in School Teachers (N = 355).*

Variables	*k*	α	*M*	*SD*	*Ranges*		*Shapiro–Wilk*
					Actual	*Potential*	
Perceived School Climate	21	.801	70.56	8.75	21-105	36-98	.96
Decision Making	3	.386	7.59	1.84	3-15	5-15	.92
Collaboration	6	.613	22.21	3.21	6-30	8-15	.91
Instructional Innovation	4	.367	13.70	2.09	4-20	6-19	.94
Student Relations	4	.567	14.83	2.34	4-20	5-18	.89
School Resources	4	.514	12.21	2.64	4-20	7-20	.95
Self-efficacy	24	.915	79.83	20.38	24-216	30-209	98
Student engagement	8	.815	26.37	6.93	8-72	12-65	97
Instructional Strategies	8	.757	26.69	7.81	8-72	16-68	.88
Classroom management strategies	8	.827	26.56	7.75	8-72	14-66	.90
Teacher Burnout	21	.829	48.80	8.76	21-105	45-102	.92
Coping with job-related stress	6	.704	16.07	3.77	6-30	8-30	.93
Career satisfaction	5	.575	9.96	2.45	5-30	6-30	.94
Attitude towards students	4	.529	9.23	2.27	4-20	8-20	.92

Table 2 shows the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of all the measures along with their subscales. The alpha reliability coefficient values of the three measures used in the present study are good (SLEQ = .801, TSES = .915, and TB = .829) as all Cronbach's alpha values of 0.7 and above are good and acceptable. However, some of the sub-scales have a value less than 0.7, which is also acceptable (Hair et al., 2006), when three items are measuring a latent variable and correlation exists among LVs.

Structural equation modeling was used the investigate the mediating role of teacher's sense of self-efficacy in the relationship between school climate and burnout of school teachers. Model fit is shown in table 4.

Table 3 *Fit Indices for Perceived School Climate, Teacher Sense of Self-efficacy, and Burnout in School Teachers (N = 355).*

.Model	χ^2	*df*	χ^2/df	*GFI*	*CFI*	*NNFI*	*RMSEA*	*SRMR*
initial Model	182.25	51	3.57	.92	.89	.89	.08	.09
Model Fit	105.12	49	2.14	.95	.92	.92	.06	.05

Note. All change in chi-square values is computed relative to the model, χ^2 >.05., GFI= Goodness of fit index, CFI=comparative fit index, NNFI= non-normed fit index; RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation, SRMR=Standardized root mean square.

Table 3, indicates the fit indices for the indirect effect of teacher's self-efficacy between perceived school climate and burnout for school teachers. The initial model showed a poor absolute fit as the χ^2 (51) = 182.25, p < .05, indicating a disparity between the sample and population variance-covariance matrices. The chi-square test for absolute model fit is known to be sensitive to both sample size and the number of parameters estimated in a structural equation modeling (SEM) framework. Therefore, researchers commonly use a variety of fit indices to evaluate how well the data aligns with the tested model. For this purpose, indices such as GFI, CFI, NNFI, RMSEA, and SRMR were examined (Hu & Bentler, 1999), According to the suggested standards (Hair et al., 2010), acceptable model fit criteria include a χ^2/df ratio between 0 and 3, with RMSEA and SRMR values below .08, while CFI, NFI, and GFI values of .90 or higher are considered excellent. In some cases, values between .90 and .80 are deemed acceptable. For the initial model, the RMSEA and SRMR values were .08 and .09, respectively, and the GFI, CFI, and NNFI values were .92, .89, and .89, respectively, with a χ^2/df ratio exceeding 3.0, suggesting that the model did not adequately fit the data.

To improve the model fit, modifications were made by adding covariance between error terms. AMOS, using modification indices, recommended incorporating covariance between the error terms for indicators of the perceived school climate. Covariance was only added between error terms of items that were invariant in content and context within the specific construct (Kenny, 2012).

Arbuckle (2012) advised that when making modifications, a reduction in the chi-square value by at least 4.0 should occur when a new parameter is added. Only covariances that reduced the chi-square value by this amount or more were incorporated. After these modifications, the fit indices were reanalyzed. The new χ^2/df ratio was 2.14, and RMSEA and SRMR values were reduced to .06 and .05, respectively. The GFI, CFI, and NFI values improved to .95, .92, and .92, indicating a well-fitting model. In conclusion, the sample and population variance-covariance matrices were now consistent.

Figure 1 *Empirical Results of Mediation Analysis of Perceived School Climate, Teacher Sense of Self-efficacy, and Burnout in School Teachers.*

After confirming the model fit, the estimates for both direct and indirect effects were examined concerning perceived school climate, teachers' sense of self-efficacy, and burnout among school teachers, see Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4 *Standardized Estimates of Direct Effects for Perceived School Climate, Teacher Sense of Self-efficacy, and Burnout in School Teachers (N = 355).*

Variables	Teacher Sense of Self-efficacy		Burnout	
	β	*SE*	β	*SE*
Perceived School Climate	.42***	0.20	-.34**	0.18
Teacher Sense of Self-efficacy			-38***	0.19
Covariates			-	-
Gender			.19*	0.10
Experience			.21*	0.17
Type of School			.24*	0.19
Class In-charge			.17*	0.11
Total R^2	.304		.393	

Note. Gender, Women = 1, Men = 2, type pf school, 1 = public, 2 = private. Class incharge, 1 = no, 2 = yes. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 4 indicates the direct effects of school climate, teacher sense of self-efficacy, and burnout of school teachers. The results show that perceived school climate was found to significantly positively predict teachers' sense of self-efficacy, which shows positive perception of school climate tends to increase the sense of self-efficacy in school teachers. However, perceived school climate and teacher sense of self-efficacy were found to be significant negative predictors of teachers' burnout. Indicating that positive perception of school climate, and sense of self-efficacy tend to decrease burnout in school teachers.

Table 5 *Standardized Estimates of Indirect effect of Teachers Self-efficacy between Perceived School Climate and Burnout for School Teachers (N= 355)*

Variables	*Burnout*	
	β	*SE*
Perceived School Climate	-.07*	0.05

*p<.01.

Table 5 shows the indirect effect of a sense of self-efficacy between perceived school climate and burnout for school teachers The results of the indirect effect indicated that a sense of self-efficacy was found to be a significant mediator between perceived school climate and burnout, which showed that positive perception of school climate increases the sense of self-efficacy of the school teachers. While the increase in sense of self-efficacy in turn increases burnout in school teachers.

Discussion

This research study explored multiple dimensions of the interplay between perceived school climate, teacher burnout, and teacher self-efficacy, specifically examining the role of teacher self-efficacy as a mediator.

The result of the mediation analysis conducted in the present study supported the role of teachers' self-efficacy as a mediator between school climate and burnout in teachers. This finding suggests that modifications in teachers' perceptions of their school environment are linked to changes in their sense of self-efficacy, which, in turn, affect their burnout levels (Fernet et al., 2012). Specifically, increased levels of teacher sense of self-efficacy tend to prevent teachers from experiencing negative emotions in reaction to negative school contextual factors. A possible interpretation of this result is grounded in Bandura's (2000) theory, which posits that an individual's perception and adaption to his/her environment are considered variable, as they vary according to their personal resources, cultivated by environmental factors. From this viewpoint, self-efficacy has the potential to influence an individual's goals and behavior. Our findings indicate that teachers who hold a positive perception of their school environment such as being collaborative, supportive, and characterized by positive student relations, are likely to feel more efficacious, which in turn leads to decreased burnout levels. This implies that a positive school environment may act as a buffering factor against burnout in teachers, by promoting teacher's self-efficacy. Moreover, the results support the idea that self-efficacy is responsive to changes in environmental factors (Luthans et al., 2006), reinforcing the idea that personal resources, such as teacher self-efficacy is a key factor in the interplay between school climate and teacher burnout.

Conclusion

The current study supports the view that teacher burnout is not primarily affected by individual-level factors but is also affected by organization-level factors e.g. school climate. The findings indicate that both school contextual factors and individual-related factors, like teacher self-efficacy acts as a predictor of significant outcomes, including teacher burnout (Pas et al., 2012). Among the five psychosocial dimensions of perceived school climate, Collaboration, and Student relations are the most pertinent predictors of teacher burnout and its sub-dimensions. Thus, building a positive school climate e.g. encouraging positive teacher's relationships with their colleagues and students is likely to promote teacher's sense of self-efficacy, which subsequently may protect teachers against experiencing burnout and its negative outcomes (Malinen & Savolainen, 2016).

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged in this study, one possible limitation is that the pattern of the findings may be affected by the time of the year during which the data collection took place (Pas et al., 2012). The data was collected during

the end-term period of schools in Islamabad, a time when teachers are likely to experience higher levels of exhaustion and increased workloads due to exam administration and paperwork, potentially skewing burnout levels. Although Islamabad is the capital city of Pakistan, teachers in Islamabad may face different working conditions compared to those in smaller cities and rural areas, raising concerns about the generalizability of the findings (Hanif et al., 2011).

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