

Research Article

A Study of Teacher Efficacy and Burnout among School Teachers in Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Burnout is a problematic phenomenon as far as teaching profession is concerned. It impairs the psychological well-being of the teachers which in turn affects the quality, competence and character of teachers. Research indicates that teacher efficacy is a powerful variable having positive effect on teacher performance. Teacher efficacy refers to teacher's belief in his/her own capacity to promote learning among students. The objectives of the present study were to examine whether teachers differ in dimensions of burnout owing to variations in the level of teacher efficacy and to explore the relationship between dimensions of burnout and teacher efficacy. Findings indicated that teacher efficacy plays an important role in reducing burnout among teachers. The results contribute to the existing body of literature maintaining that in order to practice and succeed in the complex and demanding school environment without being affected by burnout and to have a positive impact over the academic achievement of all types of students, teachers must have a strong sense of efficacy.

Keywords: teacher efficacy, burnout, school teachers, Tamil Nadu, teaching profession

INTRODUCTION

Education is the most powerful instrument for human development, social progress and more viable future. It is a tool used for the integration of the individual into the society so that he can achieve self-realization, develop national consciousness, promote unity and strive for social, economic, political, scientific, cultural and technological progress (Afe. 1995).

Education as a social system consists of three main elements, namely, teachers, students and curriculum. However, the most basic element affecting the educational process is the teacher since he/she has significant effect on the other two elements. It is the teacher who

can enhance the quality of education by giving life to curriculum and by shaping the cognitive, psychomotor and affective abilities of future generations.

In the present age, expansion of access to education, invasion of new teaching methodologies and modern technologies in the classroom, growth of heterogeneous student community and more demands from the stakeholders have made the teacher's role a complex one. Teachers should have a strong sense of efficacy and mental health to play the multifarious roles expected of them.

Effective and efficient teaching is not an easy task and to continue to teach effectively is even more difficult to achieve. Yet, if teachers are to meet the demands of the members of the knowledge economy, they should be unaffected by burnout, a personally destructive response to excessive stress and exhibit higher level of efficacy. They need to believe that they can bring a qualitative difference in the learning of the students.

In the view of Maslach (1993), burnout is a major concern in teaching profession, since it is the most unique human service occupation. Burnout is a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity, according Maslach and Jackson (1996). Burnout refers to the loss of enthusiasm, excitement and essence of mission in one's work. It also causes a feeling of helplessness, negative self-concept and attitude towards work, life and other people (Khan, 2008).

On the other hand, teacher efficacy is a powerful motivational construct that reflects a teacher's belief in his/her own capability for teaching tasks. Teacher efficacy has been defined as the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zelman, 1977). Teacher efficacy influences student achievement, attitude and affective growth. Research studies indicate that teachers with strong efficacy beliefs have greater commitment to teaching and are more likely to stay in teaching in spite of its stressful nature.

Need and Significance of the Study

Teaching involves daily, intensive and extensive use of emotional labour, and emotional work which enables teachers to manage the challenges of teaching classes which contain students with a range of diverse motivations, personal histories and learning capacities. However, too much of the former leads to a disengagement with the complexities of teaching and learning; and too much investment of one's emotional self may lead to personal

vulnerability, feelings of inadequacy at being unable to engage everyone in learning all the time and, in extreme cases, overwork and breakdown (Day 2004). Many studies on burnout highlight the role of work stressors, classroom climate and working conditions in the causation of burnout (Burke, 1993; Srivastav, 2003). Hence, burnout among teachers is a matter of concern for the society.

Various researches on teacher efficacy highlight its significant role in teaching learning process. Bandura (1997) emphasized that high self-efficacy is a predictor of increased motivation to achieve goals and feeling more comfortable in coping with unfavourable environments. According to Fives (2006), increase in efficacy decreases burnout. Flores (2004) stated that belief in strong teaching efficacy and poor perception of personal competence leads to teacher burnout. Kudva (1998) who conducted an in depth study of teacher burnout arrived at a conclusion that teachers with low role efficacy perceive high burnout.

Although these constructs have been investigated in various angles before, the knowledge about how teacher efficacy is related and associated with burnout is still inconclusive. Hence, the researcher has taken up a study to analyse the relationship between teacher efficacy and burnout among teachers.

Objectives of the Study

- To study whether teachers differ in dimensions of burnout owing to variations in the level of teacher efficacy and
- To study the relationship between dimensions of burnout and teacher efficacy.

Hypotheses

1. There is significant difference between teachers of low personal efficacy and high personal efficacy with reference to dimensions of burnout namely emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment and depersonalization.
2. There is significant difference between teachers of low teaching efficacy and high teaching efficacy with reference to dimensions of burnout namely emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment and depersonalization.
3. There is significant relationship between each dimension of burnout and i) personal efficacy and ii) teaching efficacy for the whole sample.

Method of Study

A descriptive survey method of research was employed in the present study.

Tools Used

- Teacher Efficacy Scale by Tschannen -Moran and Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) which is an adapted version of the Teacher Efficacy Scale constructed by Gibson & Dembo (1984). The instrument was designed to measure two dimensions of Teacher Efficacy namely personal efficacy and teaching efficacy.
- The MBI - Educators survey developed by Maslach, Jackson and Schwab (1996) to assess the burnout level of the teachers. Out of its three dimensions, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are negative emotions. The high scores in both the dimensions show high burnout. Personal accomplishment dimension shows the positive feeling of the teachers and hence the low accomplishment indicate high burnout among teachers.

Though both the tools are standardized ones, the reliability of the tools was established by following test-retest method and the validity of the tools was found by computing the square root of the co-efficient of reliability. The obtained values indicated high reliability and validity of the tools.

Sample

The sample constituted 430 teachers drawn from 30 schools in Chennai and Thiruvallam districts. Random sampling technique was followed for the selection of sample.

Analysis of Data

In order to arrive at meaningful interpretations of the raw scores, the data was analysed using Arithmetic mean, SD, 't' test and Karl Pearson's Product Moment Correlation.

Table 1

Classification of Whole Sample According to Varying Levels of Teacher Efficacy

Variable	Dimensions	Low		Moderate		High	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Teacher Efficacy	Personal Efficacy	111	25.81	194	45.12	125	29.07
	Teaching Efficacy	96	22.23	217	50.47	117	27.2]

It is inferred from Table 1 that out of 430 teachers, 194 teachers fall under average personal efficacy category and 217 teachers possess average teaching efficacy. Nearly 30% of

the teachers have high personal efficacy and 27% of the teachers have high teaching efficacy. Out of 430 teachers, only 96 teachers seem to have low teaching efficacy.

Hypothesis – 1

There is significant difference between teachers of low personal efficacy and high personal efficacy with reference to dimensions of burnout namely emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment and depersonalization.

Critical ratios were computed to study the differences in dimensions of burnout between teachers of low and high personal efficacy and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

't' Ratios for Differences in Dimensions of Burnout Between Teachers of Low and High Personal Efficacy

Burnout Dimensions	Level of Personal Efficacy	N	Mean	SD	df	Critical ratio
Emotional Exhaustion	Low	111	22.23	5.73	234	5.22**
	High	125	17.77	7.20		
Personal Accomplishment	Low	111	24.11	4.65	234	10.40**
	High	125	31.60	6.20		
Depersonalization	Low	111	12.33	3.95	234	4.59**
	High	125	9.86	4.28		

** P < 0.01

From the critical ratios computed and presented in Table 2, it is evident that there is significant difference ($t = 5.22$, $P < 0.01$; $t = 10.40$, $P < 0.01$ and $t = 4.59$, $P < 0.01$) between teachers of low and high personal efficacy in their levels of emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment and depersonalization. Teachers having low personal efficacy seem to be more emotionally exhausted and depersonalized than those with high personal efficacy. On the other hand, teachers with high level of personal efficacy have better personal accomplishment than those with low personal efficacy.

Hypothesis – 2

There is significant difference between teachers of low teaching efficacy and high teaching efficacy with reference to dimensions of burnout namely emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment and depersonalization.

Critical ratios were computed to study the differences in dimensions of burnout between teachers of low and high teaching efficacy and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
't' Ratios for Differences in Dimensions of Burnout Between Teachers of Low and High Teaching Efficacy

Burnout Dimensions	Level of Teaching Efficacy	N	Mean	SD	df	Critical ratio
Emotional Exhaustion	Low	96	22.36	7.69	211	3.11**
	High	117	19.38	6.32		
Personal Accomplishment	Low	96	27.76	7.23	211	1.13**
	High	117	28.75	5.58		
Depersonalization	Low	96	12.56	3.86	211	4.34**
	High	117	10.24	3.91		

** P < 0.01

From the critical ratios computed and presented in Table 3, it is clear that there is significant difference ($t = 3.11$, $P < 0.01$; and $t = 4.34$, $P < 0.01$) between teachers of low and high teaching efficacy in their level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Teachers with low teaching efficacy are more emotionally exhausted and depersonalized than teachers with high teaching efficacy. However, there is no significant difference between teachers of low and high teaching efficacy in their accomplishment level.

Hypothesis – 23

There is significant relationship between each dimension of burnout and i) personal efficacy and ii) teaching efficacy for the whole sample.

To test the hypothesis, correlation coefficients were computed and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Between Teacher Efficacy and Dimensions of Burnout for the Whole Sample

Variable	Dimensions	Emotional Exhaustion	Personal Accomplishment	Depersonalization
Teacher Efficacy	Personal Efficacy	-0.2736**	0.4630**	-0.2631**
	Teaching Efficacy	-0.1526**	0.0872	-0.2059**

****P < 0.01**

There is significant positive correlation between teacher's personal efficacy and personal accomplishment ($r = 0.4630$, $P < 0.01$) whereas a negative correlation is found between personal efficacy and the other two dimensions of burnout for the whole sample.

There is significant negative correlation between teaching efficacy and emotional exhaustion ($r = -0.1526$, $P < 0.01$) and, teaching efficacy and depersonalization of teachers ($r = -0.2059$, $P < 0.01$). However, no correlation is found between teaching efficacy and personal accomplishment.

Discussion

From the present study, it can be said that teachers with high personal efficacy and teaching efficacy are less exhausted emotionally and less depersonalized. Personally efficacious teachers are highly accomplished also. Similarly, the results of correlation analysis indicate that there is significant negative correlation between (i) personal efficacy and emotional exhaustion, (ii) personal efficacy and depersonalization, (iii) teaching efficacy and emotional exhaustion and (iv) teaching efficacy and depersonalization. Whereas, a significant positive correlation is found between personal efficacy and personal accomplishment of teachers. This finding indicates that higher the personal efficacy higher the personal accomplishment of teachers. On the other hand, higher the personal efficacy of teachers, lower would be their emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Hence, measures should be taken to strengthen the efficacy beliefs of the teachers.

Teachers need a thorough understanding of the complexity of the teaching task so that they can simplify the task by breaking it down into a manageable subset of skills and focus on the improvement. Team work among the teachers to address the school level situations and conditions that affect teaching provide the opportunity for enhanced efficacy beliefs. Repeated in-service training programs can be helpful in developing teachers' belief and value system so that they become aware of their various academic responsibilities and carry them out effectively.

Conclusion

A teacher is a central figure in the formal teaching learning process. Quality teachers determine the quality of education. Hence, the psychological well-being of the teachers has to be protected from burnout. The development of a strong sense of personal efficacy and teaching

efficacy can pay dividends of higher motivation, commitment and resilience across the span of a teaching career and reduce burnout in teachers.

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