

Burnout and Its Relationship with Self-Efficacy Among Primary School Teachers: A Field Study in Blida Province, Algeria

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Abstract

Objective: This study aimed to investigate the levels of burnout dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment) and self-efficacy among primary school teachers, and to examine the nature of the relationship between burnout dimensions and self-efficacy.

Methodology: A descriptive correlational design was employed. An accidental sample of 1,082 primary school teachers from the schools of Blida province (Algeria) participated in the study. Data were collected using three instruments: the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators (MBI-ES) adapted to the Algerian context by Warda Alaziz (2016), the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES) by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) translated into Arabic by Huda Al-Khalailleh (2011), and a demographic information form. Data were analyzed using Chi-square tests and Pearson correlation coefficients.

Results: The findings revealed varying levels across burnout dimensions: emotional exhaustion was high (56.1% of teachers), while depersonalization was low (50.6%) and a low level of reduced personal accomplishment (i.e., a high sense of personal accomplishment) was observed in 94.7% of teachers. Furthermore, teacher self-efficacy was high (62% of teachers). Most importantly, a statistically significant negative correlation was found between all three dimensions of burnout and self-efficacy (emotional exhaustion: $r = -0.334$, $p < 0.01$; depersonalization: $r = -0.253$, $p < 0.01$; reduced personal accomplishment: $r = -0.356$, $p < 0.01$).

Conclusion: The study confirms that high levels of teacher self-efficacy are associated with lower levels of burnout, particularly depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. The findings highlight the protective role of self-efficacy beliefs against professional burnout. The study recommends integrating self-efficacy enhancement programs into pre-service and in-service teacher training.

Keywords: Burnout; Self-Efficacy; Primary School Teachers.

1. Introduction

The teaching profession, particularly at the primary level, is widely recognized as one of the most stressful occupations (Kyriacou, 2001). Teachers are constantly exposed to various occupational stressors, including high workload, classroom management challenges, dealing with unmotivated students, role ambiguity, and lack of support from administration or parents (Burić, Slišković, & Penezić, 2019). When these stressors become chronic and overwhelm a teacher's coping resources, they can lead to a psychological syndrome known as burnout.

Burnout is defined as a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, characterized by three dimensions: emotional exhaustion (feeling of being emotionally overextended and depleted of one's emotional resources), depersonalization (developing a negative, callous, or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job, particularly towards students), and reduced personal accomplishment (feelings of incompetence and lack of achievement in one's work) (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Maslach, Leiter, & Schaufeli, 2009).

In contrast to burnout, self-efficacy represents a positive personal resource. Derived from Bandura's (1977; 1997) social cognitive theory, self-efficacy refers to "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Within the educational context, teacher self-efficacy is defined as "the teacher's belief in his or her ability to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 783). Self-efficacy influences how teachers perceive challenges, the effort they expend, their persistence in the face of difficulties, and their emotional reactions to stressful situations (Bandura, 1993; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

The theoretical relationship between burnout and self-efficacy is well-established. Bandura (1997) argued that a strong sense of self-efficacy enables individuals to view stressful situations as challenges to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided, thereby reducing the likelihood of burnout. Empirical studies have consistently supported this negative relationship, showing that teachers with higher self-efficacy report lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and higher levels of personal accomplishment (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Friedman, 2003; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Savas, Bozgeyik, & Eser, 2014).

While extensive research exists on teacher burnout and self-efficacy in Western contexts, there is a scarcity of studies examining these variables simultaneously in the Algerian educational context, particularly among primary school teachers. The Algerian primary education system has undergone significant reforms, and teachers face unique challenges including large class sizes, administrative burdens, and, as highlighted in the original thesis, the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating the levels of burnout and self-efficacy and the nature of their relationship among primary school teachers in Blida province, Algeria.

2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and the identified gap, this study sought to answer the following questions:

What are the levels of the three dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment) among primary school teachers in Blida province?

What is the level of self-efficacy among primary school teachers in Blida province?

Is there a statistically significant negative relationship between the dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment) and self-efficacy among these teachers?

Corresponding Hypotheses:

H1: Primary school teachers exhibit varying levels across the three dimensions of burnout.

H2: Primary school teachers exhibit a high level of self-efficacy.

H3: There is a statistically significant negative correlation between each dimension of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment) and self-efficacy.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Sample

A descriptive correlational design was employed. The study population consisted of all primary school teachers in Blida province, Algeria. Using an accidental (convenience) sampling method, a sample of 1,082 teachers (188 male, 894 female) was selected from 98 primary schools across the province. The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 1,082)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	188	17.4
	Female	894	82.6
Age	25 – 35 years	482	44.5
	36 – 45 years	313	28.9
	46 – 55 years	188	17.4
	More than 55 years	99	9.1
Marital Status	Single	215	19.9
	Married	827	76.4
	Divorced	40	3.7
Teaching Subject	Arabic	945	87.3
	French	137	12.7
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	165	15.2
	6 – 15 years	739	68.3
	16 – 25 years	116	10.7
	More than 25 years	62	5.7
Educational Level	High School	131	12.1
	Bachelor's (Licence)	802	74.1
	Master's	138	12.8
	Postgraduate Studies	11	1.0

3.2. Instruments

Three instruments were used for data collection:

- **Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators (MBI-ES):** Originally developed by Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996), the Arabic version adapted and validated for the Algerian primary school teacher context by Warda Alaziz (2016) was used. The scale consists of 22 items distributed across three dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion (9 items), Depersonalization (5 items), and Reduced Personal Accomplishment (8 items). Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never)

to 6 (every day). The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the three dimensions in this study were 0.75, 0.75, and 0.71 respectively, with an overall alpha of 0.81 for the total scale, indicating good internal consistency.

- **Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES):** Developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), the Arabic version translated by Huda Al-Khalailleh (2011) was used. The scale consists of 24 items measuring three dimensions: Efficacy for Instructional Strategies (8 items), Efficacy for Classroom Management (8 items), and Efficacy for Student Engagement (8 items). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = nothing, 5 = a great deal). The Cronbach's alpha for the three dimensions were 0.78, 0.77, and 0.71 respectively, with an overall alpha of 0.74, demonstrating acceptable reliability.
- **Demographic Information Form:** Developed by the researcher, this form collected data on gender, age, marital status, years of experience, educational level, and teaching subject.

3.3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to describe the sample's characteristics. Chi-square (χ^2) tests were conducted to determine the significance of the observed levels of burnout and self-efficacy. Pearson correlation coefficients (r) were calculated to test the hypothesized relationships between burnout dimensions and self-efficacy. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.01$.

4. Results

4.1. Levels of Burnout and Self-Efficacy

Table 2 presents the distribution of teachers across low, moderate, and high levels for each burnout dimension and for overall self-efficacy. The Chi-square results indicate that the observed distributions are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

Table 2: Levels of Burnout Dimensions and Self-Efficacy Among Teachers (N = 1,082)

Variable	Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	χ^2 (df=2)	Sig.
Emotional Exhaustion	Low	223	20.6	253.53	0.000
	Moderate	252	23.3		
	High	607	56.1		
Depersonalization	Low	547	50.6	189.78	0.000
	Moderate	360	33.3		
	High	176	16.1		
Reduced Personal Accomplishment	Low	1025	94.7	1835.51	0.000
	Moderate	29	2.7		

	High	28	2.6		
Self-Efficacy	Low	123	11.4	438.28	0.000
	Moderate	288	26.6		
	High	671	62.0		

As shown in Table 2, the majority of teachers reported a high level of emotional exhaustion (56.1%). Conversely, the majority reported low levels of depersonalization (50.6%) and, notably, a low level of reduced personal accomplishment was found in 94.7% of teachers (indicating a high sense of personal accomplishment). Regarding the positive variable, a high level of self-efficacy was observed in 62% of the teachers.

4.2. Relationship Between Burnout and Self-Efficacy

Table 3 displays the Pearson correlation coefficients between each dimension of burnout and overall self-efficacy.

Table 3: Pearson Correlations Between Burnout Dimensions and Self-Efficacy (N = 1,082)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Emotional Exhaustion	1			
2. Depersonalization	0.450**	1		
3. Reduced Personal Accomplishment	0.054	0.199**	1	
4. Self-Efficacy	-0.334**	-0.253**	-0.356**	1

** p < 0.01 (2-tailed).

The results in Table 3 reveal a statistically significant negative correlation between all three burnout dimensions and self-efficacy:

- Emotional exhaustion and self-efficacy: $r = -0.334$, $p < 0.01$
- Depersonalization and self-efficacy: $r = -0.253$, $p < 0.01$
- Reduced personal accomplishment and self-efficacy: $r = -0.356$, $p < 0.01$

These findings indicate that as teachers' self-efficacy increases, their levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment significantly decrease. The strongest negative correlation was found between self-efficacy and reduced personal accomplishment ($r = -0.356$).

5. Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between burnout and self-efficacy among primary school teachers in Blida province, Algeria. The results yielded several important findings. Levels of Burnout and Self-Efficacy: The finding that emotional exhaustion was high (56.1%) is consistent with previous research (Antoniou, Polychroni, & Vlachakis, 2006; Galanakis et al., 2020; Al-Azziz, 2016) and reflects the demanding nature of primary teaching. This exhaustion can be attributed to

factors such as high workload, role conflict, dealing with young children requiring constant attention, and, as noted in the original thesis, the post-pandemic return to full-time, in-person teaching.

However, despite high emotional exhaustion, the teachers reported low levels of depersonalization and, most notably, a very low level of reduced personal accomplishment (i.e., a very high sense of personal accomplishment). This is an encouraging finding. Low depersonalization suggests that teachers have not developed cynical or detached attitudes towards their students. This may be explained by the young age of primary school students, which elicits empathy and care rather than detachment (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). The low level of reduced personal accomplishment (94.7% of teachers) indicates that teachers derive a strong sense of meaning and effectiveness from their work. This high personal accomplishment is likely linked to the high level of self-efficacy (62% of teachers) found in this study.

The Negative Relationship: The core finding is the statistically significant negative correlation between all three burnout dimensions and self-efficacy. This result strongly supports Hypothesis 3 and is in full agreement with Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory and a large body of empirical research (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Friedman, 2003; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Savas et al., 2014; Hassan & Ibourk, 2021).

The negative relationship can be interpreted as follows: Teachers with high self-efficacy possess strong beliefs in their capabilities to manage classroom disruptions, implement effective instructional strategies, and engage even the most unmotivated students (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). These positive beliefs act as a cognitive and emotional resource. When faced with stressful situations, efficacious teachers appraise them as challenges to be overcome rather than threats, which reduces feelings of helplessness and emotional exhaustion (Bandura, 1993). Furthermore, because they believe in their ability to create positive change, they are less likely to develop cynical attitudes (depersonalization) towards their students. Finally, their successful coping efforts and positive impact on student learning directly enhance their sense of personal accomplishment, explaining the strong negative correlation ($r = -0.356$) between self-efficacy and reduced personal accomplishment.

The finding that the strongest correlation was between self-efficacy and reduced personal accomplishment aligns with Maslach and Leiter's (2016) conceptualization that a low sense of accomplishment is a direct consequence of feeling ineffective. High self-efficacy directly counters this by providing the teacher with continuous evidence of their effectiveness.

The Gender Imbalance in the Sample: It is important to acknowledge that the sample was predominantly female (82.6%), which, while potentially reflecting the actual demographic reality of primary teaching in Blida province, may limit the generalizability of the findings to male teachers. Research suggests that gender can interact with both burnout and self-efficacy (Antonioni et al., 2006). However, the strong theoretical framework and the consistency of the core negative correlation with international literature suggest that the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout is robust enough to hold across genders, though future studies with more balanced samples are needed to explore potential interaction effects.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

This study confirms that burnout and self-efficacy are significantly and negatively related among primary school teachers in Blida, Algeria. While a high level of emotional exhaustion indicates the presence of significant occupational stress, the simultaneously high levels of self-efficacy and personal accomplishment, and low levels of depersonalization, highlight the protective and resilient function of teacher self-efficacy. Teachers who believe in their professional capabilities are better equipped to manage stress, maintain positive relationships with students, and sustain a sense of professional achievement.

6.2. Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **For Teacher Training Programs:** Integrate targeted interventions to enhance self-efficacy beliefs within both pre-service and in-service teacher training. These programs should focus on providing mastery experiences (e.g., through micro-teaching and successful classroom simulations), vicarious experiences (e.g., observing and collaborating with expert teachers), and verbal persuasion (e.g., constructive feedback and mentoring).
- **For School Administrators:** Create a supportive school environment that fosters teacher self-efficacy. This includes involving teachers in decision-making, providing autonomy, recognizing achievements, and building a collaborative professional culture that reduces role ambiguity and conflict.
- **For Future Research:** Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the causal direction of the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout over time. Additionally, qualitative studies could provide deeper insights into how Algerian primary teachers experience and cope with emotional exhaustion in their specific cultural and institutional context. Future research should also aim for a more balanced gender sample to explore potential gender-specific pathways to burnout and resilience.

7. Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged:

1. **Cross-sectional Design:** The correlational design does not permit causal inferences. While the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout is negative, it is impossible to determine whether high self-efficacy prevents burnout or whether burnout erodes self-efficacy (or both, in a reciprocal cycle).
2. **Convenience Sampling:** The use of an accidental (convenience) sample, while practical for a large-scale field study, may introduce selection bias. The findings are therefore generalizable primarily to the population of Blida province and should be extended to other Algerian regions with caution.
3. **Self-Report Measures:** All data were collected via self-report questionnaires, which are subject to common method bias and social desirability bias. Teachers may have over-reported their self-efficacy or under-reported negative feelings like depersonalization.

4. **Gender Imbalance:** As noted in the discussion, the sample was heavily skewed towards female teachers (82.6%), which may limit the generalizability of the specific prevalence rates (e.g., levels of emotional exhaustion) to male primary school teachers.

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