

THE EFFECT OF WORK OVERLOAD, STUDENT MISBEHAVIOURS AND SELF-EFFICACY ON TEACHERS' BURNOUT: EVIDENCE FROM THE MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: This study investigates the effects of several key determinants of burnout among secondary school teachers in Malaysia. Specifically, the effect of work overload, student misbehaviour, and self-efficacy on burnout has been examined in this study context. Employing a simple random sampling technique, questionnaires were distributed to 500 teachers in one state located in the Northern Region of Malaysia. Regression analyses based on 345 participants showed that work overload has a positive and significant effect on burnout among secondary school teachers in Malaysia ($\beta = 0.380$, $t = 15.82$, $p = 0.000$). Next, findings revealed a negative and significant effect of self-efficacy on burnout ($\beta = -0.089$, $t = 4.77$, $p = 0.000$). Interestingly, student misbehaviour demonstrated an insignificant effect on burnout ($\beta = 0.014$, $t = -0.55$, $p = 0.57$). This research serves to increase awareness among teachers regarding the crucial importance of preserving mental health. By comprehending the determinant factors affecting teachers' burnout, both researchers and teachers gain insights to proactively address this issue within the secondary school context. The implications of this study extend beyond academia, offering practical strategies to prevent burnout among secondary school teachers in Malaysia.

Keywords: Burnout, secondary school teachers, Malaysia.

Introduction

Teaching is a challenging and interesting career, and it must meet a lot of requirements to fulfil its quality. It involves emotional and mental strength and requires physical strength. Teachers are bound to be physically and mentally drained after such a long period of working and having to deal with many obstacles and changes in the working system, especially when they fail to adapt to a new change (Subon & Sigie, 2016). There are a wide range of factors that could lead to a teacher's burnout, either internal or external. Burnout is not something new for educators, but this time, the world has been shocked by the new coronavirus disease, which is known as the COVID-19 pandemic. It has struck the world since November 2019, and the first Malaysian confirmed COVID-19 on February 4, 2020. Starting with this, everything changed, including the teaching method, where all the schools were ordered to close by the government and started to conduct virtual learning. Thus, burnout has increased among teachers when all Malaysian schools need to continue their operations by using the new teaching method that requires everyone to utilise virtual or online learning (Malay Mail, 2021). Teachers need to work from home and shift their regular face-to-face classes to online teaching and learning modes (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020). The changes

in these norms might have an impact on teacher burnout. Thus, in this study, the researchers focused on the determinants contributing to burnout among secondary school teachers in the Northern Region of Malaysia. In previous years (before COVID-19), teachers were not trained for e-learning because it was not included in the curriculum. Besides, they must explore on their own to conduct online classes, and they are given a checklist of things to do for online classes. In this situation, it is one of the factors that would lead to burnout among secondary school teachers because of the work overload. Furthermore, burnout is crucial to study because, as stated by the National Union of Teaching Professions (NUTP), Malaysian school teachers suffer from stress. Otherwise, research in Malaysia demonstrates that teachers from various backgrounds experience varying levels of burnout. From this evidence, it is proven that teachers have experienced burnout since the early 2000's. Based on the research conducted by NUTP regarding teachers' stress, this problem should be emphasised, including the factors that lead to stress and the consequences that this has on teachers (Sapudin, 2005). Therefore, a study should be conducted to examine the determinants that could lead to burnout among teachers in secondary schools after the mode of teaching has changed. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), burnout can be clarified as a problem of work-related stress. The new definition of burnout refers to it as a syndrome' and is associated with chronic workplace stress that some people are unable to manage. Previously, WHO clarified burnout as an 'occupational phenomenon' related to health status or factors that influence surroundings. In other words, employees' energy or ability to work can diminish over time when the workplace does not provide resources and is particularly demanding. In the terminal stage, a condition of physical, emotional, and mental health will occur from which it is difficult to recover. The decreased individual achievement refers to a conviction that one can no longer work successfully with customers, patients, care beneficiaries, or even students. This term, burnout, strongly showed that the individual was exhausted, and when their mind is disrupted and they cannot stay calm, they are unable to enjoy the work and perform well in their role.

Work Overload and Burnout

The term "work overload" is used to describe the workload of an individual who has exceeded their limits and expectations. This has become a serious issue for teachers as well. Teachers must not only teach but also educate the students with a lot of patience. As stated by Tabitha and Okello (2014), the teaching profession cannot deny work overload. In this regard, there has been agreement among researchers that teaching is one of the most stressful occupations. Moreover, when teachers face these problems, they cannot concentrate and focus well on a certain task, and they tend to ignore students who do not show cooperation and interest in studying. Work overload refers to the significance of occupation errands and might cause mental distress for workers (Johari *et al.*, 2019). People react contrastingly to work overload. A few accept it, while others show disappointment. Teachers may not be able to handle an overloaded task, and this will contribute to burnout when it exceeds the limit. Furthermore, work overload refers to the fixation of how many tasks an employee is dependable at work. This aspect refers to the level of burnout experienced by people because they are unable to adapt to or be active with the amount of work assigned to them. In this case, the teacher is an employee who works hard to give their best for their students to get a better understanding. During the COVID-19 pandemic, most teachers face serious work overload. With student numbers rising and an expanding number of teachers leaving the occupation, the report observed that one out

of five had a strained outlook on their work most or constantly, compared to those in comparable occupations. The scale of Cousins *et al.* (2024) has been utilised to test the level of teachers' work overload in this study. The first objective of this study is to examine the effect of work overload on burnout among teachers in secondary schools.

Students' Misbehaviour and Burnout

Student misbehaviour activities like disruptive talking, constant evasion of work, playing, verbal insults, disrespecting the teacher, and many other factors are prickly issues in the regular classroom (Sun & Shek, 2012). Teachers generally reported that these misbehaviors in the classroom are terrible and stress-provoking, and they also needed to invest a lot of time and energy to manage the classroom. Clearly, student misbehaviour activities hinder the perfection and viability of teaching and impede the learning of the students and their schoolmates. However, student misbehaviour is different in this current situation, where all the schools conducted the activity through virtual learning. Student misbehaviour in the classroom both disturbs students and influences the teaching process. As mentioned by Akkaş Baysal and Ocak (2021), with the increase of online courses since the COVID-19 pandemic, the type of student misbehaviour activities changed a lot. Misbehavior often breaks in on the smooth working of teaching and learning in both conventional and online courses. This can affect teachers or other students during the class that is being conducted. These kinds of behaviours were characterised, and what kind of precautionary measures ought to be determined in this research. Nonetheless, the situation experienced during the pandemic is new to characterising these types of student misbehaviour because most teachers have been encountering distance education for the first time. The pandemic has contributed to the fastest transition towards the education process, and everything has changed drastically without proper preparation. Under this condition, the function of online learning was to provide the apparatus to save and carry out digitalization as a helpful alternative. Relating to the main point, student misbehaviour would lead to teacher burnout as the teacher needs to handle the syllabus of the subject and, at the same time, is responsible for any issue related to the student. In addition, it is not easy to handle student misbehaviour during the online session, where students might interrupt them by giving irrelevant comments or responses during the class session. The scale of Croom and Moore (2003) has been utilised to test the level of student misbehaviour in this study. Given that, the second objective of this study is to examine the effect of students' misbehaviors on burnout among teachers in secondary schools.

Self-Efficacy and Burnout

Equally important, self-efficacy is functionally characterised as an individual's ability to perform a particular task effectively (Ahmad, 2013). If the teachers have low self-efficacy, it means they can persuade people to think negatively about something instead of being more enthusiastic than they really are, while high self-efficacy can persuade people to think the task has to be easier than it is. This regularly brings about poor task planning and causes them more stress when the teachers have low self-efficacy. Teachers' personal values drive their objectives and practise at school. Besides, values can uphold emotional prosperity, individual self-efficacy, and viability. Teachers' self-efficacy, namely their belief in their capacity to adequately deal with the tasks, commitments, and challenges connected with their profession, plays a key role in affecting significant academic

outcomes, for example, students' achievement, motivation, and behaviour at the workplace (Barni *et al.*, 2019). During a pandemic, the challenges that teachers face every day are not the same as in the past. For this reason, some of the teachers might have personal problems, especially since most people and their loved ones lost their jobs during the pandemic. When teachers have their own personal problems, their minds have already messed up with other problems, so it can generate burnout when facing another problem related to work. A teacher's career needs high self-efficacy to perform well, which indirectly prevents them from burnout. Teachers should make a preparation for conducting virtual classes in order to ensure that students can easily understand the syllabus, especially for calculating subjects and other theoretical subjects. As mentioned by Smetackova (2017), teachers with a high level of self-efficacy can manage challenges and deliver knowledge to students confidently. When teachers themselves have high self-efficacy, they will not easily turn to burnout because they can manage and control themselves well. In this research, a scale by Chen *et al.* (2001) has been utilised to gain information on self-efficacy among teachers. Thus, the third objective of this study is to examine the effect of self-efficacy on burnout among teachers in secondary schools.

Research Methodology

This research aims to examine the determinants of burnout among teachers in secondary schools. There are three independent variables, which are work overload, students' misbehaviour, and self-efficacy, and a dependent variable, which is burnout, that have been examined in this research. Secondary school teachers in a district in the Northern Region of Malaysia were selected to carry out this study. Given the three research objectives in the previous section, here are the three alternative hypotheses that have been developed for this study:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant effect of work overload on burnout among teachers;

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant effect of students' misbehaviors on burnout among teachers;

and Hypothesis 3: There is a significant effect of self-efficacy on burnout among teachers.

The survey format refers to quantitative research, and the researchers send the questionnaires to respondents to identify their thoughts regarding burnout among secondary school teachers in one state located in the Northern Region of Malaysia. A sample of data has been collected to describe whether independent variables will affect the dependent variable. The questionnaires were adapted from several past researchers, including Maslach (1996) for measuring burnout (22 items), Cousins (2004) for measuring work overload (8 items), Croom and Moore (2003) for measuring student misbehaviour (24 items), and Chen *et al.* (2001) for measuring self-efficacy (8 items). - see Table 1. The scale used in this study for all of the constructs is based on a five-point Likert scale that ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Table 1: Questionnaire measurement for variables

Variables	Adapted From	No. of Items
Burnout	Maslach (1996)	22
Work overload	Cousins (2004)	8
Student misbehaviour	Croom & Moore (2003)	24
Self-efficacy	Chen <i>et al.</i> (2001)	8

According to the Kedah State Education Department, the total population of secondary school teachers in the district is 2949. There are several selected individuals from the whole population to represent a subset or sample of the population. Given that the total population of this study is 2949, the minimum sample size in this study is 341 respondents (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The judgmental way to deal with set-up content validity includes a literature review and follow-up with experts or judges (Taherdoost, 2018). To facilitate validation, the judge's mental approach to dealing with content validity requires the researcher to be present with experts. In this study, the draft of the questionnaire has been sent to four experts for content validation. Based on the experts' comments and concerns, a few amendments were made before the questionnaire was used for the actual data collection.

Data Analysis and Research Findings

Demographic Analysis of Respondents

The data obtained based on the distributed questionnaire indicates that the respondents' gender is divided into two categories: female and male. The percentage shows that female respondents are much higher than male respondents. 220 (63.8%) respondents were female, and 125 (36.2%) were male respondents. The respondents' ages are divided into four ranges: 30 years old and below, 31-40 years old, 41-49 years old, and 50 years old and above. The highest frequency was 162 (47.0%) from the range of 41-49 years old, followed by 77 (22.3%) from the range of 50 years old and above, 70 (20.3%) from the range of 31-40 years old, and 36 (10.4%) from the range of 30 years old and below. The lowest frequency is from 30 years old and below, with only 36 (10.4%) respondents in this age range. There are four choices of answers to this question; among them are Malay, Indian, Chinese, and others. The highest frequency of respondents' races in this study is Malay (66.1%), followed by Chinese (21.3%), Indian (10.9%), and others (1.7%). There were four options for academic qualifications: diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree, and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D). The highest frequency was bachelor's, with 309 comprising 89.5% of total respondents. Next was a master's degree (23 participants, or 6.7%), a diploma (12 participants, or 3.5%), and the lowest frequency was a Ph.D. (1 participant, or 0.3%).

Minimum, Maximum, Means and Standard Deviation (SD) Analysis

A general statistical analysis of dependent and independent variables is used in the study of descriptive analyses. The results for each variable have been reported in this section. Data from 345 respondents was taken to get the descriptive statistics. Table 2 presents the values of the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation (SD) for the tested variables in the research. The range of the mean was reported to be from 2.90 to 3.75. Self-efficacy has shown the lowest mean, $\mu = 2.90$, while work overload has shown the highest mean, $\mu = 3.75$. The mean for burnout is 3.43, followed by the mean for students' misbehaviour at 3.61. Hence, the descriptive findings on means for all variables (except for self-efficacy) were considered in the high indication. The following were the classifications of different mean levels based on the composite/average score for each variable: High (3.33-5.00), medium (1.67-3.32), and low (0.00-1.66). A general statistical analysis of dependent and independent variables is used in the study of descriptive analyses. The results for each variable have been reported in this section. Data from 345 respondents was taken to get the descriptive

statistics. Table 2 presents the values of the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation (SD) for the tested variables in the research. The range of the mean was reported to be from 2.90 to 3.75. Self-efficacy has shown the lowest mean, $\mu = 2.90$, while work overload has shown the highest mean, $\mu = 3.75$. The mean for burnout is 3.43, followed by the mean for students' misbehaviour at 3.61. Hence, the descriptive findings on means for all variables (except for self-efficacy) were considered in the high indication. The following were the classifications of different mean levels based on the composite/average score for each variable: High (3.33-5.00), medium (1.67-3.32), and low (0.00-1.66).

Table 2: Minimum, maximum, mean, and SD analysis

Variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Burnout	345	2.41	5.00	3.43	0.36
Work overload	345	1.38	5.00	3.75	0.73
Student misbehaviour	345	1.54	5.00	3.61	0.65
Self-efficacy	345	1.25	5.00	2.90	0.94

Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis is a useful strategy to test the data collected for reliability. The purpose of conducting a reliability test is to measure the consistency and stability of the factors in the study. Reliability analysis based on the actual test revealed that Cronbach's alpha values for all variables are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Reliability analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Burnout	0.87
Work overload	0.90
Student misbehavior	0.91
Self-efficacy	0.96

As indicated in Table 3, the Cronbach's alpha value for the dependent variable, which is burnout, is 0.87. The Cronbach's alpha values for the independent variables, which are work overload, student misbehaviour, and self-efficacy, are 0.87, 0.90, 0.91, and 0.96, respectively. All the variables are reliable for the study, and the results are good as the range is more than 0.7, which indicates a good result (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

Pearson Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation is used to determine the significance of a connection between at least two variables. Correlation coefficients can be isolated as positive linear relationships and negative linear relationships, where the value +1 addresses the most grounded level of relationship at which the independent variables will emphatically relate to the dependent variable, while the value -1 addresses the most grounded level of relationship at which the independent variables will adversely relate to the dependent variable. The association between variables, according to thumb rules, may be positive or negative. The intensity of the relationship between the variables can be measured by using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r). The detailed Pearson correlation result, as indicated in Table 4, showed that work overload has a moderate and positive with burnout ($r = 0.637$), student

misbehaviour has a negligible correlation with burnout ($r = 1.61$), and self-efficacy has a high and negative correlation with burnout ($r = -0.171$). A guide to the appropriate use of correlation coefficients by Mukaka (2012) has been referred to for this correlation indication.

Table 4: Pearson correlation analysis

Variables	Burnout	Work Overload	Student Misbehaviour	Self-Efficacy
Burnout	-			
Work overload	0.637*	-		
Student misbehavior	0.161**	0.352**	-	
Self-efficacy	-0.171*	-0.535*	-0.367	-
	0.000	0.000	0.000	

Regression Analysis

Variances for the dependent variable (burnout), which can be explained by independent variables, have been performed using a regression analysis. This analysis indicates the relative effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. In this study, the independent variables are work overload, student misbehaviour, and self-efficacy, and the dependent variable is burnout. Table 5 presents the regression results for the determinant factors (work overload, student misbehaviour, and self-efficacy) on the dependent variable (burnout). The results reported the R-value at .668 and the R square at 0.447. This shows that 44.7% of the variance in burnout has been explained by work overload, student misbehaviour, and self-efficacy among teachers from these secondary schools. In addition, there were significant effects of work overload ($\beta = 0.380$, $t = 15.82$, $p = 0.00$) and self-efficacy ($\beta = -0.089$, $t = 4.77$, $p = 0.00$) on burnout among secondary school teachers in Malaysia. Interestingly, an insignificant result is revealed regarding the effect of student misbehaviour ($\beta = 0.014$, $t = 0.55$, $p = 0.57$) on burnout among teachers in this study.

Table 5: Regression analysis

	R	R ²	R ² Change	F
Model 1	0.668	0.447	0.442	91.81
	B	t-value	Sig.	
(Constant)	1.801	11.909	0.00	
Work overload	0.380	15.82	0.00	
Student misbehaviour	0.014	0.55	0.57	
Self-efficacy	-0.089	4.77	0.00	

Discussion

In this study, work overload showed a significant effect on burnout. This means the majority of secondary school teachers in Malaysia consider work overload to have affected their burnout. It had been proved according to the result of ($\beta = 0.380$, $t\text{-value} = 15.82$, $p\text{-value} = 0.00$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is accepted. That means there is a positive and significant effect of work overload on burnout among secondary school teachers in this study. This finding is supported by a previous study by Surana and Singh (2013), who found that work overload is significantly related to job

burnout. Student misbehaviour showed that there was no significant effect of student misbehaviour on burnout among secondary school teachers in this study. The result for student misbehaviour shows ($\beta = 0.014$, $t\text{-value} = 0.55$, $p\text{-value} = 0.57$). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is not accepted because the $p\text{-value}$ is higher than 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that student misbehaviour does not have any significant effect on burnout among secondary school teachers. This finding is consistent with research done by Mayberry and Golden (1996) regarding argumentation theory, which is not significant. The next regression analysis found that self-efficacy has a negative and significant effect on burnout. This implies that self-efficacy has an impact on burnout among secondary school teachers. As can be seen in Table 5, it has been proven according to the results ($\beta = -0.089$, $t\text{-value} = 4.77$, $p\text{-value} = 0.00$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is accepted because the value of significant p is 0.00, which is less than 0.01. Thus, it can be concluded that self-efficacy also has a significant effect on teachers' burnout. This result is consistent with Smetackova (2017), who stated that when teachers themselves have high self-efficacy, they will not easily turn to burnout because they can manage and control themselves well.

Conclusion

To conclude, this research serves to increase awareness among teachers regarding the importance of preserving mental health through managing burnout, especially during the pandemic. The result obtained from the regression analysis showed that work overload has a positive and significant effect on burnout, while self-efficacy has a negative and significant effect on burnout among secondary school teachers. To date, student misbehaviour has not had an effect on teachers' burnout, based on this study. The practical implications can be highlighted to decrease the level of teacher workload and, at the same time, increase teacher self-efficacy. To avoid work overload among teachers, the management could (1) reduce the hours of working during the work-from-home mode, (2) provide a reasonable work deadline, and (3) provide a realistic time for teachers to accomplish the work. Meanwhile, to increase the level of teacher self-efficacy, the school management needs to: (1) Support teachers so that they can perform well even when things are tough; (2) convince teachers to be confident so that they can effectively perform different tasks; and (3) persuade teachers that they are capable of successfully overcoming many challenges. Besides, future researchers are encouraged to examine additional possible relationships and burnout that were not covered in this study. This is because many variables have the potential to cause burnout among secondary school teachers, such as work-life balance and role ambiguity. Qualitative approaches, such as interviews, are recommended for future research to gather detailed data from respondents. By conducting interviews, future research will be able to recognise probable relationships that can induce burnout among secondary school teachers. Burnout among school teachers is an important issue that needs to be minimised as soon as possible since educators need strong mental health to educate students and set a good example for them since teenagers are future leaders.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in producing and writing this research paper.

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