

**Role of Psychological Empowerment and Perceived Social Support in Burnout among
Female College Teachers
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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the role of psychological empowerment and perceived social support on the level of burnout among female college teachers. The design of the study was a correlational design and simple random sampling as well as purposive sampling techniques were used in the study. The study was conducted on 80 female college teachers (between the age range of 30 to 45 years) from various randomly selected colleges in and around Patiala, Punjab, India. The teachers were administered the Psychological Empowerment Instrument (Spreitzer, 1995), the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, 1996) and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988) to assess their scores on the respective variables. The results indicated the component of personal accomplishment has a significant positive correlation with psychological empowerment and perceived social support. Similarly, a significant positive correlation was found between psychological empowerment and perceived social support. However, the other two component of burnout namely occupational exhaustion and depersonalization did not show any significant correlation with psychological empowerment and perceived social support. This research can help provide insights regarding successful strategies for reducing the level of burnout which contributes to the improvement of mental health.

Keywords: Psychological Empowerment, Perceived Social Support, Burnout, Teachers, Females.

The role of a teacher is pivotal in shaping the future of a country. A teacher not only facilitates learning but contribute to the overall development of a child. The profession of teaching may seem very easy from outside perspective, but like any other profession teachers also experience a significant amount of stress (Maphalala, 2014). Excessive stress can lead to burnout among teachers. Burnout is a state in which an individual suffers from emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Burnout can have negative consequences at a workplace. Previous studies have shown that the percentage of teachers who remain in their jobs despite of their burnout is quite high (Jackson, et al., 1986; Watts & Short, 1990). People who stay in their jobs despite the burnout are less productive, their quality of work is impaired they constantly feel dissatisfied which further decreases their commitment to the job or the organization (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Burnout is contagious and can easily be transferred from one person to another (Bakker, et al., 2005).

Teachers have a strong influence on children. They inspire, guide and shape the future generation. When teachers themselves are experiencing distress, they contribute negatively to the growth of students and educational institution. Hence, it becomes necessary to identify the factors that can prevent burnout and enhance teacher's mental health. One important variable that can influence burnout is psychological empowerment. According to Spreitzer (1995), psychological empowerment has four components, namely: competence (the confidence one has in their abilities and skills to perform a job), meaning (the compatibility between one's values, beliefs, behavior and job requirements), self-determination (the autonomy and control one has over his work) and impact (how much influence an

individual has over the outcomes at work). In totality, it is a motivational construct that represents a dynamic orientation towards work. Psychological empowerment can be very helpful when it comes to adjusting in weak work situations. It ensures the preservation of hope and attachment of the survivors during the organizational downsizing (Brockner, et al., 2004). According to a study conducted on nurses in a hospital setting, psychological empowerment can bring down the negative effects of burnout by mediating the influence of work-life-quality on burnout (Permarupan, et al., 2019). Lautizi, et al. (2009) also found empowerment to be a strong predictor of job stress.

Social support is another important variable when it comes to dealing with work stress. Social support can act as a buffer and helps in protecting an individual from the negative consequences of prolonged stress (Samson, 2020). According to a study, social support can have a threefold effect on work stress – (1) it reduces the stress outcomes; (2) it reduces the number of perceived stressors; and, (3) it also mediates the stressor strain relation (Viswesvaran, et al., 1999). When an individual has good social support, he feels that he is cared for and loved and that he is respected and has a membership of a social network (Cobb, 1976). Whether it is the stress of meeting the deadlines, bad day at work or a heated argument with a colleague, a simple conversation with a family member or a friend can ward off the negative effects of the experience. According to Zimet, et al.

(1988), perceived social support is a multidimensional concept encompassing three factors "Family", "Friends" and "Significant Others". Perceived social support has a direct negative relationship with burnout (Liu & Aunguroch, 2019). According to Kirk & Walter (1981) enhancing the social support available to the teachers can reduce the effects of burnout.

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There are limited researches investigating the relationship among these psychological variables. Hence, this study is conducted to investigate the relationship of psychological empowerment, perceived social support and burnout among college teachers. The study was conducted on female college teachers only because females have dual responsibilities and they juggle with their professional as well as a hectic personal life. Hence, it would be interesting to see how psychological empowerment and perceived social support influence burnout in female college teachers.

Objectives

1. To investigate the relationship between psychological empowerment and burnout among college teachers.
2. To investigate the relationship between perceived social support and burnout among college teachers.
3. To study the mediating role of perceived social support in psychological empowerment and burnout among college teachers.

Hypotheses

H₁ - Psychological empowerment will negatively influence burnout among college teachers.

H₂ - Perceived social support will negatively influence burnout among college teachers.

H₃ - Perceived social support mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and burnout.

Method : Sample

This correlational study was conducted among college teachers between the age range of 30 to 45 years. The sample was selected randomly from various colleges in and around Patiala, Punjab, India. The sample consisted of 80 female college teachers teaching various undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used.

Instruments

The following questionnaires were administered for the present study:

Psychological Empowerment Instrument (Spreitzer, 1995)

The PSE is a 12-item scale which helps assess the psychological empowerment of an individual by evaluating scores of four sub dimensions – meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. It is a 7-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). A higher score on the scale indicates higher psychological empowerment. The scale has been widely used in various empirical studies and the Cronbach alpha of overall psychological empowerment construct is around 0.80. The four dimensions also have a satisfactory reliability ($\alpha \geq .70$) (Spreitzer, 1995).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (1996)

The MBI is a 22-item scale used to assess an individual's level of burnout. It measures scores on three subscales, namely, Occupational exhaustion

(OE), Depersonalisation (D) and Personal Accomplishment assessment (PA). It is a 6-point Likert scale with items ranging from 0 (Never) to 6 (Everyday). The scale shows excellent internal consistency reliability with Cronbach alpha for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment coming out to be 0.90, 0.76 and 0.76 respectively as reported by Gold (1984).

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988)

This scale assesses the perception that an individual holds regarding the availability and adequacy of social support from various sources in his social network, such as, family, friends and significant others. It is a 12-item 7-point Likert scale with scores ranging from 1 (Very Strongly disagree) to 7 (Very strongly agree). The participant has to indicate the degree to which he agrees or disagrees with each of the statements. The scale has good internal reliability as the Cronbach's coefficient alpha values for family, friends and significant other subscales being 0.87, 0.85 and 0.91 respectively (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988).

Design

The current study aimed to study the relationship between psychological empowerment, perceived social support and burnout among female college teachers, while, focusing on the mediating role of perceived social support. The data was collected from 80 female college teachers ranging between the ages of 30 to 45 years. The sample was selected randomly from various colleges in and around Patiala, Punjab, India using the simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Informed consent was taken from these teachers for the study and they were told that their information would be kept anonymous and confidentiality of responses would be maintained. The teachers were then asked to fill up the Psychological Empowerment Instrument (Spreitzer, 1995), the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, 1996) and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988). Later, their scores were calculated and the results were analysed using the SPSS 26 software. We used correlation to find whether there was a relationship between psychological empowerment, perceived social support and burnout. Regression analysis was also used to assess the degree to which psychological empowerment and perceived social support can predict burnout as well as to investigate the mediating role played by perceived social support.

Results

Table 1: Correlation between Psychological Empowerment, Perceived Social Support and Burnout

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
PE	-	0.427**	-0.154	0.031	0.528**
PSS	-	-	-0.102	0.014	0.450**
OE	-	-	-	0.703**	-0.236*
D	-	-	-	-	-0.165
PA	-	-	-	-	-

Note. N=80. PE = Psychological Empowerment; PSS = Perceived Social Support; OE = Occupational Exhaustion; D = Depersonalization; PA = Personal Accomplishment. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (1996) had three subscales - Occupational Exhaustion, Depersonalisation and Personal Accomplishment.

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

Correlation Analysis

The correlation between psychological empowerment, perceived social support and burnout (measured through three components: occupational exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment) is presented in Table 1. The findings indicate that psychological empowerment exhibited a strong positive correlation with, both, perceived social support ($r = 0.427, p < 0.01$) and personal accomplishment ($r = 0.528, p < 0.01$). Positive correlation was also observed between perceived social support and personal accomplishment ($r = 0.450, p < 0.01$). However, both, psychological empowerment and perceived social support showed negative, but not statistically significant, correlations with occupational exhaustion ($r = -0.154, p > 0.05$; $r = -0.102, p > 0.05$) and depersonalization ($r = -0.031, p > 0.05$; $r = -0.014, p > 0.05$). Occupational exhaustion exhibited a significant negative correlated with depersonalization ($r = -0.703, p < 0.01$) as well as with personal accomplishment ($r = -0.236, p < 0.05$). A nonsignificant negative correlation was observed between depersonalization and personal

accomplishment ($r = -0.165, p > 0.05$).

Regression Analysis

As seen in Table 2, psychological empowerment was found to be a significant predictor of perceived social support ($B = 0.521, \beta = 0.427, p < 0.01$), explaining 17.1% of the variance ($Adjusted R^2 = 0.171$). Table 3 shows the direct relationship between psychological empowerment and personal accomplishment, a subscale of burnout. The results indicated that psychological empowerment significantly predicted personal accomplishment ($B = 5.069, \beta = 0.528, p < 0.01$), making up for 26.9% of the variance ($Adjusted R^2 = 0.269$). The third regression analysis (Table 4) studied the role of perceived social support in predicting personal accomplishment and the results revealed that perceived social support significantly and positively predicted personal accomplishment ($B = 3.543, \beta = 0.450, p < 0.01$), describing 19.2% of the variance ($Adjusted R^2 = 0.192$).

Discussion

The present study was intended to investigate the role of psychological empowerment and perceived social support on the level of burnout (measured through three components: occupational exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment) among female college teachers. Perceived social support was further assessed to observe its role as a mediator between the relationship of psychological empowerment and burnout.

It was hypothesized that psychological empowerment

Table 2: Regression analysis between Psychological Empowerment and Perceived Social Support

IV	DV	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Adjusted R ²	Sig.
Psychological Empowerment	Perceived Social Support	0.521	0.125	0.427	4.165**	0.171	.000

Note. N=80.

df = 78; *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 3: Regression analysis between Psychological Empowerment and Personal Accomplishment

IV	DV	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Adjusted R ²	Sig.
Psychological Empowerment	Personal Accomplishment	5.069	0.924	0.528	5.484**	0.269	.000

Note. N=80. Personal accomplishment is one of the subscales of burnout.

df = 78; *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 4: Regression analysis between Perceived Social Support and Personal Accomplishment

IV	DV	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Adjusted R ²	Sig.
Perceived Social Support	Personal Accomplishment	3.543	0.796	0.450	4.452**	0.192	.000

Note. N=80. Personal accomplishment is one of the subscales of burnout.

df = 78; *p<0.05, **p<0.01

will negatively influence burnout among college teachers (H_1). Psychological empowerment is helpful in work situations as it helps individuals to handle and adjust to difficult work situations, increases their understanding of personal control, motivates them to participate actively in job-related activities and also preserves their hope, thus, leading to an increase in their professional identity, which is found to partially mediate the relationship between psychological empowerment and occupational burnout (Brockner, et al., 2004; Ture & Akkoc, 2019; Ding & Xie, 2021). High psychological empowerment has been found to be related to lower levels of emotional exhaustion, given that there is an increase in psychological safety, organizational embeddedness as well as organizational commitment (Zhou & Chen, 2021; Safari, et al., 2020). Numerous studies have reported that high psychological empowerment is associated with lower frequency as well as lower intensity of burnout, i.e., an inverse relationship exists between psychological empowerment and job burnout (Ghaniyoun, Shakeri & Heidari, 2017; Cavus & Demir, 2010; Shokrpour, Bazrafkan & Talebi, 2021; Mardani & Mardani, 2014). However, the results of our study indicated that while two of the components of burnout, namely, occupational exhaustion and depersonalization, were in line with the previous findings, they did not show a significant negative relationship with psychological empowerment. On the other hand, the component of personal accomplishment showed a strong positive correlation with psychological empowerment ($r = 0.528$, $p < 0.01$) (as seen in Table 1). This indicates that our hypothesis (H_1) has been partially accepted. A reason for such findings may be that our sample size was small. Another reason may also be that people in a small city forge strong bonds, as a result of which factors like occupational exhaustion and depersonalization can be handled effectively side-by-side and not allowed to reach their peak. Our findings have been supported by a study conducted by Boudrias, Morin & Brodeur (2012).

A second hypothesis postulated that perceived social support will negatively influence burnout among college teachers (H_2). Social support has been known to reduce stress and the number of stressors perceived by an individual as it allows the individual to feel accepted, loved and cared for (Viswesvaran, et al., 1999; Cobb, 1976). Internal social support including teachers' workplace relationships, principal's support, etc. has been found to be more effective in reducing the effects of burnout (particularly emotional exhaustion and depersonalization) than support from external sources (Fiorilli, et al., 2019; Walker, 1997). Studies have shown that perceived social support acts as buffer to stress and has a direct negative relationship with burnout (Samson, 2020; Liu & Aunguroch, 2019). The results of our study, however, show that while occupational exhaustion and depersonalization are in line with the prior

findings, they do not display a significant negative correlation with perceived social support. Nevertheless, a strong positive correlation can be seen between perceived social support and personal accomplishment. ($r = 0.450$, $p < 0.01$) (as seen in Table 1). This suggests that our hypothesis has been partially accepted. A small sample size could have been the reason for such results. Also, studies have suggested that the type of institution greatly affects the relationship between overall social support and burnout (Kim, Jee, Lee & An, 2018).

Social support has been found to enhance the psychological well-being among individuals in a workplace, psychological well-being being an important outcome of psychological empowerment (Constantine & Sue, 2006; Spreitzer, 1995). Since studies also point towards the inverse relationship between perceived social support and level of burnout (Samson, 2020; Liu & Aunguroch, 2019), we hypothesized that perceived social support mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and burnout (H_3). Our findings indicate that this hypothesis has been partly accepted as strong positive relationship can be seen between psychological empowerment and perceived social support and also between perceived social support and the personal accomplishment component of burnout. However, perceived social support does not show significant correlation with occupational exhaustion and depersonalization components of burnout.

Conclusion

To conclude, the main aim of the study was to study the role of psychological empowerment and perceived social support on the level of burnout (occupational exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment) among college teachers. The results of the study showed significant positive correlations of psychological empowerment as well as perceived social support with personal accomplishment component of burnout. The results, further, indicated an inverse relationship between psychological empowerment and burnout as well as between perceived social support and burnout. Perceived social support was found to partly mediate the relationship between psychological empowerment and level of burnout.

Limitations

There were a few limitations to the current study. The size of the sample was small and consisted of only female teachers, as a result of which gender difference in psychological empowerment, perceived social support and level of burnout could not be assessed. The sample was limited only to college teachers. Teachers from schools, in both rural and urban areas, face different kinds of challenges and support from their family and the workplace which might affect their stress levels and level of psychological empowerment.

Implications of the study

During this competitive era, teachers and other job professionals are facing a constant struggle to acquire social credibility and job security. Greater work demands in face of lesser resources in terms of time and energy accompanied by fewer opportunities for rewards and recognition of their efforts, contributes to accumulated stress and emotional exhaustion as well as feelings of inefficiency and alienation from their professional lives. This can prove detrimental for their physical as well as psychological well-being and, thus, needs to be handled efficiently. Thus, this research can help create awareness among the teachers regarding stress and burnout and its harmful effects as well the ways to combat such instances of burnout. The administration of various institutions should launch frequent initiatives and measures for constant psychological empowerment of their staff and they should also identify and simultaneously deal with various aspects of the working environment that lead to such a burnout situation. Initiative to conduct regular mental health check-ups and provide the teachers with guidance regarding ways of handling stress such as relaxation techniques, cognitive-behavioural techniques like reappraisal or restructuring of the stressful situation, biofeedback, etc. can also help them deal effectively with their job stress.

Future scope of the study

The study can be used as a basis for further research focusing on various factors that contribute to burnout among various educational professionals working at different levels of the institution. It can be used to perform further in-depth research on the detrimental effects of burnout in educational settings and to determine whether males and female are affected by the factors in the same way. Additionally, it can also provide basis for researches evaluating the efficacy of various interventions that could be used to help alleviate the effects of burnout and increase productivity of the professionals in educational institutions.

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