Teacher Satisfaction with Online Teaching: An Exploration of the Role of Social support

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Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between Burnout, Social supportwith Job satisfaction of high school teachers in the context of online teaching and to identify the best predictor of Job satisfaction. The study was done on 77 high school teachers (39 females, 38 males) who have been using online teaching methods for the last 6 months and belong to the age range of 22-50 years. Following a survey research design, measures of Burnout, Social support, and Job satisfaction were taken using the Maslach Burnout inventory (1981), Multidimensional scale of perceived social support (Zimet, Dahle, Zimet & Farley, 1988) and Job Satisfaction scale (Dixit, 1993), respectively. Data analysis using Pearson's correlation method suggested significant moderate negative correlation between Burnout and Job satisfaction and a moderate positive correlation between Social support and Job satisfaction. Results of multiple regression analysis revealed a significant contribution of Social support as well as burnout in influencing Job satisfaction (43 per cent). Social support emerged as the most significant predictor of Job satisfaction. Practical implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: Burnout, job satisfaction, social support, online teaching

Introduction

Learning and teaching methodologies have undergone tremendous changes with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Online teaching became inevitable in India in a situation when the Government introduced lockdown with all educational institutions closed and there was no opportunity for teachers or students to be physically present in classroom settings. The sudden shift from the traditional mode of teaching to the not much familiar technological mode has been challenging for both teachers and students. Researchers and educationalists across the world have been trying to understand the effectiveness of different methods of online learning and teaching (Joshi, Vinay, & Bhaskar, 2020). So, the impact it has on students and teachers has also been a matter of discussion among educationists (Varanasi, Vashistha, Kizilcec & Dell, 2020). Most of the teachers were new to the technical aspects of using the online mode of teaching though they have been exposed to the internet tools. So, teachers have reported a lack of experience in online teaching, difficulty in communicating with students in the online mode, getting their attention, eliciting responses from them, and poor academic performance of students as causing difficulty in online teaching (Ma, Chutiyami, Zhang,

& Nicoll, 2021). Certain other studies have indicated that the non-availability of the internet and devices, speed of internet connection, and poor student motivation were the major challenges teachers encounter (Rana & Kumari, 2021). Certainly, a drastic shift to a new model of teaching and learning will pose difficulties, mostly for teachers who were forced to use the new system (Singh, Gupta, & Yadav, 2021). There are instances in which such difficulties result in burnout.

The term 'burnout' has originated from the writings of Freudenberger (1974) when he studied professionals mostly in healthcare settings, which was further elaborated by Maslach (1978) who operationalized burnout to have three dimensions, viz., Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal accomplishment (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Maslach perceives that burnout tends to occur in people in any kind of profession which results from their belief of not being able to make a positive change in the system and feeling emotionally drained due to the working conditions. Emotional exhaustion is a state in which a person realises that he has no more resources available to deal with stressful situations. Depersonalization involves a situation when a person turns cynical and develops a negative approach towards people. Poor Personal accomplishment develops out of feelings of work dissatisfaction.

Studies have been conducted in the past which have identified increased burnout in teachers, mostly attributed to a greater number of students to be managed in online classrooms (Jurjević, Đuranović, & Olčar, 2021). Teachers pursuing online instruction tend to experience average levels of emotional exhaustion, a high degree of depersonalization and a low level of personal accomplishment (Hogan & McKnight, 2007). A recent survey conducted among school teachers in India has identified 13 per cent of them as experiencing high levels of work stress and 66 per cent having moderate levels resulting in burnout (Kumawat, 2020). Burnout can be one of the outcomes of excessive work stress which may have adverse effects on not only teacher productivity but also on the physical and mental health of teachers (Roeser et al, 2013). So, researchers in the past have identified that increased burnout can result in low job satisfaction (Domitrivich et al, 2016). The term `Job satisfaction' was first utilized by Hoppock in 1935, referring to a combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that make a person feel satisfied with his job. Teachers with high levels of stress were found to exhibit lower levels of job satisfaction.

Burnout has been identified as leading to low job performance thereby affecting productivity. Emotional exhaustion has been identified as one of the components of burnout and that which is related to professional stress (Freudenberger, 1974). Psychologists have tried to address the issue of burnout among professionals and most have focussed on charting interventions intended to increase the coping ability of people. It is in this context that we think of measures to reduce stress, and social support has been identified as a key resource which enables one to deal with stress. Social support has been assumed as having a moderating effect on the experience of stress. Social support can be defined as the supportive interactions or exchanges of resources between people in both formal and informal relationships (House, Umberson, & Landis, 1981). This involves providing emotional support, instrumental support, appraisal support, and informational support. Social support is considered as an external resource which helps

the employees to balance work and family roles because it gives them extra time, energy, and contentment (Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012). Employees then have enough personal resources to deal with their family demands, thereby preventing those demands from obstructing performance at work. Individuals possessing greater social support are generally found to have better physical and mental health. Similar studies on the relationship between burnout and social support have led us to believe that the latter can have a positive effect on burn out (Fiorilli, Gabola, Pepe, Meylan, Curchod-Ruedi, Albanese, & Doudin (2015).

Significance of the study

A review of extant literature available suggests that burnout is an inevitable result of excessive demands placed on individuals owing to the nature of the job as well as the resources individuals possess in meeting those demands. In the context of online teaching and learning, it is undeniable that the shift to a new system of teaching poses several challenges to teachers. Teachers tend to experience considerable levels of burnout and meeting the demands of work can be challenging which can result in job dissatisfaction. Factors such as social support have been identified in previous studies as acting as buffers in reducing burnout and dissatisfaction. This concern is more relevant, especially in the context in which the entire teaching-learning process has shifted to the online mode and teachers are adapting to the 'new normal'. The challenges placed on teachers are manifold in this respect. Though relevant research has been done in this area in the Western culture, very few studies have tried to understand the most important predictor among them, especially in the Indian context. The present study was therefore undertaken to identify

the influence played by Social support beyond Burnout, if any, in influencing Job satisfaction.

Objectives

1. To understand the nature and extent of the correlation between Burnout, Social support, and Job satisfaction.

2. To find out the most important predictor of Job satisfaction among the variables of Burnout and Social support.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were proposed:-

1. There will be no significant negative relationship between Burnout and Job satisfaction.
2. There will be no significant relationship between Social support and Job satisfaction.
3. There will be no significant relationship between Social support and Burnout.
4. There will be no significant predictive relationship between Burnout and Job satisfaction.
5. There will be no significant predictive relationship between Social support and Job satisfaction.

Operational definition of variables

Burnout is a state in which a person becomes exhausted in all aspects of physical and emotional well-being and feels that he or she is overwhelmed, emotionally drained and unable to meet the constant demands of a job.
Job satisfaction is the extent to which an individual feels self- motivated, and satisfied in terms of the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of a job.
Social support is defined in terms of the supportive network an individual perceives as received from family, friends, and significant others.

Method

Participants

The participants in the study consisted of 77 teachers (39 females and 38 males), teaching in high school classes, and working in different schools (both CBSE and State syllabus) in the Idukki district in Kerala. The age range of the participants was from 21 to 50 years. Teachers with significant psychological issues were excluded from the study as it could be an extraneous variable which may unduly influence the outcome variable. Only teachers who had at least two years of teaching experience and using an online method of teaching for the past 6 months were included in the study.

Research design

The present study followed a descriptive survey research design with data collection following the appropriate steps.

Measures

The following measures were used for data collection:-

1. Personal information schedule

   The information related to socio-demographic variables of the participants was collected using the information schedule developed by the investigators.

2. Maslach Burnout inventory

   The scale developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) was used to get a measure of burnout. It is a 22-item scale with a 7-point rating of responses varying from very mild (0) to very strong (7). It assesses three dimensions of job burnout, viz., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personalization accomplishment which are independent of each other. High scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and low scores on personal accomplishment are indicative of high burnout. The test-retest reliability scores range from .6 to .82. The concurrent and construct validity of the scale have also been established.

3. Job satisfaction scale

   The test developed by Dixit (1993) was used to assess participants' job satisfaction. It consists of 52 items with a five-point scale rating, meant to assess different dimensions, viz., the Intrinsic aspect of job, Salary, promotion avenues and service conditions, Physical facilities, Institutional plans, and policies, Satisfaction with authorities, Satisfaction with social status and family welfare, Rapport with students and Relationship with co-workers. A high score on the scale indicates greater job satisfaction and vice-versa. The scale has split-half reliability of .92 and test-retest reliability of .86.

4. Multidimensional scale of perceived social support

   The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahle, Zimet & Farley, 1988) was used to assess social support. The scale consists of 12 items which measure perceived social support from three different sources namely, family, friends, and significant others. Each dimension includes four items with a range of answers from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The total scores on the scale range from 12 to 84. The scale shows high reliability of 0.91 with a reliability of 0.94, 0.90 and 0.95 for friends, family, and significant others, respectively. The scale has both construct and concurrent validity.

Procedure

The data was collected using the measuring instruments. Prior permission from Heads of Schools was obtained and consent was taken from teachers regarding their willingness to participate in the research. The participants were assured confidentiality and anonymity of responses and that it was explained to them that the data collected would be used for research purposes only. Data was collected from those teachers who consented to participate.

Data analysis

The collected data were subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS 21. The data was checked to find out whether the assumptions of normality were met. Descriptive statistics were obtained following which Karl Pearson's method of correlation was employed to identify the relationship among the variables under study. To understand the predictive properties of the variables, multiple linear regression analysis was used with the variables, viz., Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization, Personal accomplishment, and Social support as predictor variables and Job satisfaction as the outcome variable.

Results

The results obtained are presented in the following sections. The scores obtained in the study variables were examined for the whole group of participants and it was identified that 66 per cent of teachers experienced at least a moderate degree of Emotional exhaustion and 92 per cent experienced a high level of depersonalization. It should also be noted that 54 per cent of teachers had feelings of Personal accomplishment while nearly 81 per cent of participants experienced a high level of social support. The mean score obtained in Job satisfaction also indicates that almost all the participants had at least a moderate level of Job satisfaction. Similar results have been obtained in recent studies (Hogan & McKnight, 2007).

Descriptive statistics and Correlations

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics (Means, Standard Deviations, Minimum and maximum values) and correlations of the study variables.

Table-1: Means, Standard deviations and correlations for the study variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Emotional Exhaustion	25.38	8.654				
Depersonalization	16.21	4.908	.768**			
Personal accomplishment	33.55	6.290	.395**	.440**		
Social support	68.61	10.784	-.413**	-.366**	-.025	
Job satisfaction	212.69	23.884	-.452**	-.310**	.098	.562**

The first hypothesis was intended to identify whether there exists a negative correlation between Burnout and Job satisfaction. The results of Pearson's correlation suggest a moderate negative correlation between the variables (Table 1).

The second hypothesis was meant to understand the relationship between Social support and Job satisfaction and a moderate positive correlation was found between the variables.

Similarly, the third hypothesis assumed to test whether there is a negative relationship between social support and burnout and the result was found to be statistically significant and the variables were negatively correlated.

Results of multiple regression analysis

Since the bivariate analysis of the data using Pearson's correlation method revealed a significant correlation of variables to Job satisfaction, an effort was taken to identify the best variables which could predict Job satisfaction after taking into consideration the inter-correlation among the variables (Hypotheses 4 and 5). Multiple regression analysis was used for this purpose and hence the data was analyzed with Job satisfaction as the outcome variable and Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization, Personal accomplishment and Social support as predictor variables. The results obtained are presented in table 2.

Table-2: Results of regression analysis done with job satisfaction as outcome variable (N=77)

Predictor variables	R	R square	R square change	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
				B	Std. error	Beta		
Constant				127.339	14.693		8.667	.000
Social support	.562	.315	.315	1.244	.212	.562	5.879	.000
Emotional exhaustion	.612	.374	.059	-.734	.279	-.266	-2.634	.010
Personal accomplishment	.656	.430	.056	.989	.370	.260	2.670	.009

It may be seen from the table that the final regression equation contains three variables, namely social support, emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. These variables together could account for 43 per cent of variance in job satisfaction. About 31.5 per cent of the variance in job satisfaction could be accounted for by social support and 5.9 per cent of additional variance could be explained by emotional exhaustion while the remaining 5.6 per cent is attributed to personal accomplishment. Depersonalization, one of the variables of Burnout, was found to be removed from the regression equation and was not found to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction.

Discussion

The present study examined the nature of the relationship between the variables of Burnout, viz., Emotional

exhaustion, Depersonalization, Personal accomplishment and Social support with Job satisfaction. On examining the results, it could be concluded that there exists a moderate negative relationship between Emotional exhaustion and Job satisfaction. Similar was the case with the relationship between Depersonalization and job satisfaction. Social support was found to be positively correlated with Job satisfaction. Social support was found to have the highest correlations with job satisfaction when compared to other predictor variables. Social support was also found to have a negative relationship with Emotional exhaustion and Depersonalization, while it was not found to have any relationship with Personal accomplishment.

Burnout occurs when an individual feels that he or she is overwhelmed, emotionally drained and unable to meet the constant demands of a job. The participant teachers were found to experience a high level of emotional exhaustion which was negatively related to job satisfaction. The demands placed by online teaching may result in the emotional drain, thereby affecting one's sense of contentment with his job. Similar findings were reported by some researchers (Koustelios & Tsigilis, 2005) who found that intrinsic aspects of job satisfaction seemed to correlate stronger to burnout than the extrinsic factors. On the other hand, the participant teachers in the present study were found to have a higher sense of personal accomplishment.

Job satisfaction happens when individuals feel that they have a stable job and career growth. The present study group was found to have a moderate to a high level of job satisfaction. A high level of sense of personal accomplishment was also found to be positively related to job satisfaction. Similarly, when people have a very good amount of social support, they get motivated to achieve different and difficult goals in their lives. Online classes must become a necessity during this pandemic period. Teachers need a great deal of support from their family and friends so that they could handle their daily household chores while managing stress in their professional life. It is also important that some teachers lack knowledge on the technical side and hence need assistance to carry out the tasks assigned to them. The hypothesis that there will be no significant relationship between Social support and Job satisfaction is rejected. Similar findings were reported by Kumar (2015) that better Social support results in higher job satisfaction.

The identification of social support as the most important predictor variable in the present study reiterates the significance of the support system in influencing Job satisfaction. It was observed that lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization combined with higher levels of social support can result in greater Job satisfaction. It was also found that there was no correlation between personal accomplishment and social support, while a moderate relationship was seen between Social support and emotional exhaustion as well as depersonalization. Greater social support may be related to a lesser degree of Burnout. The size of the personal support network was positively related to personal achievement. When people have an adequate amount of social support, they feel self-motivated. Recognition and rewards from the institution can increase job satisfaction in teachers. Teachers need external support during this pandemic period in particular as teaching in the online mode is the only option available to them and hence they need to manage whatever difficulties are encountered. Some teachers may find it difficult to cope with the new technologies and therefore, it is necessary that those around provide assistance whenever they need any help.

Conclusions and Implications

It was identified in the present study that a lesser degree of Emotional exhaustion and Depersonalization along with greater Social support predicts Job satisfaction. The participant teachers were found to experience Emotional exhaustion, as well as Depersonalization while a large majority tends to have high levels of personal accomplishment. They were also found to have a moderate level of Social support and Job satisfaction. Social support was found to emerge as the most significant predictor of Job satisfaction. Hence, it may be assumed that the increased Social support available to teachers may help them to ease out the negative effects of work stress related to online teaching. Though the specific factors that contribute to Burnout could not be explored in the present study, it was identified that teachers experience considerable Burnout. Further studies could therefore focus on identifying the specific variables contributing to increased Emotional exhaustion and Depersonalization. The greater sense of Personal accomplishment perceived by teachers is a positive aspect identified in the present study. However it was not identified as a predictor of Job satisfaction. Studies in the future can focus on finding out the moderating effect of Social support on the relationship between Burnout and Job satisfaction. The findings of the study indicate the need to build awareness among families and school administration to provide support for teachers during the days of online teaching. The positive effect of Social support identified in the present study could be further utilized by developing intervention strategies focussing on enhancing support systems available to individuals in the context of family and close relationships.

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