



The effect of perceived school climate and teacher efficacy in behavior management on job satisfaction and burnout: A longitudinal study



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Perceived school climate had a positive effect on teacher job satisfaction.
- Self-efficacy in behavior management affected both job satisfaction and burnout.
- Collective efficacy in student discipline did not affect job satisfaction or burnout.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how perceived school climate affects teachers' job satisfaction and burnout and how self-efficacy and collective efficacy in behavior management mediate the effect of perceived school climate on job satisfaction and burnout. The questions were answered using longitudinal questionnaire data collected from 642 Finnish lower secondary school teachers. A structural equation model revealed that school climate had a positive effect, partly mediated by self-efficacy, on job satisfaction. Collective efficacy in student discipline did not explain either job satisfaction or burnout. Self-efficacy in managing behavior had a positive effect on job satisfaction and a negative effect on burnout.

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1. Introduction

The academic learning outcomes of Finnish students have been found to be excellent in several international comparisons, but a number of research findings have suggested that the disciplinary climate is more challenging in Finnish schools than in many other countries (Martin & Mullis, 2013; OECD., 2010; OECD., 2014a). For example, in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 study, students' evaluations of the school disciplinary climate in Finland were more negative than in most other participating countries and regions (Sulkunen & Välijärvi, 2012). In addition, Finnish teachers participating in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Teaching and

Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013 study did not give a positive assessment of their schools' discipline situations (OECD., 2014b, p. 403). Cross-cultural evidence suggests that poor school climate and negative student behavior can both be significant risk factors for lower teacher job satisfaction. In TALIS 2013 study, several indicators of school climate, such as positive teacher–teacher and teacher–student relations and opportunities to participate in school decisions, were systematically related to higher job satisfaction (OECD., 2014b, pp. 416–417). In addition, having a higher percentage of students with behavior problems in class was associated with lower job satisfaction among teachers in 29 of the 34 participating countries and regions (OECD., 2014b, p. 191). In this respect, it appears essential for teachers to have a strong sense of efficacy in dealing with problematic student behavior.

The objective of this paper is to study how perceived school climate and teacher efficacy in managing student behavior affect teachers' job satisfaction and work-related burnout. A number of

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studies have already introduced models in which the relationships between some of these constructs have been investigated simultaneously (e.g. [Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012](#); [Grayson & Alvarez, 2008](#)). However, none of the previous studies have included both collective efficacy and self-efficacy in the same model, even though this would have been reasonable, since they are considered strongly influence each other ([Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004](#)). In addition, none of the previous studies have used collective teacher efficacy and teacher self-efficacy as a mediating variables between school climate and job satisfaction and burnout. Furthermore, the previous studies have relied on cross-sectional data whereas this study utilized a longitudinal research design, which gives considerably stronger ground for building a model with causal relationships between the variables.

1.1. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction, which can be defined as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” ([Locke, 1976](#), pp. 1300), has been a topic of interest for both vocational and organizational psychology. In the former field, the emphasis has been on person-centered outcomes; the latter field has focused on organizational outcomes like employee turnover ([Lent & Brown, 2006](#)). Teachers’ job satisfaction has been found to be an important predictor of a person’s decision to leave the teaching profession ([Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011](#)). Job satisfaction is also related to negative effects such as burnout ([Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009](#)) and job stress ([Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010](#)). At the same time, several studies that include cross-cultural replications show that positive work conditions, autonomy, and feelings of both collective efficacy and self-efficacy predict teachers’ job satisfaction ([Badri, Mohaidat, Ferrandino, & El Mourad, 2013](#); [Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Steca, 2003](#); [Klassen et al., 2010](#); [Lent et al., 2011](#); [Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009, 2014](#)). There is also evidence that the quality of teacher–student relationships is positively related to teachers’ job satisfaction ([Veldman, van Tartwijk, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2013](#)). In summary, research thus far shows that teachers’ job satisfaction is related to social and organizational factors (work conditions, relationships, autonomy), cognitive factors (collective efficacy, self-efficacy), and affective factors (burnout, job stress).

1.2. Burnout

Working as a teacher can be very stressful. In Finland, the context of this study, the percentage of workers who experience a high level of stress was found to be highest in education in comparison with other occupational sectors ([Kauppinen et al., 2010](#), pp. 235). The large number of research reports from several countries suggests that there is a global interest in studying teacher burnout ([Aloe, Amo, & Shanahan, 2014](#)). According to [Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter \(2001\)](#), burnout is a “prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job” (p. 397). Burnout is constructed from three factors: emotional exhaustion, a feeling of cynicism, and a sense of inefficiency ([Maslach et al., 2001](#)). Of these three components, exhaustion is considered to be the most central feature of burnout ([Maslach et al., 2001](#)).

Like job satisfaction, teacher burnout has been found to be associated with school-related social and organizational factors as well as teacher efficacy. [Hakanen, Bakker, and Schaufeli \(2006\)](#) found a significant path leading from job demands and available job resources to burnout. [Fernet, Guay, Senécal, and Austin \(2012\)](#) discovered that teachers’ perceptions of students’ disruptive behaviors and the principal’s leadership behavior affected burnout through the mediation of teacher self-efficacy. [Brown \(2012\)](#)

conducted a literature review investigating the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and burnout. Her conclusion was that 10 of the 11 reviewed studies found a negative correlation between teacher self-efficacy and the exhaustion dimension of burnout.

[Aloe et al. \(2014\)](#) paid closer attention to the relationship between teachers’ classroom management self-efficacy and burnout in their meta-analysis of 16 individual studies. Eight of these studies were conducted in the United States, three in the Netherlands, two in Israel, and the rest in Spain, Turkey, and Norway. Their results indicated that self-efficacy in classroom management had a significant negative correlation with all three dimensions of burnout. Furthermore, [Tsouloupas, Carson, Matthews, Grawitch, and Barber \(2010\)](#) found that self-efficacy in behavior management partially mediated the effect of perceived student misbehavior on emotional exhaustion. [Aloe and others \(2014\)](#) acknowledged that a future direction for studying the relationship of classroom management self-efficacy and burnout is the use of longitudinal datasets that would better allow for the evaluation of causal paths between these constructs.

1.3. School climate

School climate is considered an important research topic even though there is no universal agreement on how it should be defined ([Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2013](#)). The beginning of empirical school climate research dates back to the 1950s ([Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009](#)). Some more recently used definitions include “shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape interactions between the students, teachers, and administrators” ([Mitchell, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2010](#), p. 272) and “the quality and character of school life” ([National School Climate Center, 2007](#), p. 5). This paper concentrates on teachers’ perceptions of school climate. Consequently, in this study we follow a more teacher-oriented definition in which school climate refers to “the psychosocial context in which teachers work and teach” ([Johnson, Stevens, & Zvoch, 2007](#), p. 834).

Regardless of the challenges related to defining and measuring ([Anderson, 1982](#)) school climate, it is widely seen as a valuable concept for the purposes of educational research and school reform. This is understandable, as school climate has been found to be connected to many significant outcomes. Studies have shown that positive school climate is associated with academic achievement, motivation for learning, reduced aggression, lower suspension rates, and many other positive student outcomes ([Cohen et al., 2009](#); [Thapa et al., 2013](#)). Positive school climate has also been found to be connected to lower perceptions of stress and higher efficacy and job satisfaction among teachers ([Collie et al., 2012](#); [Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993](#); [Lee, Dedrick, & Smith, 1991](#); [Taylor & Tashakkori, 1995](#)). In addition, the findings from a study conducted by [Ingersoll \(2001\)](#) suggested that positive school climate could be a way to reinforce teacher retention.

In North America, one indicator of the growing interest in addressing school climate can be seen in the fact that the U.S. Department of Education (2014) awarded more than \$40 million in grants to school districts and states to improve school climate. In Finland, the need to pay more attention to school climate was raised in the aftermath of two deadly school shooting events in 2007 and 2008 ([Ministry of the Interior, 2012](#), pp. 63; [Punamäki, Tirri, Nokelainen, & Marttunen, 2011](#)). With research findings that indicate the significance of school climate and an increasing investment in its improvement, it appears that school climate research will continue to be a lively field of enquiry in the years ahead.

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