

**Job satisfaction and motivation to leave the job among Teachers: relationships with school situation, feeling of belonging, and emotional burnout****Mohammad Taghi Mahmoody**, Islamic Azad University Shahrekord Branch**Ali Asghar Zare**, Islamic Azad University Shahrekord Branch**Mohammad Moradi**, Islamic Azad University Shahrekord Branch

**Abstract:** This study reviews the relationships between school situation and teachers' feeling of belonging, emotional burn out, job satisfaction, and motivation to leave the educational situation. Six faces of the school context were assessed: value homophony, supervisory support, relationships with coworkers, relationships with parents, time demands, and discipline troubles. The participants were 256 Iranian teachers in elementary school and secondary school. The data were calculated by means of SEM analyses. All six school situation variables were correlated to job satisfaction and motivation to leave the job. These relationships were mainly indirect, mediated by feelings of belonging and emotional burn out.

## 1. Introduction

The deficiency of well-qualified teachers is an important problem in several countries (Ingersoll, 2001; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005). This problem is rising because of teacher attrition, i.e. their exit from the teaching jobs. For instance, 25 percent of starter teachers in the US leave the job before the third year of work, and almost 40 percent leave the vocation during five years (Chang, 2009). Furthermore, the majority of teachers leave the occupation before they reach retirement age (McDonald, 1999). The high volume of teacher attrition is found not only in the U.S., but in other parts of the world regardless of their educational system, for example in Australia, China, Iran and England (Abbasian, Khajavi ; 2010, Hong, 2010).

In Iran, the place of the the current study, no official statistics of teacher attrition is available. Similarly, Day, Sammons, Stobard, Kington, and Gu (2007) distinguish between "positioned factors," "individual factors," and "skilled factors." In our study, we were concerned with school background variables, which also can be named operational conditions factors. Recent studies reveals that job conditions are main predictors of teacher attrition. A study in England also found that an overloading work was the main factor to teacher attrition (Smithers & Robinson, 2003), while Weiss (1999) showed that supportive situations were related to motivation for teachers to continue in the job. We examine assumed background of teacher attrition, specifically job satisfaction of teacher and motivation to depart from the work. Also relationships between school background variables and teacher job satisfaction examined, and the motivation among Iranian teachers to leave their job included. Understanding the relationships between school context and teacher satisfaction variables important because the variables can be changed and improved.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Teacher work satisfaction and motivation to leave the job

In the literature, work satisfaction is counted as the evaluative judgments (whether positive or negative) of people about their jobs (Weiss, 2002). For example, Locke (1976) described it as a satisfying or encouraging emotional state coming from the evaluation of one's job. In line with these descriptions, we proposed it as teachers' assessment of their job or to their professional role (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010a; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004). However, there is no conformity of how to calculate the construct (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009, 2010a), which studied as: (a) a specific job satisfaction which teachers are satisfied of their occupation, and (b) a general sense of satisfaction of the job (Moe, Pazzaglia, & Ronconi, 2010; Sargent & Hannum, 2005). Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2010a) said that a problem with the first approach is that different conditions can be important to some teachers. Thus, such procedures forget the fact that the effect of different conditions on general work satisfaction is dependent on importance of each circumstance to the teachers. Teacher job satisfaction is strongly associated with absenteeism and attrition (Huberman, 1993; Sargent & Hannum, 2005; Wriqi, 2008; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004). Therefore, we also anticipate that teacher occupation satisfaction predicts teachers' tendency to leave the job. Teacher job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are effected by several variables. Dinham and Scott (1998) said that the origins of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction can be put in three classes: (a) internal rewards of job, (b) external factors of the school, and (c) educational factors.

Rewards of teaching relates to the nature of teaching, interaction with students, and observation learning and developing of the students, all of them are primary motives to be a teacher and the main cause of satisfaction of teachers (Scott, Stone, & Dinham, 2001). External factors to the school consist of imposed educational change, external assessment of schools, and negative representation of teachers in the society, and a reduction in the status of teaching. Educational factors or background variables at school can include relationship with co workers, parents, and the school management, and time restrictions, troublemaking student behavior, and the values which are insisted at the school.

According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), belonging's need is a basic human motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Students' sense of belonging to the school is positively related to motivation (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Goodenow & Grady, 1993), satisfaction, and affect (McMahon, Parnes, Keys, & Viola, 2008; Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Mantague, 2006). Even though, no systematic study on teachers' sense of belonging to school can be seen. Consequently, we expect that belonging is positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to the tendency to leave the job. An important question was whether teachers' feeling of belonging intervenes in the relationship between social interactions and value perception from one hand and work satisfaction and the tendency to leave the job, on the other hand.

### 2.3. Emotional burn out

Studies from different nations indicate that teachers are among those jobs with the highest level of job stress (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Most teachers cope effectively with the situation, for example, through dynamic problem solving, social and emotional support from coworkers, knowledge from their teaching context, interaction with parents, or changing their teaching strategy. Nevertheless, burnout may be the endpoint of coping unsuccessfully with stable stress (Jennett, Harris, & Mesibov, 2003).

Emotional burn out is the core element of burnout (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) and results from long-term job-related stress, mainly among human service workers, like teachers (Jennett et al., 2003). Emotional burn out is characterized by low energy and persistent fatigue (Pines & Aronson, 1988; Schwarzer, Schimtz, & Tang, 2000). Studies in different cultures have found that measures of teacher burnout, including emotional burn out, predict both psychological and physical health as well as teachers' tendency and job satisfaction. For example, Hakanen, Bakker, and Schaufeli (2006) confirmed that emotional burn out correlated negatively with self-assess health and work ability among teachers. Moreover, study of teachers in Hong Kong showed, that the dimension of burnout predicted teachers' tendency of leaving the job (Leung and Lee , 2006; Jacobsen, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986), and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010a) showed that emotional burn out predicted the level of job satisfaction among teachers.

#### 2.4. Teachers' perception of the school

We included teachers' perception of six school context variables in this study: value consonance, managerial support, relationships with coworkers, relationships with parents, time restrictions, and discipline problems.

##### 2.4.1. Value consonance

Sahlberg (2010) said teaching is a job which is usually driven by values, ethical or internal motivations. Teachers set goals for their teaching whether explicitly or implicitly (Chang, 2009). Furthermore, during daily teaching and classroom activity, teachers follow and represent values. Hence, we may expect them to be most comfortable when they can teach in correspondence with their own educational goals, whereas teachers may be less comfortable if they have to characterize values that are consonant with their individual values. They might differ in their values about what goals should be followed, what things should be insisted, and what learning purposes and methods should be used. Nonetheless, in this study our concern is whether the individual teacher feels that their aim and values are in congruence with the goals and values of the school ones. A teacher who feels that the general norms and values of the school are different with theirs, may experience Rosenberg (1977, 1979)'s contextual dissonance. In line with Rosenberg (1979) we define value consonance as a special type of background consonance.

The concept may have serious implications for the relationship of the individual to the surroundings. A background dissonance may end in a feeling of not aloneness (Rosenberg, 1977, 1979). According to Rosenberg, we also expected that value consonance would be positively related to teachers' feeling of belonging. As a result, we expected that the relationship between value consonance and job satisfaction would, be mediated by the belonging. These relationships can be made by different processes. As Rosenberg (1977, p. 209) said, the background is an environment. In line with him, we therefore expect that teachers have less feedback themselves and their practices. Kristof (1996) defined it as the compatibility between people and organizations that they share similar characteristics. If teachers' goals and values are not compatible with the prevailing norms and values in the school where he or she is teaching, those norms and values may be perceived as a barrier against acting in line with values and achieving one's goals.

#### 2.4.2. Social environment and relationships with coworkers, parents and school management

Research also showed that a positive social environment and social support are positively linked to teacher satisfaction and motivation (Day et al., 2007; Scheopner, 2010; US Department of Education, 1997) and not related to burnout (Hakanen et al., 2006; Leung & Lee, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). However, this evidence is not consistent, and Wriqi (2008) said that educational relationships were inadequately related to job satisfaction. Exciting support and positive relationships with managers, coworkers, and parents might also encourage belonging. Therefore, we expect that the relationship between positive social relationships and work satisfaction is mediated through a feeling of belonging, partly. Nowadays, teachers are more and more dependent on cooperating with parents and relationship with them.

#### 2.4.3. Time demands

teachers experience an increasing work assignments and a harder workday, leads in less time for rest and mending (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010b; Hargreaves, 2003; Lindqvist & Nordäng, 2006). We refer to the situation as time restrictions, which is due to several causes such as increasing demand for documentation and paperwork, repeated meetings, frequent communication with parents, the management and scoring of tests, permanent changes of the lessons, and participation in school development projects (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010b). According to Scott et al. (2001), this resulted in a major decline in teachers' general job satisfaction. Furthermore, it was found a positive correlate with teacher burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2008; Hakanen et al., 2006; Kokkinos, 2007; Peeters & Rutte, 2005; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010a) said that time restrictions was particularly strongly related

to the emotional burn out. We therefore expected a positive relationship to both job satisfaction and emotional burn out.

#### 2.4.4. Discipline problems

The statistics reveals that 30 percent of students from fifth to tenth grade in the schools are often disturbed by other students during lessons at school (Skaalvik, Danielsen, & Skaar, 2007). Interviews with teachers from elementary and secondary schools in Iran also show that majority of the teachers experience disruptive behavior as a problem (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010b). Discipline troubles or disruptive behavior is recognized as a serious stressor and significant correlations. (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007, 2008, 2010a; Hakanen et al., 2006; Kokkinos, 2007; Tsouloupasa, Carson, Matthews, Grawitch, & Barber, 2010). The problems can lead to more future problems, which in turn lead in stress, worry, and anxiety. Chang (2009) discusses the association between discipline problems and burnout in terms of the concept of goal similarity. Chang explains that a teacher may set different aims.

#### 2.4.5. Theoretical predictions

Based on the analysis, a theoretical model was specified. Furthermore, we think belonging to be positively correlated to work satisfaction. Consequently, value consonance and social relationships were

related to job satisfaction both directly and indirectly. The indirect relationship can be expected to be mediated through a feeling of belonging. The theoretical model also specified that time restrictions and discipline troubles are predictive of job satisfaction, both directly and indirectly. The indirect relationship is predicted to be mediated through emotional burnout. Moreover, it was expected that belonging, emotional burnout, and job satisfaction would be predictive of a motivation to leave the job.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Iranian public school

In Iran, students are enrolled in elementary school in the calendar year when they become six years old. Elementary school is 6 years, from the 1st through 6th grades, and secondary school lasts for 6 years, from the 7th through 12th grades. Both elementary and secondary school are compulsory and follow a national curriculum which shows the goals of the education, Students in elementary school have informal evaluation, while students in the secondary school are graded.

#### 3.2. sample and procedure

A total of 256 teachers from elementary and secondary schools (1st-10th grades) participated in this study.

The data collection was administered in February-March of 2014 by two trained research assistants visiting the schools and bringing the questionnaires back. 84% of the sample at the selected schools participated in the process. The sample consisted of 72 % females, and the age of the teachers varied from 26 to 59. The mean age was 42, and the average number of years in the teaching profession was 17. The schools varied with respect to size from schools with 6 teachers to schools with 26 teachers, with the average being 14. The average

number of students in the schools was 170. 56 percent of the teachers worked at the elementary level (grades 1-6); whereas 37 % taught at the secondary school level (grades 7-12).

#### 3.3. Instruments

##### 3.3.1. Value consonance

Value consonance was calculated by use of a three-item scale. the items referred to values, opinions, and good teaching in general, and that they did not refer to any specific values or opinions. The items referred to the school and to the entire teaching staff, which is in line with Kristof's (1996) definition .

Cronbach's alpha index for the scale was .94 which is considered adequate (Cortina, 1993).

##### 3.3.2. Managerial support

Managerial support was assessed by a three-item scale to measure teachers' experiences of receiving cognitive and emotional support from the school management, Cronbach's alpha index for the scale was .88.

### 3.3.3. Relationships with coworkers

Teachers' relationships with their coworkers were measured by three items and

Cronbach's alpha index for the scale was .96.

### 3.3.4. Relationships with parents

Teachers' relationships with parents were measured by means of a three-item subscale to assess the teachers' feeling of trusted by the parents and the Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .91.

### 3.3.5. Time restrictions

Time restrictions was calculated by a three-item scale and Cronbach's alpha index for the scale was .85.

### 3.3.6. Discipline troubles and disturbing behavior of students

Discipline tribulations were calculated by three items and Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .90.

### 3.3.7. The belonging feeling

The concept belonging was assessed by a three-item scale to assess their general feeling of school, their feeling accepting by the management, and trusted by their coworkers and Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .82.

### 3.3.8. Emotional burnout

Emotional burn out was assessed by a six-item version of the emotional burn out dimension of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI: Maslach et al., 1996). The six-item version has a Cronbach's alpha of .91 (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010a). Cronbach's alpha in this study was .92.

### 3.3.9. work satisfaction

The teachers' general job satisfaction was calculated by a four-item scale and Cronbach's alpha index for the scale was .91.

### 3.3.10. tendency to leave the job

The teachers' motivation for leaving the job was assessed by a three-item scale. Cronbach's alpha index for the scale was .94. Answers on all scales were given on a six-point scale from "Completely disagree" (1) to "Completely agree" (6).

## 3.4. Data analysis

the theoretical model was tested by means of SEM which is a statistical methodology that takes a congruent approach to the analysis (Byrne, 2001). In order to assess the model fit, we applied well-established indices such as CFI, IFI, TLI, and RMSEA, as well as the chi-square test (Bollen, 1989; Byrne,

2001; Hu & Bentler, 1999). For well-specified models, an RMSEA of .06 or less reflects a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

#### 4. Results

It was found zero order correlations between the study variables as well as statistical means and standard deviations. work satisfaction was positively related to value consonance, managerial support, relationships with coworkers, relationships with parents, and belonging, while it was negatively related to time restriction, discipline troubles, emotional burnout, and tendency to leave

the job. Teachers' feeling of belonging was positively and moderately to strongly related to value consonance, supervisory support, and positive relationships with coworkers. Belonging was also positively but weakly correlated to teachers' interaction with parents. It was found only weak correlations between the six school context variables. We tested a measurement model with six latent school context variables each of these variables was cited by three to five items. The model had good fit to the data ( $\chi^2(155, N = 2569) = 1344.010$ , CFI = .957, IFI = .957, TLI = .942 and RMSEA = .055). We then tested a second measurement model with four latent variables: feeling of belonging, emotional burnout, job satisfaction, and tendency to leave the job. Each of these latent variables was indicated by three to six items as described in the Methods section. The model had acceptable fit to the data ( $\chi^2(98, N = 2569) = 1714.357$ , CFI = .943, IFI = .943, TLI = .921 and RMSEA = .08). The relationships between the variables were further analyzed by means of SEM analysis. In the analysis, we tested the theoretical model and then deleted non-significant paths one by one, firstly with the path with the lowest regression weight. The final model, standardized regression weights, had acceptable fit to the data ( $\chi^2(566, N = 2569) = 4500.601$ , CFI = .934, IFI = .934, TLI = .922 and RMSEA = .052). The  $\chi^2/df$  ratio was the same to 7.952, which is high compared to Kline's (1998) rule of values of less than 3 being considered adequate. However, the  $\chi^2/df$  ratio is responsive to the number of observations. Testing the model on a smaller subsample from the other region of the country ( $N = 265$ ) showed the same results, but with a  $\chi^2/df$  ratio equal to 1.901. In line with our expectations, value consonance, managerial support, relationships with coworkers, and relationships with parents were significant and independent predictors of teachers' feeling of belonging. Discipline troubles and time restrictions were significant predictors of emotional burnout. Both feeling of belonging and emotional burn out were related to work satisfaction. Tendency to leave the job was negatively related to job satisfaction and positively related to emotional burnout. We also explored additional direct paths to the final model from value consonance and social relationships to

emotional burnout, and from time restrictions and discipline problems to belonging. None of these paths were statistically significant at the .05 level. In spite of our expectations, only two school context variables, relationships with parents and time restrictions, were directly, but weakly related to job satisfaction. However, as perceived by the teachers, all school context variables were indirectly related to job satisfaction. Value consonance, managerial support, relationships with coworkers, and relationships with parents were positively related to job satisfaction through feeling of belonging. Additionally, time restrictions and discipline problems were negatively related to job satisfaction



through emotional burnout. Also, In spite of our expectations, teachers' feeling of belonging was not directly related to tendency to leave the job. The relationship between belonging and tendency to leave the profession was mediated through job satisfaction and emotional burnout.

As said, the empirical model showed several indirect relationships. If interpreted in causal terms, an indirect effect shows an independent variable causes a mediating variable which in turn causes a dependent variable (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Sobel, 1990). For instance, teachers' feeling of belonging mediates the relationships between value consonance, management support, relationships with coworkers, and relationships with parents, from one hand, and work satisfaction on the other. In comparison, the relationships between discipline troubles and time restrictions, on the one hand, and job satisfaction and tendency to leave the profession, on the other, were mediated through emotional burnout. Both belonging and emotional burnout were also indirectly related to tendency to leave the job, mediated through work satisfaction. We also tested the model for eight different subgroups: older and younger teachers, males, females, elementary teachers, secondary teachers, teachers at urban and rural. All these models demonstrated the similar pattern of results and had the same significant regression weights. Furthermore, all models showed similar fit to the data. Thus, the pattern of relationships between the variables was very similar for different subgroups of teachers. The statistical means and standard deviations for different subgroups of teachers according to age, gender, location, and school level also counted. We applied Cohen's *d* to estimate effect size (Cohen, 1988). Still, we found small tendencies toward older teachers reporting more positive relationships with parents, less discipline troubles, and higher job satisfaction than the younger, whereas younger group reported more positive relationships with their coworkers. It should be noted that younger teachers are defined 35 years or younger and older teachers are defined as being over the age of 50. No significant differences were found between either of these two groups and teachers between 35 and 50 years. There were some small differences between male and female groups. Compared to males, females showed higher value consonance, better relationships with coworkers, higher work satisfaction, and lower tendency to leave the job. Nevertheless, they also reported higher time restrictions. We found no significant differences between teachers at urban and rural schools, though compared to secondary teachers, teachers in elementary school reported higher value consonance and more positive relationships with their school management supervisory support.

## 5. Discussion

In this study, time restrictions and discipline problems were predictive of emotional burnout. Also, in accordance with expectations, both teachers' feeling of belonging and emotional burn out were predictive of job satisfaction, while emotional burn out and job satisfaction were predictive of tendency to leave the job. The positive relationship between value consonance and teachers' feeling of belonging supports the theoretical analysis of contextual consonance and dissonance. Value consonance in this study was based on Rosenberg's (1977, 1979) theory. According to him, contextual dissonance may end in a feeling of aloneness. This notion was supported in the present study, in which we focused on value context; the degree to which teachers feel that they share the current norms and values of the school where they teach. Future research should analyze the processes through which value consonance



relates to teachers' feeling of belonging. One opportunity is that the complete feeling of sharing goals and values with coworkers and the school management raises a feeling of belonging in itself. Such sharing of goals and values may increase teachers' beliefs in what they do and make them feel as part of a group.

An important task for future research is also to explore means to establish shared goals and values among the teaching staff. The finding that managerial support and relationships with coworkers and parents were predictive of belonging supports the notion that relationship is a basic human need (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This shows the importance of creating a feeling of mutual trust and respect among all people and interested parties in school. Emotional burnout, which is the core element of general burnout (Maslach et al., 1996), comes from long-term professional stress (Jennett et al., 2003). Such stress may be made by both time restrictions and discipline troubles. Although the zero order correlations demonstrated that all school variables were related to job satisfaction, the SEM analysis showed that only two of these constructs, relationships with parents and time restrictions, were directly though only weakly related to job satisfaction. However, the analysis revealed that all school context variables were indirectly related to job satisfaction, mediated through belonging or emotional burnout. Social relationships with coworkers, parents and the school management were associated to job satisfaction through the feeling of belonging. Value consonance, were also correlated to work satisfaction through belonging. None of the school variables was directly related to emotional burnout. In comparison, time restrictions and discipline troubles were related to work satisfaction through emotional burnout. These variables were not related to belonging significantly. As showed, an indirect effect implies an independent variable causes a mediating variable which in turn leads to a dependent variable (MacKinnon et al., 2004; Sobel, 1990). For instance, based on the current analysis, we may assume that value consonance and positive social relationships end in a stronger feeling of belonging and that this stronger feeling of belonging in turn results in higher work satisfaction. We also assume that time restrictions and discipline troubles increase emotional burnout, which in turn decreases teachers' work satisfaction. We expected that belonging and emotional burnout would somehow mediate the relationship between teachers' perception of the school context and their job satisfaction (see Fig. 1). Even so, an important finding in this study is that these relationships were almost entirely mediated through belonging and emotional burnout. Thus, our analysis suggests that belonging and emotional burn out are key variables in mediating the impact of school variables on job satisfaction and tendency to leave the job. Teachers' feeling of belonging was also negatively related to their tendency to leave the job.

The relationship between these variables was mediated through work satisfaction and emotional burnout. It is especially vital to note the negative relationship between belonging and emotional burnout. Though the present study does not prove causal directions, a possible explanation is that belonging works as a obstacle against burnout. This is consistent with the notion of belonging is a fundamental psychological need.

A lack of belonging may therefore be perceived as a psychological strain that may cause emotional burnout. Emotional burn out was both directly and indirectly related to motivation to leave the

vocation. The indirect relationship was mediated through job satisfaction. These results indicate that job satisfaction is a key variable for mediating the effect of belonging and burn out on the tendency to leave the profession. One implication of this study is that school administrators should pay more attention to teachers' feeling of belonging, emotional burnout, and job satisfaction. In the SEM model, the constructs of burn out and job satisfaction are related to belonging and explain 52 percent of the variance in teachers' tendency to leave the job. Moreover, belonging and burn out are together strongly related to various aspects of

the school context. In order to increase the feeling of belonging and job satisfaction and decrease emotional burnout, it seems important to create a supportive school environment, to clarify and develop mutual goals and values, to reduce time restrictions on teachers, and to establish school-based directions for student behavior.

Future research should therefore include other school variables and the personal characters of teachers, teachers' life situation, and teachers' position within society.

This study demonstrates the relationship between teachers' perception of selected variables in the school context and their job satisfaction as well as their motivation to leave the teaching profession.

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