

## Predictive Effects of Perceived School Environment, Teacher Efficacy, Internal Locus of Control on Secondary Schools Teacher Burn Out

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of perceived school environment, teacher efficacy and locus of control on the teacher burnout among secondary schools teachers. The sample of the study consisted of 261 secondary school teachers randomly drawn from twelve secondary schools in three Local Government Areas in Ondo State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was used to achieve the research objectives. Four reliable and valid instruments were used to collect data from the participants. The results were calculated using mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The result shows that there is relatively high level of burn out among the participants. The correlation coefficients among all the variables were significant with strongest relationship between internal locus of control and teacher burn-out (-.484) ( $p < 0.01$ ). Based on these findings, it is suggested that, training, motivation, incentives/awards and other related mechanisms that can boost the teachers sense of efficacy and as well leading to higher levels of internal locus of control among teachers should be put in place by school administrators and government at all levels.

**Keywords:** *Perceived School Environment, Teacher Efficacy, Internal Locus of Control*

The teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is faced with several challenges regarding students' behaviour and learning, lesson planning and preparation, grading and recording student work, keeping to the rules and regulations put up by the school administrators, classroom pedagogy, constant communication with parents, interaction with colleagues among others. Research has found that teaching is an occupation especially prone to stress and that teachers may experience greater levels of stress, psychological distress, and burnout than many other help-related jobs (Evers et al., 2002; Helms-Lorenz & Maulana, 2015). The great deal of pressure experienced by teachers, in the course of their career has resulted in poor performance, attitude and personality changes, illness, premature retirement (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2001). Although the reasons may differ, all teachers may experience stress in their work (Jennett, Harris, and Mesibov, 2003). Consequently, this has resulted in more teachers leaving the teaching profession for other occupations due to improved work load and work home

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balance, as well as increased control over their work (Marvel, Lyter, Strizek, & Morton, 2006).

Burnout is defined as a deep and permanent exhaustion with many emotional, physical, cognitive and social symptoms, resulting from long term occupational stress, particularly in occupations with incessant human interactions and high responsibility for others (Brouwers, and Tomic, 2000). Burnout is a multidimensional construct. According to Maslach's theory, the characteristics of burnout syndrome include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted of one's emotional resources. Depersonalization refers to a negative, callous, or excessively detached response to other people, who are usually the recipients of one's services or career (Maslach, 1996). Reduced personal accomplishment refers to a tendency that teachers evaluate themselves negatively as well as a general feeling that they are no longer doing a meaningful and important job. Literature on burn out as it relates to the teaching profession revealed that, burnout has been shown to impact teachers' ability to work effectively with students and diminishes the teacher's ability to address disruptive student behaviours (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000); to utilize social supports and humour as coping strategies (Ho, 2016); and impacts teacher perceptions of school climate and job satisfaction (Ashton & Webb, 1986). There are undoubtedly many factors that may be associated to this challenge; for this reason, this study seeks to investigate the predictive effects certain variables such as: perceived school environment, teacher efficacy and locus of control has on teacher burn out of secondary school teachers.

### ***Perceived School Environment and Teacher Burn out***

School environment is the psychological as well as the social setting of a school within which teachers work and relate. It is a highly influential environment. Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009) identified the four aspects of school-level environment as physical and social-emotional safety, quality of teaching and learning between individuals at a school, relationships and collaboration, and the structural environment of the school. In addition to this, Collie, Shapka, and Perry (2012) states that the strength of an effective school always depends on all aspects of school-level environment. Studies on school environment shows that school environment factors have been considered as key predictors of teachers' teaching competencies, stress and job satisfaction (Butt *et al.*, 2005). Recently, there has been connection between aspects of school environment and teachers' outcomes such as teaching efficacy, teacher stress, and job satisfaction (Collie *et al.*, 2012). School environment factors such as time pressure and work overload have been found to correlate positively with teacher burnout (Hakanen *et al.*, 2006; Kokkinos, 2007; Peeters & Rutte, 2005; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Teachers' perception of school environment has been found by Skaalvik & Skaalvik, (2009) to be associated with their sense of stress. From the foregoing, it appears that school environment influences the teachers in their commitment, efficacy and most importantly in their burnout.

### ***Teacher Efficacy and Teacher Burn out***

Teacher efficacy can be defined as a teacher's judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about the desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy 2001). High level teacher efficacy is required to take on these tasks without emotional exhaustion. While teachers with high level teacher efficacy face these tasks with little or no stress, teachers

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whose teaching efficacy is low, struggle to consolidate these challenges that come with the teaching profession. This is in agreement with Chwalisz, Altmaier, and Russell (1992) who avows that teachers with low level of self-efficacy reported high degrees of burnout. Irena (2017) acquiesce with this, by asserting that high teachers' efficacy can be considered a factor protecting them from experiencing stress, including permanent strong stress potentially leading to the burnout syndrome.

In the literature on teacher burnout, teacher self-efficacy was examined as a predictor of teacher burnout (Bayani, Bagheri, and Bayani, 2013). Researchers found strong relation between these variables (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2007). It was reported that teachers who scored low in self-efficacy reported a higher degree of burnout unlike the teachers with high self-efficacy scores (Chwalisz, Altmaier, and Russell, 1992). Furthermore, teacher self-efficacy beliefs were negatively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout and positively related to the personal accomplishment (Evers, Brouwers, and Tomic, 2002). To corroborate this, Brown (2012) conducted a systematic review of 11 studies exploring the interaction between teacher self-efficacy and burnout and found that the majority of the studies discovered a significant negative correlation between self-efficacy and the three elements of burnout, whereby teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and reduced levels of personal accomplishment. However, (Brouwers and Tomic, 2000) argued that self-efficacy has a longitudinal effect on depersonalization and a synchronous effect on personal accomplishment, while the direction was reverse for the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion. Consequently, self-efficacy beliefs of teachers have an important place in overcoming burnout syndrome (Sürgevil, 2006).

### ***Locus of Control and Teacher Burn out***

The concept of locus of control was introduced and structured within the frame of social learning by Julian Rotter in 1966. Bothma and Schepers (1997) affirms that this concept stems from the attribution theory, which is mainly concerned with the attribution processes by which individuals interpret behaviour as being due to certain aspects of the environment. Solmus (2004) linked these attributions to factors like luck, faith, other strong people, and self-behaviours of individuals. It follows that locus of control refers to a person's belief about what causes the events in his or her life (Strauser, Ketzve Keim, 2002). The behaviour exhibited by individuals is a product of the divergence in their belief in their internal traits vis-à-vis their external traits. From the foregoing, it can be established that locus of control is connected to the way in which an individual deals with certain situations.

Existing literature reveals that there is a nexus between teacher burn out and their locus of control, both external and internal. For instance, Sunbul (2001) study of 290 Turkish teachers revealed that teachers' age and external locus of control were in positive correlation with Emotional Exhaustion (EE) and Depersonalization (DP) subscales of burnout. Prior to this, Lunenburg and Cadavid (1992) found teachers' external locus of control to be negatively correlated with Personal Accomplishment (PA) subscale of burnout. Teachers with internal locus of control are less frequently experiencing burnout because they have more control over the environment (Whitebook, Howes, Darrah, Friedman, 1982 cited in Maya and Marine, 2016). Munir and Sajid (2010) in their study of locus of control with organizational commitment of university professors in Pakistan found out that, Professors with more internal locus of control are more likely to have high affective and normative commitment, whereas participants with more external locus of control are more likely to have high continuance

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commitment. This suggests that internal locus of control plays an important role in contributing to university professors' affective commitment. Various studies showed that there was a relationship between having internal locus of control and burnout (Hipps, 1990; Marun, 1987; Cadavid, 1986; Spector, 1984; McIntyre, 1981 cited in Figen and Banu, 2010). Dorman (2003) suggested a model that showed that teacher burnout was affected by locus of control beside other variables such as class environment, role conflict, and self-esteem. This study therefore, aims at investigating the predictive effects of locus of control with other variables such as perceived school environment and teacher efficacy as it results in burn out among secondary school teachers.

### *Research Questions*

Four research questions were raised in this study. These are;

1. What are the levels of teachers' burn out on Teacher burn out subscales?
2. Is there any significant relationship among perceived school environment, teacher efficacy, locus of control and burn out among Secondary School Teachers?
3. Is there any significant relationship between burnout scale sub-dimensions and locus of control of the teachers?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Design*

A cross-sectional design survey design was used to achieve the research objectives. It is a design whereby a sample is drawn from a population, all at once (Adendorff, 1998).

### *Participants*

The sample of the study was 261 secondary school teachers randomly drawn from twelve secondary schools in three Local Government Areas in Ondo State. 38.3% (100) of teachers were males and 61.7% (161) were females. 13.0% (34) of them were single and 86.6% (226) were married, and 0.4% (1) was divorced. As regards their educational qualifications, 8.8% (23) of them are certified with the National Certificate in Education, 82.8 (216) had the Bachelor Degree in Education (B.Ed.), and 8.4 (22) had bagged their Master's degree. Their age ranges between 28 and 57 years.

### **Instrumentation**

The study utilized the following four standardized instruments:

**School Environment:** The School-Level Environment Questionnaire (SLEQ) revised by Johnson, Stevens and Zvoch (2007) was adapted to measure the teachers' perceptions of school climate. The scale consisted of 21 items and the following five subscales: collaboration (6 items), student relations (4 items), school resources (4 items), decision making (3 items) and instructional innovation. The items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (4). Higher scores indicated healthier school environment. The scale was found to have good psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha = .737.

**Teacher Efficacy:** Teaching Efficacy Scale developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) was used to measure teaching efficacy of teachers. This scale consisted of 10 items that measure three factors of teaching efficacy. The first factor, called Efficacy for Classroom Management, comprised 3 items, the second factor, called Efficacy for Student Engagement, included 3 items, the third factor, called Efficacy for Instructional Strategies, consisted of 4

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items. For each item of this scale, respondents marked a 1, 2, 3, 4, for their response, the numbers corresponding to, N (Never), HE (Hardly Ever), S (Sometimes), O (Often), respectively. The scale was found to have good psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha = .933.

**Locus of Control:** The Locus of control scale developed by Julian Rotter (1966) was adopted for this study. This scale, composed of 6 items which were measured with a 4-point Likert-type scale whose answers ranged between "It depends totally on me" (4), "It depends quite a lot on me" (3), "It somewhat depends on me" (2), "It does not depends on me" (4). The scale was found to have good psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha = .764

**Teacher burn out:** Burnout scale (22items). The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), a 22-item Likert-type scale, was used as a measure of teacher burnout (Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter, 1996). Inventory consisted of three subscales: Exhaustion (EE: 9 items), Depersonalization (D: 5 items), and accomplishment (A: 8items). Higher emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lower personal accomplishment lead to high burnout status. Reliability coefficient for the inventory was calculated employing a Cronbach Alpha which was found as .797

### *Procedure*

The research instruments were administered on three hundred (300) secondary school teachers using the drop-off and pick-up method whereby the teachers were given a day to respond to the questionnaire. The researcher was assisted in the administration of the instrument by some administrators and committed members of staff in the selected schools. Out of the three hundred (300) instruments distributed, 261 instruments were returned and considered useful for the study. This number represents a response rate of 87%.

### *Method of Data analysis*

The results were calculated using mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS 16) for Windows was used for this process.

## **RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** What are the levels of teachers' burn out on Teacher burn out subscales?

*Table 1: Descriptive statistics showing the levels of teachers' burn out on Maslach Burnout Inventory subscales*

Maslach Burnout Inventory Subscales	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. dev.
Emotional Exhaustion	261	10.00	28.00	16.89	4.13
Depersonalization	261	8.00	29.00	17.09	4.05
Personal Accomplishment	261	6.00	24.00	12.44	3.65

Table 1 shows the scores of the teachers on the burnout subscales. The table reveals high mean scores on Depersonalization ( $\bar{x} = 17.09$ ) and Emotional Accomplishment ( $\bar{x} = 16.89$ ) subscales and a relatively lower mean score on the Personal Accomplishment subscale ( $\bar{x} = 12.44$ ).

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**Research question 2:** Is there any significant relationship among perceived school environment, teacher efficacy, internal locus of control and burn out among Secondary School Teachers?

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics and correlation among variables**

Variables	N	Mean	Standard deviation	School environment	Teacher efficacy	Locus of control	Teacher Burnout
School Environment	261	50.96	8.71	1.00			
Teacher efficacy	261	32.61	4.94	.049	1.00		
Locus of control	261	11.84	3.88	.153*	.141*	1.00	
Teacher Burnout	261	24.80	8.95	-.219**	-.188**	-.484**	1.00

\*= correlation is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed)

\*\*= correlation is significant at 0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 2 shows that the correlation coefficients among all the variables were significant. The results further revealed strongest relationship between internal locus of control and teacher burn-out (-.484)( $p < 0.01$ ) and the lowest between teacher efficacy and school environment (.049) ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Research question 3:** Is there any significant relationship between the sub-dimensions of the burnout scale and internal locus of control of the teachers?

	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment	locus of control
Emotional Exhaustion	1.00			
Depersonalization	.602**	1.00		
Personal Accomplishment	-.313**	-.463**	1.00	
Locus of control	-.448**	-.386**	.280**	1.00

\*\*= correlation is significant at 0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 3 clearly shows that there is a relationship among the sub-dimensions of the burnout scale and internal locus of control. The table further reveals that there is a negative significant relationship between internal locus of control and two sub-dimensions of burnout scale (emotional exhaustion and depersonalization). Conversely, a positive significant relationship between internal locus of control and Personal Accomplishment was recorded.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study examined the predictive effects of school environment, teacher efficacy, and internal locus of control on secondary schools teacher burn-out. The study reveals high mean score on depersonalization and Emotional Accomplishment subscales and a relatively lower mean score on the Personal Accomplishment subscale. In the burnout scale, increase in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are indicators of burnout in a teacher. On the other hand, decrease in personal achievement is its additional sign. High scores recorded in the depersonalization subscale poses a challenge to the academic environment because depersonalization is associated with a negative, insensitive, and separated attitude towards the

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people one works with, the students are at the receiving end in this context. Therefore, from table 1, it can be inferred that there is relatively high level of burn out among the participants. This is a challenge as Hughes (2001) affirmed that burned-out teachers negatively affect themselves, their students, and the educational system.

The results from the correlation matrix in table 2, shows that there is a significant relationship among the predictor variables (school environment, teacher efficacy, internal locus of control) and the outcome variable (burnout). The revealed that a significant negative relationship (-.188) was recorded between teacher efficacy and teacher burnout. This is in agreement with (Chwalisz, Altmaier, and Russell (1992) who reported that teachers who scored low in self-efficacy reported a higher degree of burnout unlike the teachers with high self-efficacy scores. The table also shows lowest relationship between teacher efficacy and school environment (.049) ( $p < 0.05$ ). This corroborates the findings of Hoy and Woolfolk, (1993) that teachers' perceptions of school environment have been found to be associated with their teaching efficacy. However, internal locus of control recorded the most potent relationship (-.484) ( $p < 0.01$ ), nonetheless, this relationship is a negative relationship. This points out that as participants reported not as much of control over their lives, they correspondingly reported a greater degree of burnout. This is consistent with the findings by McIntyre 1981; Kyriacou and Sutcliffe 1979; Meadow 1981 as cited in (McIntyre, 1983). The third hypothesis investigated further by testing the relationship between the sub-dimensions of the burnout scale and internal locus of control of the teachers. The results from table 3 shows that there is a negative significant relationship between internal locus of control and two sub-dimensions of burnout scale (emotional exhaustion and depersonalization). On the other hand, a positive significant relationship between internal locus of control and Personal Accomplishment was recorded. Going by this result, it can be inferred that lower internal locus of control among the participants (which unvaryingly is a symptom of external locus of control) is the precursor to their psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. This result is consistent with the findings from Akça and Yaman, (2010) who in their study of 291 teachers who served in Aksaray, found that the teachers experience desensitization and emotional exhaustion however their personal accomplishment perceptions were found high. The findings of this research acquiesces with prior findings on burnout and its relation to school environment, teacher efficacy and locus of control (Leung and Spector, 2000; Evers, Tomic and Brouwers, 2004; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2007; Akça and Yaman, 2010; Maya and Marine, 2016). Essentially, the findings of this study has revealed that Internal locus of control plays a significant role in teachers burnout. Nevertheless, it has been observed that just sparse research on internal locus of control and teacher burnout has been conducted. Therefore, this study recommends that longitudinal studies aimed at investigating the external and internal locus of control of teachers using larger samples should be conducted. In addition to this, training, motivation, incentives/awards and other related mechanisms that can boost the teachers sense of efficacy and as well leading to higher levels of internal locus of control among teachers should be put in place by school administrators and government at all levels.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study examined the effects school environment, teacher efficacy and internal locus of control has on the burnout among secondary school teachers. The result of the study revealed that all the predictor variables correlates with the dependent variable in varying weights. The findings from this study can be useful to colleges of education, institute of education, universities as well as government agencies in preparing pre-service teachers for the task of the teaching profession. This present study is limited in sample to secondary school teachers.

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Teachers in the primary schools and tutors in the tertiary institutions were not included. Also, it should be noted that results from this research cannot be generalised to other countries as these factors could be peculiarities that are obtainable in the Nigerian context.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The authors carefully declare this paper to bear not conflict of interests.

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