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**RESEARCH PAPER**

# Role Overload and Burnout among School Teachers: Investigating the moderating role of Supervisor Support and Collegial Support

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**ABSTRACT**

Present research has been carried out to investigate the moderating role of collegial support (CS) and supervisor support (SS) in the relationship between Role overload (RO) and Burnout (BO) among school teachers. Data for this quantitative study were collected through survey questionnaires. Purposive convenient sampling technique was used for approaching the sample of 400 teachers serving in Rawalpindi and Islamabad Army Public schools. Information was obtained about socio-demographic variables as well as study variables (Role Overload, Burnout and supervisor and collegial support). Psychometric properties of the instruments were established. Zero order correlation analysis was conducted through SPSS. Process MACRO was used to test the hypothesized relationships among study variables. Current study found moderating role of supervisor support (SS) and collegial support (CS) in the RO and BO relationship. Findings of this study indicate the importance of provision of SS and CS in protecting school teachers from burnout. Further studies may be conducted to study moderating role of workplace incivility and work harassment in RO-BO relationship among school, college and university teachers.

| **KEYWORDS** | Burnout, Collegial Support , Role Overload, Supervisor Support |
| --- | --- |

## Introduction

The profession of teaching has been perceived as an easy and less stressful profession however, if viewed from teacher's perspective, they will identify many stressors related to their job. Empirical findings have found teaching profession relatively more stressful, the biggest stressor for the teachers is the work load on them (Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2010), and this stressor has been found leading to exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2017). A large number of studies have addressed this phenomenon in teachers, and indicated that a large proportion of school teachers present high levels of emotional exhaustion (e.g García-Carmona 2019). Baeriswyl et al (2016) and Baeriswyl et al (2021a) investigated in two different studies that workload and emotion exhaustion are positively related to each other. However, source of stress among the teacher population has been found related to the workload as well as their reaction to the workload and the way they handle this stressor (Baeriswyl et al 2021 b). According to Job Demand Resources model (Bakker et al. 2007), when the given task does not match the capacity of the worker, or under time pressure excessive job demands lead to stress and burnout. One's appraisal of the stressor and the coping strategy used to handle that stressor determines the impact of stressor on the individual

(Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Present study has been designed to investigate the moderating impact of social support (supervisor support and collegial support) in the role overload and burnout relationship

## Literature Review

After joining a job employees are formally given their job description (JD) by their supervisors and they are informed about their expected roles related to that job. The work role in a workplace implies a set of tasks given to an individual. Workers tend to feel stressed when they have to meet unrealistic deadlines or when the assigned task exceeds their capabilities and skills, because they need to exert extra efforts for accomplishing the given task. Employees tend to get fatigued while putting extra efforts. They need to have extra rest before and after the extra efforts to prevent adverse effects of extra work on their well-being (e.g, Geurts &, Sonnentag 2006). Too many job demands cause fatigue as well as tiredness leading one to think of even quitting the job or actually quitting the job. If stressful situation continues in the work setting it leads to exhaustion and burnout.

Burnout consists of three components namely emotional exhaustion, cynicism a.k.a depersonalization and the thinking that they are lacking in personal accomplishment. (Maslach, 1982). Workers suffering from burnout experience feelings of mentally fatigued, or being drained (emotional exhaustion), they emotionally distance themselves from others namely colleagues, coworkers, students etc (i.e depersonalization), and they negatively evaluate their competence as well as their effectiveness.    reduced personal accomplishment is personal accomplishment is characterized by a negative evaluation of one's job competence and effectiveness. Major component of burn out is Emotional exhaustion (Cropanzano et al 2003)

Travers, (2017) investigated emotional exhaustion namely fatigue which is psychological as well as physical in different context whether personal life, work setting, and clients or students (e.g Avanzi et al., 2014;  Kristensen et al., 2005 ; Schonfeld et al., 2017). However, stress and burnout is not the same for both men and women. Women and less experienced teachers are more likely experience burnout (Leiter et al., 2014). Similarly, teachers with better emotion stability are more likely handle effectively their reactions to stressors (e.g., Borrelli et al., 2014; Chan, 2006; Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012. Moreover, Buonomo et al., (2017), De Stasio et al., (2017) and Fiorilli et al., (2017) investigated positive relationship between emotional competence and well-being

## Job Demands Resources Model (JDR)

According to the Job Demands Resources model (Bakker et al. 2007), a model of occupational stress employees tends to get stressed when the demands placed upon them exceed the available resources. The situations where job demands are higher and the resources are limited there is the possibility that the employees will experience distress, their well-being will be affected leading to burnout.  The imbalance between job demands and the resources are associated with stress and burnout.  When a worker has been given limited time to perform a task and he does not possess adequate abilities to perform that task, due to time pressure and on account of numerous responsibilities, working in this situation for long time leads to fatigue both physical and psychological, complete exhaustion and depletion of resources.

**Workplace Support**

We are living in a fast-paced world and to survive in this era everyone needs to put his maximum efforts which puts a lot of pressure on a single person who has to manage different responsibilities at the same time. When a person cannot balance his work and personal life, he experiences mental and physical stress. This stress contributes to poor job satisfaction and exhaustion. An individual who is dissatisfied with his job his personal life is likely to have adverse mental and physical health issues.

Relationship between role overload and burnout is often mitigated by workplace support. JDR explains how the environment around the employees affect their well-being. In case there is imbalance between the job demands and job resources, workers start absenting them from work they are less focused on the given task, their frequency of committing mistakes increases, they show low productivity and the like. However, in case of balance between demands and resources outcome is presence of employees on the workplace, increase in productivity and the like. This balance predicts employee's satisfaction with their job and the likelihood that such employees will be engaged and involved in their work Resources in the workplace settings are important in handling the demands of job (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Workplace support is an important aspect that ensures comfort and less likelihood of burnout in an individual with the increasing demands of work. Workplace social support is helpful in dealing with stressors. Support from coworkers, supervisors, and school administrators is considered internal support, whereas support from friends, family, and partners is considered as external support (Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Schaufeli &Bakker, 2004). Researchers, for instance Carlson et al., (2014), McNall et al., (2015) and Pérez-Fuentes et al., (2015) investigated that social support (whether internal i.e. support at the workplace or external to the workplace) is a resource for the teachers who are facing stressful situation in the teaching institution. Empirical studies have found internal support, i.e. support available in the workplace mitigating the impact of job demand and improving QoL, and Commitment (e.g. Collie et al., 2017; Travers, 2017).

Teachers are pillars of the society, they train and groom their students who are in turn responsible for their societies. Teachers happiness and satisfaction with their job and personal life is very important and if teacher's roles and responsibilities match with their abilities, and they receive support at their work place they will not experience stress and burnout. Teacher's job is quite hectic, they often forget drawing a line between their roles and responsibility, as a result their responsibilities exceed their time and energy which results in exhaustion and leads to burnout. Although there is extensive literature on role overload, workplace support, and burnout however, to the best of our knowledge, in the local context, role overload and its impact upon burnout have not yet been investigated in school settings in general and Army Public schools in particular. Moreover, the moderating role of workplace support, especially collegial and supervisor support has not been examined among school teachers in collectivistic culture. Present study has been designed to study the association between role overload and burnout. Moreover, mitigating role of collegial support as well as supervisor support was also tested in the role overload and burnout association among Army Public schools in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

**Hypotheses**

H1: Role overload positively and significantly predicts burnout.
H2: Supervisor support negatively and significantly predicts burnout.
H3: Collegial Support negatively and significantly predicts burnout.
H4: Supervisor support moderates the link between role overload and burnout.
H5: Collegial support moderates the link between role overload and burnout.

**Material and Method**

**Sample and Procedure**

We used cross sectional design for this research, data were collected through survey method, study sample i.e school teachers (N=400) were approached through Purposive convenience sampling technique. Age range of our study sample was 23 - 58 years (M = 31.6, SD = 1.4), 50 were men and 350 were women. 294 teachers were having master's degree, 81 had obtained MS/MPhil, whereas 25 had obtained M.Ed. degree

These teachers were from five Army Public schools. These teachers were approached in their schools; they were informed about the objectives of the study. They were informed that their responses to the questions will remain confidential, their identity will not be disclosed, information obtained from them will be used for research purposes only. They were told about their right to withdraw from this research at any stage. After obtaining their written consent they were asked to provide honest responses on demographic sheet, and the questionnaires (Maslach Burnout Inventory, Workplace Support Scale and Role Overload Scale).

**Instruments**

Role Overload scale (Reilly, 1982) was used in the current study for assessing role overload in this study. On 13 items of this scale teachers indicated the frequency of having experienced role overload in their work setting on 1-5 Likert-type scale ( 1= strongly disagree - 5= strongly agree). Alpha reliability coefficient was 0.77 in the present study. Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson 1986) was used to measure burnout in this study. Teachers reflected their exhaustion in their work setting on twenty two items of this scale on 0 to 6 rating scale (0= Never, 6= Every day), Alpha reliability coefficient of this scale was .84 in this study. workplace Support was assessed on 13 items of supervisor support (SS) sub-scale and 16-items of Collegiality (CS) subscale from Teacher Satisfaction Inventory (TSI) (Cassidy 2016). Participants rated items of this scale on 1 – 4 (1= Rarely 4= Very Frequently). In this study alpha reliability coefficient for CS sub scale scores was .66 whereas for SS Alpha was .72.

**Results and Discussion**

**Table 1**
**Descriptive Statistics, Correlation and Alpha Reliability coefficients**

|   |     | Mean | SD  | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4      |
|---|-----|------|-----|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| **1** | RO  | 3.95 | .14 | (.77) | -.50* | -.45* | .87**  |
| **2** | CS  | 2.65 | .19 |       | (.66) | .84** | -.50** |
| **3** | SS  | 2.83 | .19 |       |       | (.72) | -. 67* |
| **4** | BO  | 3.53 | .14 |       |       |       | (.84)  |

Note: RO= Role Overload, CS= Collegial support, SS= Supervisor Support, BO= Burnout. ***p<.001, *p<.01*

Table 1 is showing descriptive statistics, Alpha Reliability Coefficients and correlation coefficients among the study variables. Correlation analysis shows significant positive correlation between RO and BO, negative and significant correlation between RO and CS as well as RO and SS. Moreover, negative correlation can be seen between CS and BO, as well as SS and BO.  Alpha coefficient values range is from .66 - .84.

**Table 2**
**Moderated multiple regression analysis**

| Model 1 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Antecedents | Coeff. | SE | p |
| Constant | 25.45 | 0.17 | 0.00 |
| RO | 2.05 | 0.17 | 0.00 |
| SS | -0.47 | 0.19 | 0.02 |
| RO * SS | -0.62 | 0.19 | 0.00 |

*Note:* RO= Role Overload, SS= Supervisor Support

Using PROCESS MACRO, moderation was tested through Model 1 (Hayes 2013). As indicated in table above RO has been found significantly and positively predicting BO, moreover, SS is also significantly and inversely predicting BO hence supporting H1 and H2 of this study. Moreover, mitigating role of SS has been found in the RO and BO link thus supporting H4 of this study.

**Table 3**
**Moderated multiple regression analysis**

| Model 1 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Antecedents | Coeff. | SE | p |
| Constant | 25.43 | 0.18 | 0.00 |
| RO | 1.65 | 0.18 | 0.00 |
| CS | -0.53 | 0.20 | 0.09 |
| RO* CS | -0.65 | 0.18 | 0.00 |

Note: RO= Role overload, CS= Collegial Support

As shown in table above RO has been found positively and significantly predicting BO, similarly CS has been found inversely and significantly predicting BO, moreover, the interaction between RO and CS has been found significantly mitigating the RO-BO link thus H5 of the current study is supported that anticipated the moderating role of CS in the association between RO and BO.

**Discussion**

Current study has been conducted to test the association between RO and BO, CS and BO as well as SS and BO. This study also tested the moderating role of SS and CS in the association between RO-BO. Five hypotheses were tested.  First hypothesis (H1) anticipated the main effects of role overload and burnout. This hypothesis was supported in this study. Our present findings are in line with previous literature that investigated excessive role demand leading to burnout among teachers. Past studies have recognized role overload as a major stressor for teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2010), leading them to emotional exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik  (2017). This reporting of distress among teacher sample may be attributed to the multiple tasks assigned to the teachers, and the variety of roles they have to perform.  It has been suggested by the previous literature that due to excessive job demands the phenomenon of Burnout develops as the time passes, however, women and less experienced teachers (Leiter, et

al. 2014) are more likely experience burnout. Feelings of exhaustion have been frequently reported by the workers in general and teachers in particular (Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2010). H2 anticipated the main effects of supervisor support on burnout, and H3 anticipated the main effects of collegial support on burnout. H2 and H3 were supported SS was found inversely and significantly predicting BO. Moreover, CS was also found inversely and significantly predicting BO. These findings are in line with the past findings e.g McNall et al., (2015) and Pérez-Fuentes et al., (2015) who investigated the positive impact of both internal and external social support on distress. H4 anticipated moderating role of SS in the association between RO and BO and H5 anticipated moderating role of CS in the link between RO and BO. Both hypotheses were supported in the present study. This finding is consistent with past studies where moderating role of support in the workplace has been found protecting the individuals from experiencing burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In current study we found that teachers who were perceiving the availability of support from the supervisor as well as colleagues were not experiencing the symptoms of burnout or they have reported lesser scores on burnout as compared to those not having support at the workplace or having lesser level of support. The availability of support gives the perception that the work environment is a pleasant place, and the tasks assigned to the employees are perceived as challenging and not as a threat (Lazarus & Folkman 1984). The presence of the support tends to make the workplace comfortable leading to job satisfaction, happiness and productivity. It is pertinent to mention here that the sample of this study (teachers) reported that they frequently consult their colleagues and their principal for help in time of need thus in present study the mitigating impact of support from the coworkers and supervisor is understandable.

**Conclusion**

This research tested the moderating role of supervisor support(SS) and collegial support (CS) in the relationship between role overload (RO) and burnout (BO) in a sample of school teachers from Army public school teachers from Rawalpindi Islamabad. Findings of this study demonstrate that RO significantly positively predicts BO, CS significantly negatively predicts BO, and SS also significantly negatively predicts BO. Moreover, moderating role of SS was found in the RO and BO link. Similarly, this study also found moderating role of CS in the RO-BO association.

**Recommendations**

Present study has been conducted on a sample of Army public schools, further research may take sample from private schools as well as schools in the rural and far flung areas. Present study obtained information on study variables only on self-report questionnaires, future studies may consider using mixed method research, getting information from multiple sources. This research may be extended, data on the study variables may be obtained from college and university teachers as well. Moreover, future studies may also consider studying role of harassment, organizational politics and workplace incivility in role overload and burnout relationship.

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