



A Correlation Study of Self-efficacy and Occupational Burnout Among University Foreign Language Teachers

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Abstract. With the rapid development of education, teachers are the very basis of modern education and education reform and they play an important role in promoting the quality of education. The paper aims to investigate the current situation of occupational burnout among university foreign language teachers and analyse the relationship between occupational burnout and self-efficacy. The subjects in this study are 162 university foreign language teachers from four universities in Dongguan city. The questionnaires are issued to the 162 teachers and data collected is analysed by SPSS. The quantitative method is employed to get numerical values, examine variables identified and test hypotheses. Meantime, the descriptive method is used to describe the overall dimension of the questionnaire and distribution of basic demographic variables and the correlational method is to investigate whether there is a correlation between self-efficacy and occupational burnout. The results have shown that on the whole, the self-efficacy level of the subjects is high and the degree of occupational burnout is not high. Specifically, there is a significant negative correlation between self-efficacy and occupational burnout and there is a significant negative correlation between self-efficacy and the three dimensions of occupational burnout (depersonalization, emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment). Furthermore, self-efficacy has a significant negative predictive effect on occupational burnout of university foreign language teachers.

Keywords: Self-Efficacy · Occupational Burnout · University Foreign Language Teachers

1 Introduction

With the rapid development of education, much attention has been paid to the building of high-quality teachers. China's Education Modernization 2035 stresses the building of high-quality, professional and innovative teachers. Teachers are the very basis of education reform and they play an important role in promoting the quality of education. At the same time, the continuous deepening of education reform raises higher demands on teachers. Teachers undertake a great deal of teaching and scientific research work and they are faced with unprecedented challenges and pressure. Nowadays, teacher

is recognized as a high-intensity and high-pressure occupation [1]. If teachers' work pressure cannot be effectively controlled and alleviated for a long time, they will suffer from occupational burnout. At present, university foreign language teachers gradually suffer from occupational burnout and they become one of the high-risk groups of burnout. Occupational burnout poses a great threat to physical and mental health of teachers and it affects the lives of teachers, their families, administrators, as well as the society [2]. It weakens teachers' enthusiasm and self-confidence, so that teachers may give up pursuing their career. Besides, burnout is harmful to teaching quality, which is not conducive to educating students. In a word, occupational burnout has gradually become a constraint in teachers' development and it has a direct negative impact on teachers' teaching and students' development. In addition, the other psychological mechanism that influences the development of teachers is self-efficacy, which is also very closely related to occupational burnout [3]. Therefore, the study on correlation between self-efficacy and occupational burnout of university foreign language teachers has practical significance.

2 Literature Review

This part encompasses related literature and studies, and theoretical foundation, namely, Self-efficacy Theory.

2.1 Related Literature and Studies

Motallebzadeh K. et al. found that English teachers' self-efficacy has an opposite relationship with occupational burnout and a significant relationship was observed between teachers' age, gender, and their burnout [4].

Liu Ping studied the relationship between self-efficacy and occupational burnout of college English teachers in 300 universities in Nanjing. The results showed that college teachers' self-efficacy and burnout were negatively correlated [5].

Wang H. et al. investigated 523 Canadian teachers and found that self-efficacy can independently predict teachers' adjustment, self-efficacy for student engagement, and personally controllable attributions can predict teachers' psychological well-being, physical health, and quitting intentions [6].

Through sorting out existing studies, it is found that although scholars have different research results on the relationship between self-efficacy and occupational burnout, they all admit that there is a certain internal relationship between the two. Based on this reality, the researcher raises the question, "what is the relationship between self-efficacy and occupational burnout of university foreign language teachers?" At present, there are few empirical studies on this aspect. Therefore, starting from the perspective of self-efficacy, this paper carries out empirical research on the correlation between self-efficacy and occupational burnout in order to make new innovations and contributions to the research on interpersonal development and psychological quality training of teachers.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

This study is based on Self-efficacy Theory proposed by psychologist Albert Bandura. Bandura proposed that self-efficacy is cognition that one realizes his or her ability, which can cause a certain expectation. Self-efficacy includes two components, that is, outcome expectation and efficacy expectation. Outcome expectation refers to a belief that behavior will lead to desirable outcome and efficacy expectation refers to a belief that one has the requisite skills to bring about the outcome [7].

Teachers' self-efficacy is closely related to many important outcomes associated with education. In classrooms, if teachers have a high self-efficacy, students are more academically motivated, more likely to have high self-efficacy and more likely to achieve academic success [8]. Besides, self-efficacy also affects the effort that teachers spend in teaching [9]. Furthermore, teachers with high efficacy are more creative and are more willing to adapt new methods in teaching. Teachers' self-efficacy is one of the most important teacher characteristics related to student success. Teachers should develop their teaching ability and enhance their self-efficacy to make the teaching effective [10]. Hence, the researcher believes that Bandura's self-efficacy theory can support the study of teachers' self-efficacy.

3 Methodology

This chapter discusses methodology which comprises research aim, research hypothesis, research methods and subjects.

3.1 Research Aim

This study aims to investigate the current situation of occupational burnout among university foreign language teachers and analyse the relationship between occupational burnout and self-efficacy.

3.2 Research Hypothesis

The following are the null hypotheses to be tested in this study at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in self-efficacy of university foreign language teachers in Dongguan when they are grouped in terms of gender, age and education level.
2. There is no significant difference in occupational burnout of university foreign language teachers in Dongguan when they are grouped in terms of gender, age and education level.
3. There is no significant correlation between self-efficacy and occupational burnout.
4. Self-efficacy has no predictive effects on occupational burnout.

3.3 Research Methods

This study employs the quantitative method to get numerical values, examine variables identified and test hypotheses, the descriptive method to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation, or phenomenon and the correlational method to investigate whether there is a correlation between self-efficacy and occupational burnout.

This study also applies questionnaire which encompasses the following three parts:

- Part I Personal information. Its purpose is to investigate the demographic information of the respondents in terms of age, gender and education level.
- Part II Self-efficacy. It aims to find out the general status of self-efficacy among the respondents.
- Part III Occupational Burnout. This part seeks to explore the general situation of the respondents' occupational burnout.

3.4 Subjects

The subjects in this study are 162 university foreign language teachers from four universities in Dongguan city. The random sampling method is adopted to survey the foreign language teachers from the four universities. These teachers have one year to more than twenty years teaching experiences and they have different educational background.

4 Data Analysis

This part mainly analyzes the overall situation of self-efficacy and occupational burnout and the correlation between self-efficacy and occupational burnout among university foreign language teachers.

4.1 Overall Situation of Self-efficacy and Occupational Burnout Among University Foreign Language Teachers

From Table 1, on the whole, the total number of subjects is 162. According to the 1–5 item scoring method, university foreign language teachers' self-efficacy scores are similar and high, with an average of more than 4, while occupational burnout is relatively low on the whole, with an average of slightly higher than 2. In terms of the degree of dispersion, the standard deviation of occupational burnout is higher than that of self-efficacy, indicating that the subjects in the sample have a relatively different degree of occupational burnout. The average score of university foreign language teachers' self-efficacy in all dimensions is more than 4 points, between 4.005–4.212, while the average score of the three dimensions in occupational burnout is low. The standard deviations of emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment have exceeded 1, indicating that the degree of emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment is different among the teachers. The standard deviation of the questionnaire should be greater than 0.6 and the ideal value should be greater than 0.8. The standard deviation of the overall questionnaire and all dimensions should be greater than 0.6, and some dimensions should be greater than 0.8, which show that in this study the overall questionnaire and all dimensions are qualified in the degree of difference, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Overall Situation of Self-efficacy and Occupational Burnout among University Foreign Language Teachers

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Teaching strategy and life management	4.212	0.677	162
Teaching skills	4.005	0.763	162
Career development	4.018	0.788	162
Self-efficacy	4.106	0.624	162
Depersonalization	1.749	0.975	162
Emotional exhaustion	2.332	1.056	162
Reduced personal accomplishment	2.229	1.008	162
Occupational burnout	2.112	0.912	162

Table 2. Correlation analysis of self-efficacy and occupational burnout among university foreign language teachers

	Depersonalization	Emotional exhaustion	Reduced personal accomplishment	Occupational burnout
Teaching strategy and life management	-.268**	-.245**	-.309**	-.299**
Teaching skills	-.118*	-.120*	-.225**	-.162**
Career development	-.269**	-.400**	-.436**	-.409**
Self-efficacy	-.265**	-.298**	-.376**	-.342**

Note: ** The correlation is significant at a confidence level of 0.01 (double test)

* The correlation is significant at a confidence level of 0.05 (double test).

4.2 Correlation Analysis of Self-efficacy and Occupational Burnout among University Foreign Language Teachers

In this study, Pearson-Product Moment of Correlation Coefficient is employed. In Table 2, the results show that overall self-efficacy and all dimensions are significantly negatively correlated with overall occupational burnout and all its dimensions. The correlation degree between overall self-efficacy and occupational job burnout of teachers is $-.342^{**}$, which is in the middle and low degree. The correlation between the dimensions of self-efficacy and overall occupational burnout is $-.299^{**}$, $-.162^{**}$ and $-.409^{**}$, respectively, indicating that the degree of career development in self-efficacy and occupational burnout is relatively high, followed by the degree of teaching strategy and life management in self-efficacy and teaching skills in self-efficacy and occupational burnout have the lowest degree of correlation.

At the same time, the correlation among teaching skills, teaching strategy and life management and career development and occupational burnout of university foreign language teachers rises in turn. The correlation between three dimensions of occupational burnout and overall self-efficacy is $-.265^{**}$, $-.298^{**}$ and $-.376^{**}$, respectively. The correlation between reduced personal accomplishment of occupational burnout and self-efficacy is the highest.

5 Conclusion

This paper studies occupational burnout of university foreign language teachers from the perspective of self-efficacy and the correlation between them. Based on the empirical research on the self-efficacy and occupational burnout of university foreign language teachers, the following conclusions are drawn: on the whole, the self-efficacy level of the subjects is high and the degree of occupational burnout is not high. Specifically, there is a significant negative correlation between self-efficacy and occupational burnout, and there is a significant negative correlation between self-efficacy and the three dimensions of occupational burnout (depersonalization, emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment). Furthermore, self-efficacy has a significant negative predictive effect on occupational burnout of university foreign language teachers.

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