

ABSTRACT

The Work Environment of Secondary School Teachers

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The study was designed to: (1) determine the nature of the work environment in secondary schools; (2) measure job attitudes and performance-related deficits; (3) determine differences in the work environment, job attitudes, and performance-related deficits among four school types; (4) measure the impact of the work environment; and (5) determine the impact of selected individual characteristics upon job attitudes and performance-related deficits.

A theoretical model, used as an explanatory and analytical framework, was tested using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

In the quantitative phase a 157-item questionnaire administered to 428 teachers in 34 secondary schools measured 11 work environment variables, three job attitudes, occupational burnout, and four individual characteristics.

The qualitative phase utilized semi-structured interviews, site observation, and content analysis to obtain data. Interviews were conducted with supervisory staff and the teachers and principals at 12 school sites.

It was found that teachers in all school types reported high work method autonomy, high caseloads, and many student learning problems. However, they perceived low levels of role conflict and role ambiguity, many student behaviour problems, and infrequent feedback from principals. Teachers in the assisted school perceived that there were a significantly greater number of intrinsic rewards in their work environment.

Teachers reported low levels of job-related stress as measured for 38 work-related stressors, but relatively high levels of job satisfaction. However, they were very dissatisfied with the pay and promotion facets. Teachers described their pay as (1) inadequate for their needs and (2) inequitable, based on the following criteria: (i) nature of job, (ii) extent of teacher training, (iii) required work effort, and (iv) salaries of other workers. Teachers were not strongly committed towards their schools; defining commitment differently depending upon the availability of work rewards within the organizational setting. Burnout scores were low although a significant number of teachers were in later stages of the syndrome. Teachers in the assisted schools reported the greatest job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, teachers in the junior secondary had the highest scores on satisfaction with the principal. Teachers in government schools reported the highest depersonalization scores.

There was no difference in work locus of control between teachers of the different school types. Work locus of control, teacher efficacy, and entry motive all had both main and moderator effects; however, work values displayed moderator effects only. The relative importance of the work locus

of control and the teaching efficacy measures might be related to system-wide perceptions of powerlessness. The teacher's motive of entry had a strong main effect upon teacher job attitudes and occupational burnout.

Teachers in all school types placed the highest value upon extrinsic-social rewards, ranking them ahead of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in that order. Intrinsic aspects of work were the prime determinants of burnout; however, job satisfaction, occupational stress, and organizational commitment were also influenced by extrinsic-social and extrinsic factors in the teacher's work environment.

The results confirmed that there were differences in the work environment of the four school types; and that, likely, this variation in the quality of the work environment was primarily responsible for the differences in job attitudes and performance-related deficits among teachers in the four school types. It was also confirmed that teachers valued different aspects of the work environment, and that these work values moderated the impact of the work environment upon the employee.