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Orginal Article

# The Role of Perceived Teacher-Working Environment Fit in Social Contextual Burnout with the Mediating Role of Proactive Strategies in Zahedan Teachers

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## Abstract

This study explored the relationship between teachers' perceived person-environment fit and social-contextual burnout, focusing on the mediating roles of self-regulation and co-regulation during the 2021-2022 academic year. The sample consisted of 386 teachers from 36 schools in Zahedan, selected via multi-stage cluster sampling. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires and analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in AMOS. Based on the results, perceived person-environment fit had a significant negative direct effect on burnout, meaning better alignment diminishes exhaustion. Further, self-regulation acted as a significant negative mediator, suggesting that good fit promotes self-management strategies that lower burnout. Conversely, co-regulation served as a significant positive mediator, revealing a complex interaction where collaborative efforts might correlate with higher burnout owing to interpersonal demands or conflict resolution in misaligned contexts. Despite this, perceived fit remained a critical determinant of agentic behavior. The findings highlight that teachers' perception of organizational alignment directly influences their use of proactive coping mechanisms. When teachers feel valued and supported, they would be more empowered to engage in self-management and collaboration. This emphasizes the importance of both individual resilience and collective support systems in mitigating job exhaustion. The study confirms that burnout is deeply rooted in the structural and social conditions of the school environment, not just an individual psychological issue. Hence, educational administrators should prioritize improving the overall organizational climate rather than focusing solely on individual stress management.

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Interventions enhancing perceived fit—through better resource allocation, clearer communication, and stronger professional communities—are essential for fostering an environment where agentic strategies thrive. Through aligning institutional realities with teacher expectations, schools can achieve sustainable reductions in burnout. Ultimately, maintaining educator well-being requires a holistic approach addressing both individual agency and broader workplace factors. Understanding these dynamics would support targeted policy-making for the long-term health of the teaching workforce.

**Keywords:** Perceived person-environment fit, agentic strategies, teachers' social-contextual burnout, Zahedan schools.

## Extended Abstract

### Introduction

Job burnout is a complex psychological syndrome which develops gradually in response to prolonged exposure to extensive, chronic, and exhausting work-related stress. This phenomenon not only threatens the mental and physical health of teachers but also has detrimental effects on the quality of education as well as social interactions within the school environment. In recent years, researchers' attention has shifted from examining individual factors in isolation to exploring the interactions between individuals and their work environment. A key construct in this context is the "perceived fit" between the teacher and the work environment. It reflects the alignment between the teacher’s expectations, values, and abilities with the resources, demands, and organizational culture of the school. When such fit exists, job satisfaction grows, and stress decreases. However, the mechanisms through which this fit influences burnout require more rigorous analysis. Social-contextual burnout, as a dimension of burnout rooted in incompatibility with the school's structural and social relationships, has gained special significance. The main hypothesis of this study rests on the principle that agentic strategies, including self-regulation (individual efforts to change conditions) and co-regulation (collaborative efforts with others), serve as mediating variables. This implies that a teacher’s perception of fit with the work environment determines the extent of their use of these strategies, thereby influencing their level of burnout. Thus, the primary objective of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how these variables interact along the 2021-2022 academic year. The goal is to clarify the moderating

and mediating roles of these strategies in predicting teachers' social-contextual burnout.

## Methodology

This research employed a descriptive-correlational approach utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test potential causal relationships among variables. The statistical population consisted of all teachers working in public and private schools in Zahedan. For sample selection, a multi-stage cluster sampling method was applied; initially, several educational districts were selected, followed by random selection of boys' and girls' elementary, middle, and high schools. Ultimately, 386 teachers were identified as participants. Data collection tools included three standardized questionnaires: 1) The Agentic Strategies Scale, measuring teachers' tendency toward proactive action to improve working conditions; 2) The Socio-Contextual Teacher Burnout Inventory (STBI), developed by Pietarinen et al., which appraises various dimensions of burnout arising from the school's social context; and 3) The Perceived Fit Between Teachers and Work Environment Questionnaire, comprising two components: "receiving professional recognition" and "productive and capable work environment." The validity and reliability of these instruments were confirmed prior to administration. Collected data were analyzed using Amos software and SEM techniques to ascertain the overall model fit as well as the direct and indirect effect paths between variables.

## Results

Analyses derived from the Structural Equation Model in Amos indicated that the proposed model demonstrated an acceptable fit with empirical data. The findings suggested that perceived fit between the teacher and the work environment is a strong and significant predictor of diminished social-contextual burnout. Specifically, results revealed that this fit influences burnout through indirect pathways as well. In the self-regulation model, a significant negative path coefficient of -0.58 was observed, exhibiting that increased self-regulation leads to lowered burnout. Similarly, in the co-regulation model, this coefficient was -0.35. Further, the direct mediating roles of self-regulation and co-regulation in relation to burnout were calculated at 0.09 and -0.28, respectively, with all these paths being statistically significant. Notably, perceived fit positively and significantly predicted teachers' agentic strategies, with path coefficients of 0.61 for self-regulation and 0.65 for co-regulation. These figures suggest that the greater the teacher's sense of fit with their work environment, the more they utilize active strategies to manage challenges.

## Discussion

The results of this study confirm that agentic strategies play a key role in mitigating the risk of experiencing social-contextual burnout. This finding aligns with stressor-resource theories and adaptation frameworks. The connection among these variables stems from the social nature of the teaching profession; learning, institutionalizing, and successfully applying these strategies are entirely contingent upon the supportive social interaction context of schools. When teachers feel they operate in a compatible and predictable environment, they are more motivated to employ self-regulation and collaborate with colleagues (co-regulation). This understanding suggests that agentic strategies are not static but can be enhanced, taught, and stabilized within the school context. Administrators and educational policymakers can assist teachers in mastering diverse and effective strategies through creating spaces where professional recognition and necessary resources are available. Ultimately, this not only leads to a significant decline in job burnout but also, by strengthening positive dynamics in schools, establishes a healthier, more dynamic, and suitable work environment for all stakeholders in the educational system.

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