

RUNNING HEAD: Teacher Trust and Burnout

Does Teacher Trust in the Principal Influence Teacher Burnout?

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Paper presented at The American Educational Research Association
(AREA) Annual Meeting. Montreal, Canada. April 15, 2005.

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the relationship between teacher trust in the principal and teacher burnout. Among the findings are that a moderate to strong inverse relationship exists between the two variables. As trust in the principal goes down, teacher burnout goes up. For example, teachers who indicated low trust in the principal are about 28 percent more likely to experience high teacher burnout. Also, the number of years that the teacher has worked with the principal seems to have a strong effect on the teacher trust-burnout relationship, and the teacher's age and the teacher's experience have a moderate impact. In addition, teacher gender appears to have a slight effect on the teacher trust-burnout relationship, and principal gender, principal age, and principal race appear to not affect the teacher trust-burnout relationship at all. We conclude with the recommendation that if principals focus on developing trusting relationships with their teachers, they are more likely to reduce teacher burnout.

INTRODUCTION

Deming wrote in the foreword to John Whitney's book, *The Trust Factor* (1994), "Trust is mandatory for optimization of a system. Without trust, there cannot be cooperation between people, teams, departments, or divisions.... The job of a leader is to create an environment of trust so that everyone may confidently examine himself" (p. viii). According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000),

Trust is fundamental to functioning in our complex and interdependent society. We count on the people who grow and process our food and medicines to do so properly; we depend on those who build our houses to do so sensibly; we rely on other people with whom we share the roadways to obey traffic laws; we trust those who hold and invest our money to deal with us honestly; we depend on our government to maintain the safety of our infrastructure and to protect us from aggressors. In short, in every facet of our lives, we are dependent on other people to behave in accordance with our expectations. It is imperative that we have confidence that our expectations of other people are met. (p. 549)

Tyler and Kramer (1996) argue that "as trust declines, people are increasingly unwilling to take risks, demand greater protections against the possibility of betrayal, and

increasingly insist on costly sanctioning mechanisms to defend their interests" (p. 4). Mishra (1996) interviewed 33 managers from eleven firms and found that trust leads to decentralized decision-making, undistorted communication, collaboration, and crisis resolution.

Lewicki and Bunker (1996) note that the decline in trust sometimes "occurs in a single violation that is so severe that it effectively eliminates all trust; other times the decline is a more gradual erosion of trust" (p. 125). According to Lewicki and Bunker (1996), "emotionally, individuals often experience strong feelings of anger, hurt, fear, and frustration; these reactions lead them to reassess how they feel about the other" (p. 125).

Teacher burnout also has negative effects on a positive learning environment. Cunningham (1983) claims that "burnout results in reduced pupil-teacher rapport, teacher warmth, teacher satisfaction, pupil motivation, and ultimately teaching effectiveness. With burnout comes increases in absenteeism, truancy, career changes, and early retirement" (p. 38).

Cunningham (1983) continues to explain that

Symptoms of burnout often begin with a feeling of uneasiness. Symptoms include being tired all the time, dissatisfied, depressed, and physically run down. Teachers experiencing burnout often have minor physical maladies

such as insomnia, frequent colds, headaches, and dizziness, loss of appetite or sexual interest, and diarrhea. Such teachers report somatic illness such as fatigue and weakness, blurred vision, irritability, sensitivity to weather, difficulty in coping, dizziness, malaise, and depression. (p. 40)

Farber (1984) adds to the effects of teacher burnout by claiming that

teachers who become burned out may be less sympathetic toward students, may have lower tolerance for frustration in the classroom, may plan for their classes less often or less carefully, may fantasize about or actually plan on leaving the profession, may feel frequently emotionally or physically exhausted, may feel anxious, irritable, depressed, and in general, less committed and dedicated to their work. (p. 321)

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this paper is to report the findings of a study exploring the relationship between teacher trust in the principal and teacher burnout. The following questions guide the study:

1. Is there a relationship between teacher trust in the principal and teacher burnout? More specifically, as teacher trust in

the principal increases, does teacher burnout decrease and vice versa?

2. Given a relationship between teacher trust and burnout, is this relationship mediated by other variables such as demographic factors? In other words, do such things as teacher age, experience, and ethnicity affect the trust-burnout relationship?

Hypothesis

The main hypothesis in this study is that as trust increases, burnout decreases. In other words, teacher trust in the principal and teacher burnout should be inversely correlated.

METHODOLOGY

Three hundred and fifteen teachers from 16 campuses selected in Texas public schools were surveyed. The original sample in the study encompassed three high schools containing 331 teachers, six middle schools containing 337 teachers, and seven elementary schools containing 380 teachers for a total of 16 campuses and 1,048 teachers. We surveyed the entire population of identified teachers.

Three hundred and seventy-three out of 1,048 teachers responded to the survey for a return rate of 36 percent. We removed 58 responses due to duplication, missing data, and/or

respondent error. Therefore, we utilized 315 of the responses with a final return rate of 30 percent.

We used two questionnaires for the analysis in this study. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2002) developed the first questionnaire, the Omnibus T-Scale, to determine the level of faculty trust in the principal. Dworkin (1987) developed the second questionnaire, the Teacher Burnout Scale (Alienation Burnout), to measure the level of teacher burnout.

We contacted the superintendent and/or principal via e-mail communications and telephone conversations from selected Texas public schools to obtain permission to survey their teachers. Then, we provided each principal and/or superintendent with a brief verbal explanation of the purpose and methodology for the study and answered any questions that the principal and/or superintendent posed. Next, we created a web site containing the instrument and the instructions on how to complete the survey. Then, we sent an e-mail containing the survey web-site link to a campus contact identified by the superintendents and/or principals and asked them to distribute the electronic link to the teachers on the respective campuses for completion of the survey. After electronically monitoring the responses from each campus in the first cycle, we contacted the campus contacts for the campuses that had not reached the acceptable return rate.

We utilized Pearson product-moment correlations, cross tabulations, chi square tests for significance, and contingency coefficients to analyze the data in this study.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

What is the relationship between teacher trust in the principal and teacher burnout? Table 1 gives the Pearson product-moment correlations for the variables in the study.

Table 1 - Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Among Teacher Trust in the Principal Scores, Teacher Burnout Scores, and Demographic Variables as Identified by Teachers in Selected Texas Public Schools

Variables	TT	BO	TG	TA	TE	YWP	PA	PG	PR
Teacher Trust (TT)	1.00								
Teach Burnout (BO)	.61**	1.00							
Teach Gender (TG)	-.09	.01	1.00						
Teach Age(TA)	.11	.09	.14*	1.00					
Teach Exp (TE)	.11	.09	.03	.66**	1.00				
Yrs Work Prin (YWP)	.04	.00	.09	.15**	.18**	1.00			
Prin Age (PA)	-.05	-.06	.19**	.19**	.06	.09	1.00		
Prin Gender (PG)	.09	.14*	-.17**	.05	.11	.05	-.04	1.00	
Prin Race (PR)	-.19**	-.04	.10	.02	-.04	-.28**	.36**	-.13*	1.00

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As hypothesized, there is a strong (.61) correlation between teacher trust and teacher burnout. The positive correlation is an artifact of the way we coded the variable teacher burnout and actually indicates an inverse relationship between trust and burnout. The table also indicates some effects

of principal gender on teacher burnout and a moderate relationship between principal race and teacher trust.

Table 2 presents the simple bi-variate relationship between trust and burnout and indicates that teachers who score low on trust are about 28 percent more likely to experience high teacher burnout. Also, the contingency coefficient was 0.446, thus confirming the strong relationship between teacher trust in the principal and teacher burnout found in the Pearson product-moment analysis. We turn now to the multivariate analysis.

Table 2 - Teacher Burnout by Teacher Trust in the Principal as Identified by Teachers in Selected Texas Public Schools (in Percentages)

	Teacher Trust in the Principal		
	High Trust	Moderate Trust	Low Trust
	5.1 through	2.6 through	1.0 through
Teacher Burnout	6.0	5.0	2.5
Low Burnout (0.6 - 2.0)	82.9	43.8	15.6
Moderate Burnout (-0.4 - 0.5)	17.1	46.9	56.3
High Burnout (-2 through -0.5)	0	9.4	28.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(123)	(160)	(32)

chi square = 78.13 p<.001

Mediating Variables

Do other variables, such as demographic factors, mediate the inverse relationship between teacher trust in the principal and teacher burnout? To test for possible interaction effects,

we examined the relationship with a multivariate cross-tabulation analysis and found associations for some of the variables on the relationship.

Table 3 displays the results of a multivariate cross tabulation for teacher burnout by teacher trust in the principal, controlling for teacher gender. This analysis indicates that females who reported low trust in the principal are about 8 percent more likely to fall into the high teacher burnout category than males are.

Table 3 - Teacher Burnout by Teacher Trust in the Principal, Controlling for Teacher Gender as Identified by Teachers in Selected Texas Public Schools (in Percentages)

Teacher Burnout	Teacher Gender					
	Female			Male		
	Teacher Trust in the Principal			Teacher Trust in the Principal		
	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low
Low	81.0	43.4	17.4	94.4	46.4	11.1
Moderate	19.0	47.3	52.2	5.6	42.9	66.7
High	0	9.3	30.4	0	10.7	22.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(105)	(129)	(23)	(18)	(28)	(9)

chi square = 60.74 $p < .001$ (Female); chi square = 19.44 $p < .001$ (Male)

However, the Pearson product-moment correlations were 0.59 for female teachers and 0.72 for male teachers. Also, the contingency coefficients were 0.437 for female teachers and 0.511 for male teachers, thus suggesting that male teachers are

more affected by the teacher trust-burnout relationship.

Therefore, teacher gender only slightly influences the strength of the teacher trust-burnout relationship, if at all.

As displayed in Table 4, teacher age appears to have a moderate influence on the teacher trust-burnout relationship. Teachers 35 years of age and younger reporting low trust in the principal were 23 percent more likely to score high on teacher burnout compared to teachers 46 years and older.

Table 4 - Teacher Burnout by Teacher Trust in the Principal, Controlling for Teacher Age as Identified by Teachers in Selected Texas Public Schools (in Percentages)

Teacher Burnout	Teacher Age					
	35 years and under		36 - 45 years		46 years and older	
	Teacher Trust in the Principal		Teacher Trust in the Principal		Teacher Trust in the Principal	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Low	83.8	14.3	84.6	10.0	80.9	25.0
Moderate	16.2	50.0	15.4	60.0	19.1	62.5
High	0	35.7	0	30.0	0	12.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(37)	(14)	(39)	(10)	(47)	(8)

chi square = 29.70 p<.001 (35 years old and under); chi square = 28.24 p<.001 (36 years to 45 years); chi square = 23.95 p<.001 (46 years and older)

The Pearson product-moment analysis also confirmed the differences in the teacher trust-burnout relationship. For example, teachers 35 years and younger displayed a correlation of 0.66 (p<0.01) while teachers 46 years and older displayed a correlation of 0.59 (p<0.01). Also, the contingency coefficients

were 0.450 for teachers 35 years old and under and 0.428 for teachers 46 years and older. In other words, teacher age appears to moderately influence the teacher trust-burnout relationship.

The results of this analysis also indicated that the teacher's years experience moderately influences the teacher trust-burnout relationship for teachers reporting low trust in the principal. For example, as displayed in Table 5, teachers with 1 to 14 years experience reporting low trust in the principal were approximately 26 percent more likely to report high teacher burnout than teachers with 15 or more years experience.

Table 5 - Teacher Burnout by Teacher Trust in the Principal, Controlling for Teacher Experience as Identified by Teachers in Selected Texas Public Schools (in Percentages)

Teacher Burnout	Teaching Experience					
	1 to 14 years			15 years and above		
	Teacher Trust in the Principal			Teacher Trust in the Principal		
	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low
Low	83.6	46.4	18.2	81.8	37.8	10.0
Moderate	16.4	42.0	45.5	18.2	57.8	80.0
High	0	11.6	36.4	0	4.4	10.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(67)	(112)	(22)	(55)	(45)	(10)

chi square = 46.99 p<.001 (1 to 14 years); chi square = 30.70 p<.001 (15 or more years)

The Pearson product-moment correlation among trust in the principal and teacher burnout by the teacher's years experience

was 0.63 for teachers with 1 to 14 years experience and was 0.56 for teachers with 15 or more years experience ($p < 0.01$).

Therefore, the teacher's years experience appears to moderately affect the teacher trust-burnout relationship.

In this analysis, teachers who reported low trust in the principal were approximately 29 percent more likely to score high on teacher burnout if they had worked with the principal for 5 years or more than those teachers who had worked with their principal for 4 or less years, Table 6.

Table 6 - Teacher Burnout by Teacher Trust in the Principal, Controlling for the Number of Years That the Teacher Has Worked with the Principal as Identified by Teachers in Selected Texas Public Schools (in Percentages)

Teacher Burnout	Years Worked with Principal					
	4 years and under			5 years and above		
	Teacher Trust in the Principal			Teacher Trust in the Principal		
	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low
Low	82.8	47.7	16.7	82.1	26.1	12.5
Moderate	17.2	44.7	62.5	17.9	60.9	37.5
High	0	7.6	20.8	0	13.0	50.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(93)	(132)	(24)	(28)	(23)	(8)

chi square = 50.77 $p < .001$ (4 years and under); chi square = 29.90 $p < .001$ (5 years or more)

The Pearson product-moment correlation among teacher trust in the principal and teacher burnout for teachers who worked with their principals for four years or less was 0.58 ($p < 0.01$)

and was 0.70 ($p < 0.01$) for teachers working with their principals for five or more years. Also, the contingency coefficients were 0.412 for teachers who have worked with their principals for 4 years and less and 0.580 for teachers who have worked for their principals for 5 years or more. The cross-tabulation, the Pearson product-moment correlations, and the contingency coefficients all suggest that the number of years that the teacher has worked with the principal strongly influences the trust-burnout relationship. More specifically, if a teacher does not trust the principal, the likelihood that the teacher will become burned out will increase the longer that the teacher continues to work with the principal.

After completing the analysis for the demographic variables relating to the teacher, we investigated the demographic factors relating to the principal; principal gender, principal age, and principal race. In the cross-tabulation analysis shown in Table 7, teachers with male principals who reported low trust in their principal were only about 4 percent more likely to score high on teacher burnout than those teachers with female principals. In addition, the Pearson product-moment correlation between teacher trust in the principal and teacher burnout was 0.63 ($p < 0.01$) for teachers with male principals and 0.57 ($p < 0.01$) for teachers with female principals. Also, the contingency coefficients were 0.445 for teachers with male principals and 0.459 for teachers

with female principals. The results of the Pearson product-moment correlation and contingency coefficients support the findings from the cross-tabulation. Therefore, the gender of the teacher's principal does not appear to affect the teacher trust-burnout relationship.

Table 7 - Teacher Burnout by Teacher Trust in the Principal, Controlling for Principal Gender as Identified by Teachers in Selected Texas Public Schools (in Percentages)

Teacher Burnout	Principal Gender					
	Male			Female		
	Teacher Trust in the Principal			Teacher Trust in the Principal		
	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low
Low	80.0	42.1	8.3	88.4	48.8	37.5
Moderate	20.0	46.5	62.5	11.6	46.5	37.5
High	0	11.4	29.2	0	4.7	25.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(80)	(114)	(24)	(43)	(43)	(8)

chi square = 53.87 p<.001 (Male); chi square = 25.06 p<.001 (Females)

Table 8 displays the results of the cross-tabulation for teacher burnout by teacher trust in the principal, controlling for principal age. Initially, the results suggested that teachers with a principal 46 years and older were 31 percent more likely to experience high teacher burnout. However, the small number of respondents with a principal 35 years and younger could have skewed the results.

Table 8 - Teacher Burnout by Teacher Trust in the Principal, Controlling for Principal Age as Identified by Teachers in Selected Texas Public Schools (in Percentages)

Teacher Burnout	Principal Age					
	35 years and under		36 - 45 years		46 years and older	
	Teacher Trust in the Principal		Teacher Trust in the Principal		Teacher Trust in the Principal	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Low	83.3	33.3	81.9	13.3	86.8	7.7
Moderate	16.7	66.7	18.1	53.3	13.2	61.5
High	0	0	0	33.3	0	30.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(12)	(3)	(72)	(15)	(38)	(13)

chi square = 4.16 not significant (35 years and under); chi square = 45.48 p<.001 (36 years to 45 years); chi square = 36.42 p<.001 (46 years and older)

Supporting the assumption that the small number of respondents with principals under 35 years of age may have affected the results of the cross-tabulation, the Pearson product-moment correlations, as displayed in Table 9, revealed that the principal's age did not significantly change the correlation between trust in the principal and teacher burnout.

Table 9 - Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Among Teacher Trust in the Principal Scores and Teacher Burnout Scores by Principal Age as Identified by Teachers in Selected Texas Public Schools

	Principal Age					
	35 years and under		36 - 45 years		46 years and older	
	Trust Score	Burnout Score	Trust Score	Burnout Score	Trust Score	Burnout Score
Trust	1	.620**	1	.611**	1	.652**
Burnout	.620**	1	.611**	1	.652**	1
(N)	30	30	165	165	112	112

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Also, the contingency coefficients were 0.349 for teachers with principals 35 years old and under, 0.465 for teachers with principals 36 years to 45 years, and 0.495 for teachers with principals 46 years and older. Therefore, the age of the teacher's principal does not appear to influence the trust-burnout relationship.

The multivariate cross-tabulation for teacher burnout by teacher trust in the principal suggested that the race of the teacher's principal does not influence the teacher trust-burnout relationship. For example, while controlling for the race of the teacher's principal, teachers with African American, Hispanic, Asian, and other race principals who reported low trust in the principal were only about 7 percent more likely to score high for teacher burnout, Table 10.

Table 10 - Teacher Burnout by Teacher Trust in the Principal, Controlling for Principal Race as Identified by Teachers in Selected Texas Public Schools (in Percentages)

Teacher Burnout	Principal Race					
	Caucasian			African Amer., Hispanic, Asian, and Other		
	Teacher Trust in the Principal			Teacher Trust in the Principal		
	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low
Low	82.7	42.9	21.7	93.3	46.5	0
Moderate	17.3	47.3	52.2	6.7	46.5	66.7
High	0	9.8	26.1	0	7.0	33.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(104)	(112)	(23)	(15)	(43)	(9)

chi square = 56.93 p<.001 (Caucasian); chi square = 23.76 p<.001 (African American, etc.)

When we conducted a correlation between teacher trust in the principal and teacher burnout by principal race, no significant differences were observed. We found that teachers with a Caucasian principal scored a correlation of 0.59 ($p < 0.01$) and teachers with an African American, Hispanic, Asian, and other race principal scored a 0.67 ($p < 0.01$). Additionally, the contingency coefficients were 0.439 for teachers with Caucasian principals and 0.512 for teachers with African American, Hispanic, Asian, and other race principals. In other words, principal race does not appear to affect the trust-burnout relationship.

A regression analysis for teacher burnout indicated that teacher trust in the principal and the demographic variables in this study, account for approximately 40 percent of the variance for teacher burnout ($R^2 = 0.396$; $F(9,305) = 22.26$) and is significant at the $p < 0.001$ level. According to this analysis, teacher trust in the principal had the most effect on teacher burnout ($\beta = 0.621$). The other variables have virtually no effect on teacher burnout.

Conclusions and Recommendations

With the increasing demands of state mandated testing, No Child Left Behind, and improving standards for all students, principals and superintendents need to understand the relationship between the factors that influence student

performance and a positive learning environment. These higher standards and expectations will amplify the necessity for teachers to perform in the classroom, thus increasing teacher stress and teacher burnout. Based on the findings and conclusion in this study, the researchers make the following recommendations.

First, principals must be willing to create and maintain positive working relationships with their teachers. Principals should begin by being kind toward their teachers. In addition, principals must be open, honest, benevolent, truthful, and competent in their roles. In order to create a positive learning environment for all constituents, principals must always remember that trust is the foundation for any relationship, and that without trust, the relationship will struggle, if not fail. The results of this study sturdily implicate the strong correlation between teacher trust in the principal and teacher burnout. If principals do not actively develop trusting relationships with their teachers, they risk creating working environments where teachers are burned out and less productive.

Second, superintendents have an obligation to insist that their principals spend time on developing trusting relationships with their teachers. Superintendents should require yearly professional development activities that promote "team building" and foster "relationship building." Examples of professional

development activities that can assist principals in developing trusting relationships include "ropes" courses, personality identification and development systems, and simply engaging in "fun" activities that are more about getting to know the individual than discussing routine procedures. Superintendents must continually remind principals that relationships with teachers can be the building blocks for a successful school system.

Finally, the researchers would encourage universities and Colleges of Education to integrate the importance of developing relationships in schools into the curriculum for their student teachers and aspiring principals. Again, with the basic element of a successful relationships being trust, teacher and administrator certification programs should include this topic in the curriculum and in classroom activities.

In sum, as the political pressures from local, state and federal entities continue to push for higher standards in the public schools, administrators have an obligation to ensure that teachers can overcome the obstacles that may interfere with classroom teaching. This study has shown that teacher trust in the principal and teacher burnout have a strong, positive correlation of 0.61 ($p < 0.01$) and that teacher trust in the principal accounts for nearly 40 percent of the variance with teacher burnout. This finding cannot be disregarded. The results

of this study suggest that principals should consider focusing on developing trusting relationships with their teachers to reduce teacher burnout.

Recommendations for Further Research

To help educators better understand the complex dimensions of trusting relationships, additional research must be completed to define more effectively the factors that lead to trusting relationships within the school system. Trust research is thorough in business and the social sciences but is limited in the educational environment. In addition, further research can establish how trusting relationships between the principal and the teacher affects other variables such as school ratings in Texas, student performance, teacher efficacy, and a positive learning environment.

This study should be replicated with a larger teacher population to determine whether the correlation will hold strong for a larger sample size. In addition, the replication of this study with a larger population would assist in analyzing the demographics of the teachers and the principals with a smaller response rate, such as African American and Hispanic teachers and principals.

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