

Educators' Social and Emotional Skills and Indicators of School Climate Predict Burnout

Jill McVey, Maxwell Box & Cristina Anguiano-Carrasco

In this study, we examined the relationship between social and emotional (SE) skills, school climate, educator variables, and educator burnout. Mosaic Educator, an assessment designed for teachers and school staff, was completed by a sample of educators in several regions of the country during the spring of 2022. This assessment measured educators' SE skills, perceptions of school climate, and experiences of burnout symptoms. Additionally, demographic and work variables were collected, including gender, race/ethnicity, hours worked, and job tenure. The final sample in this analysis included 329 educators (82.2% female, 17.8% male; 62.5% White, 19.2% Black/African American, 16.3% Hispanic/Latino, 2.0% Asian) who had an average tenure of 15.6 years.

SE skills and school climate indicators were measured using the same approach as in the *Mosaic™ by ACT® Social Emotional Learning Assessment* (ACT, 2021) by utilizing the multi-trait, multi-method approach using Likert, situational judgement test, and forced-choice items. The skills and indicators measured are as follows:

- **Sustaining Effort:** The extent to which a person's actions demonstrate persistence, goal striving, reliability, dependability, and attention to detail at work
- **Getting Along with Others:** The extent to which a person's actions demonstrate the ability to work on teams, empathy, helpfulness, trust, and trustworthiness
- **Maintaining Composure:** The extent to which a person's actions demonstrate stress management, emotional regulation, a positive response to setbacks, and poise
- **Keeping an Open Mind:** The extent to which a person's actions demonstrate ingenuity, creative thinking, inquisitiveness, flexibility, open-mindedness, and embracing diversity
- **Social Connection:** The extent to which a person's actions demonstrate assertiveness, influence, optimism, and enthusiasm
- **Relationships with School Personnel:** The extent to which school staff relate to other adults/staff members at their school
- **School Safety:** An educator's perception of the school qualities related to security at school

Burnout scores were created by averaging the nine burnout items from Maslach's Emotional Exhaustion Scale for Educators (Mind Garden, 2022), with scores ranging from 1 (lowest burnout) to 6 (highest burnout). Across all participants, the average score was 2.93 with a standard deviation of 1.18. Educator demographic and work variables, all SE skills, and both school climate dimensions were used to predict educator burnout in a regression analysis model. Table 1 summarizes the results of this analysis.

Table 1. Predicting Teacher Burnout*

Variable	Unstandardized B	Standard Error	T	Significance	Adjusted R ²
Constant	6.410	0.666	9.621	<.001	.381
Job Tenure	0.007	0.006	1.147	.252	
Hours Worked per Week	0.006	0.006	0.976	.330	
Gender: Female	-0.372	0.146	-2.554	.011	
Race: Asian	0.119	0.374	0.318	.751	
Race: Black	0.094	0.142	0.664	.507	
Race: Hispanic or Latino	0.078	0.151	0.516	.606	
Sustaining Effort	0.061	0.104	0.591	.555	
Getting Along with Others	0.407	0.134	3.035	.003	
Maintaining Composure	-0.468	0.071	-6.588	<.001	
Keeping an Open Mind	-0.046	0.090	-0.509	.611	
Social Connection	-0.097	0.070	-1.396	.164	
Relationships with School Personnel	-0.317	0.093	-3.403	<.001	
School Safety	-0.437	0.062	-7.028	<.001	

*The reference group for gender was male, and the reference group for race was White.

In this model, approximately 38% of the variance of teacher burnout was explained by gender, two SE skills, and both school climate dimensions. Consistent with other research on this topic (Roloff et al., 2022), lower levels of Maintaining Composure predicted higher levels of burnout ($p < .001$). Additionally, higher levels of Getting Along with Others also predicted higher levels of burnout ($p < .05$), which was not a result found in other studies on this topic. In terms of school climate, worse Relationships with School Personnel, as well as lower feelings of School Safety, both predicted higher levels of burnout ($p < .001$ for both school climate dimensions). Finally, the only demographic or work variable that helped predict burnout was gender, which found that

male educators tended to have higher levels of burnout than female educators, a finding that runs counter to most research on this topic (Purvanova & Muros, 2010).

Given the high levels of stress that educators face in their jobs, understanding the factors that lead to burnout can help institutions provide the kinds of policies needed to support their staff. Prior research has demonstrated that teachers who receive professional development related to SE skills tend to have lower levels of burnout (Oliveira et al., 2021). Based on this study, cultivating staff relationships, providing a safe working environment, and offering professional development related to SE skills like stress management could all provide support toward reaching this goal.

References

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