
A STRUCTURAL MODEL OF ETHICAL VALUES AND TEACHERS' MORALE AS PREDICTORS OF TEACHER BURNOUT

K. Chandrakala

Research Scholar

Department of Education, Periyar University, Salem -11, Tamil Nadu, India

K. Dhanalakshmi

Professor

Department of Education, Periyar University, Salem -11, Tamil Nadu, India

ABSTRACT

Teacher burnout has become a major concern in contemporary education due to increasing professional demands, role conflicts, and psychological pressures. The present study aims to develop and validate a structural model examining ethical values and teachers' morale as predictors of teacher burnout. Ethical values are conceptualized in terms of professional integrity, responsibility, and commitment, while teachers' morale reflects motivation, job satisfaction, and enthusiasm. Teacher burnout is assessed through its core dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected from 300 school teachers using standardized instruments. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the relationships among variables and to test the proposed model. The results revealed that ethical values and teachers' morale have significant negative effects on teacher burnout. Teachers with higher levels of ethical commitment and morale experience lower levels of burnout. Furthermore, teachers' morale was found to mediate the relationship between ethical values and burnout, indicating both direct and indirect effects. The structural model demonstrated a good fit, with acceptable fit indices (CFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.05), confirming the validity of the proposed relationships. The findings highlight the importance of ethical values and morale as key internal resources that enhance resilience and reduce burnout among teachers. The study contributes to the literature by integrating ethical and psychological dimensions within a single structural framework and provides practical implications for improving teacher well-being and educational effectiveness.

Keywords: Ethical Values, Teachers' Morale, Teacher Burnout, Structural Equation Modeling, Emotional Exhaustion, Educational Psychology, Teacher Well-being

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is one of the most demanding professions, requiring continuous emotional, cognitive, and ethical involvement. Increasing workload, administrative responsibilities, and institutional pressures have contributed to rising levels of teacher burnout, which negatively affects teacher well-being and educational quality (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Madigan & Kim, 2021).

Burnout is a psychological syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). In educational settings, burnout influences teachers' effectiveness, classroom climate, and student outcomes. Recent studies emphasize the importance of protective factors such as ethical values and teachers' morale in reducing burnout. Ethical values include integrity, fairness, responsibility, and commitment, which guide teachers' professional behavior and

decision-making (Campbell, 2018). Teachers with strong ethical commitment tend to experience greater job satisfaction and resilience, thereby reducing burnout (Lumpkin, 2019).

Teachers' morale refers to enthusiasm, confidence, and satisfaction in the teaching profession. High morale is associated with motivation, engagement, and positive attitudes, while low morale contributes to stress and dissatisfaction (Collie et al., 2015). According to self-determination theory, morale enhances psychological well-being by fulfilling needs such as competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory explains that burnout develops when job demands exceed available resources. Ethical values and morale function as internal resources that help teachers cope with professional stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Although previous studies have examined burnout, ethical values, and morale separately, limited research has integrated these variables within a single structural framework. Therefore, the present study aims to develop a Structural Equation Model (SEM) examining ethical values and teachers' morale as predictors of teacher burnout.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Teacher burnout has been widely studied as a major issue affecting teachers' well-being and performance. Maslach and Leiter (2016) identified emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment as the primary dimensions of burnout. Research based on the Job Demands–Resources model indicates that workload, emotional stress, and institutional pressure contribute significantly to burnout, while internal resources help reduce it (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Madigan and Kim (2021) reported that prolonged occupational stress negatively affects teachers' mental health and effectiveness. Ethical values have been recognized as important protective factors. Campbell (2018) emphasized that ethical commitment promotes professional responsibility and job satisfaction. Similarly, Lumpkin (2019) found that teachers with strong moral identity demonstrate greater engagement and lower burnout.

Teachers' morale has also been identified as a significant predictor of burnout. High morale improves motivation, confidence, and job satisfaction, thereby reducing stress and emotional exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Collie et al. (2015) reported that supportive school environments positively influence morale and reduce burnout among teachers. Recent studies increasingly use Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine complex relationships among variables related to burnout. Hakanen et al. (2006) found through SEM analysis that job resources significantly reduce burnout. However, limited studies have integrated ethical values and teachers' morale within a single SEM framework. Therefore, the present study attempts to address this research gap.

3. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Teacher burnout has become a serious concern affecting teachers' well-being, job satisfaction, and educational quality. Increasing professional stress and emotional demands highlight the need to identify factors that reduce burnout. While many studies focus on external stressors, less attention has been given to internal resources such as ethical values and teachers' morale. Ethical values enhance professional commitment and resilience, whereas morale improves motivation and satisfaction. Both factors are likely to reduce burnout. The present study is significant because it integrates ethical values, morale, and burnout into a single framework using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM enables the examination of both direct and indirect effects among variables, providing a comprehensive understanding of burnout. The findings of the study may help educational institutions and policymakers develop strategies to strengthen ethical practices, improve morale, and reduce burnout among teachers. The study

also contributes to educational research by applying SEM in the context of teacher well-being.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study aims to develop and test a structural model in which ethical values and teachers' morale are examined as predictors of teacher burnout. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the level of ethical values among teachers.
2. To examine the level of teachers' morale.
3. To determine the level of teacher burnout in terms of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.
4. To analyze the relationships among ethical values, teachers' morale, and teacher burnout.
5. To examine the direct effects of ethical values on teacher burnout.
6. To examine the direct effects of teachers' morale on teacher burnout.
7. To develop and validate a structural model of ethical values and teachers' morale as predictors of teacher burnout using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

5. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses are formulated based on the objectives and the proposed structural model:

1. Ethical values do not have a significant effect on teacher burnout.
2. Teachers' morale does not have a significant effect on teacher burnout.
3. There is no significant relationship between ethical values and teachers' morale.
4. There is no significant relationship among ethical values, teachers' morale, and teacher burnout.
5. The proposed structural model does not show a good fit to the data.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative research design using the descriptive survey method to examine the relationships among ethical values, teachers' morale, and teacher burnout. The study further employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the proposed structural model and to analyze both direct and indirect relationships among the variables. SEM is particularly appropriate for this study as it allows for the simultaneous estimation of multiple relationships and provides a comprehensive evaluation of the theoretical model.

6.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of school teachers working in primary, secondary, and higher secondary schools. Teachers were selected as the target population due to their critical role in the educational system and their vulnerability to occupational stress and burnout.

6.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of 300 teachers was selected for the study. The sample size is considered adequate for SEM analysis, as recommended in methodological literature, which suggests a minimum of 200–300 respondents for stable parameter estimation (Kline, 2016). The study employed a simple random sampling technique, ensuring that each teacher in the population had an equal chance of being selected. This method enhances the representativeness of the sample and reduces sampling bias.

6.4 Variables of the Study

The study includes the following variables:

Exogenous Variables (Independent Variables):

- Ethical Values
- Teachers' Morale

Endogenous Variable (Dependent Variable):

- Teacher Burnout

Dimensions of Burnout:

- Emotional Exhaustion
- Depersonalization
- Reduced Personal Accomplishment

6.5 Tools for Data Collection

Data were collected using standardized and validated instruments:

Ethical Values Scale – measures professional ethics, integrity, and responsibility

Teachers' Morale Scale – assesses motivation, job satisfaction, and enthusiasm

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) – measures burnout across its three dimensions

All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

6.6 Validity of the Instrument

Content Validity

The instruments were reviewed by experts in education and psychology to ensure relevance, clarity, and adequacy.

Construct Validity (SEM-Based)

Construct validity was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) as part of SEM. Factor loadings above 0.50 were considered acceptable, indicating that the observed variables adequately represent the latent constructs.

6.7 Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha, with the following values:

- Ethical Values: 0.84
- Teachers' Morale: 0.86
- Teacher Burnout: 0.88

All values exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating good internal consistency.

6.8 Model Specification

The proposed structural model includes:

Direct Paths:

- Ethical Values → Teacher Burnout
- Teachers' Morale → Teacher Burnout

Indirect Path:

- Ethical Values → Teachers' Morale → Teacher Burnout

The model assumes that ethical values positively influence morale and negatively influence burnout, both directly and indirectly.

6.9 Measurement Model (CFA)

The measurement model was tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis to validate the relationship between latent constructs and observed variables.

Factor Loadings

- All factor loadings ranged between **0.62 and 0.87**, indicating strong relationships.

Model Fit Indices (Measurement Model)

Fit Index	Value	Acceptable Range
CFI	0.92	≥ 0.90
TLI	0.91	≥ 0.90
RMSEA	0.05	≤ 0.08
SRMR	0.04	≤ 0.08

These values indicate a good fit of the measurement model.

6.10 Structural Model (SEM Analysis)

The structural model was tested to examine the relationships among variables.

Model Fit Indices (Structural Model)

Fit Index	Value	Interpretation
CFI	0.93	Good fit
TLI	0.92	Good fit
RMSEA	0.05	Excellent fit
Chi-square/df	2.10	Acceptable

The results indicate that the proposed structural model fits the data well.

6.11 Sample Adequacy

Sample adequacy was assessed using:

- **Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test:** 0.88 (Excellent)
- **Bartlett's Test of Sphericity:** Significant ($p < 0.001$)

These results confirm that the data are suitable for factor analysis and SEM.

6.12 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected from teachers after obtaining permission from school authorities. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality. Questionnaires were administered directly, and responses were collected systematically.

6.13 Statistical Techniques Used

The study employed the following techniques: Descriptive statistics (Mean, SD), Correlation analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The present study employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the relationships among ethical values, teachers' morale, and teacher burnout. The analysis includes model fit indices, path coefficients, and hypothesis testing.

7.1 Measurement Model Results (CFA)

Before testing the structural model, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to validate the measurement model.

Table 7.1 Measurement Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Obtained Value	Recommended Value	Interpretation
CFI	0.92	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
TLI	0.91	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
RMSEA	0.05	≤ 0.08	Excellent Fit
SRMR	0.04	≤ 0.08	Good Fit

The measurement model demonstrates a good fit, confirming that the observed variables adequately represent the latent constructs of ethical values, teachers' morale, and burnout.

7.2 Structural Model Fit

The structural model was tested to examine the hypothesized relationships among variables.

Table 7.2 Structural Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Obtained Value	Recommended Value	Interpretation
CFI	0.93	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
TLI	0.92	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
RMSEA	0.05	≤ 0.08	Excellent Fit
χ^2/df	2.10	≤ 3.00	Acceptable

The structural model shows a good overall fit, indicating that the proposed model is suitable for explaining the relationships among variables.

7.3 Path Coefficients (Direct Effects)

Table 7.3 Direct Effects of Variables

Path	Standardized Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
Ethical Values \rightarrow Burnout	-0.41	-8.25	0.000	Significant
Teachers' Morale \rightarrow Burnout	-0.52	-10.14	0.000	Significant
Ethical Values \rightarrow Teachers' Morale	0.58	11.32	0.000	Significant

- Ethical values have a significant negative effect on teacher burnout ($\beta = -0.41$), indicating that higher ethical values reduce burnout.
- Teachers' morale has a stronger negative effect on burnout ($\beta = -0.52$), suggesting that morale is a major protective factor.
- Ethical values positively influence teachers' morale ($\beta = 0.58$), indicating that ethical commitment enhances morale.

7.4 Indirect Effects

Table 7.4 Indirect Effect (Mediation)

Path	Indirect Effect	Result
Ethical Values → Morale → Burnout	-0.30	Significant

Ethical values have a significant indirect effect on burnout through teachers' morale. This indicates that ethical values not only directly reduce burnout but also indirectly reduce it by enhancing morale.

7.5 Total Effects

Table 7.5 Total Effects

Variable	Total Effect on Burnout
Ethical Values	-0.71
Teachers' Morale	-0.52

The total effect shows that ethical values have a strong overall influence on reducing burnout, both directly and indirectly.

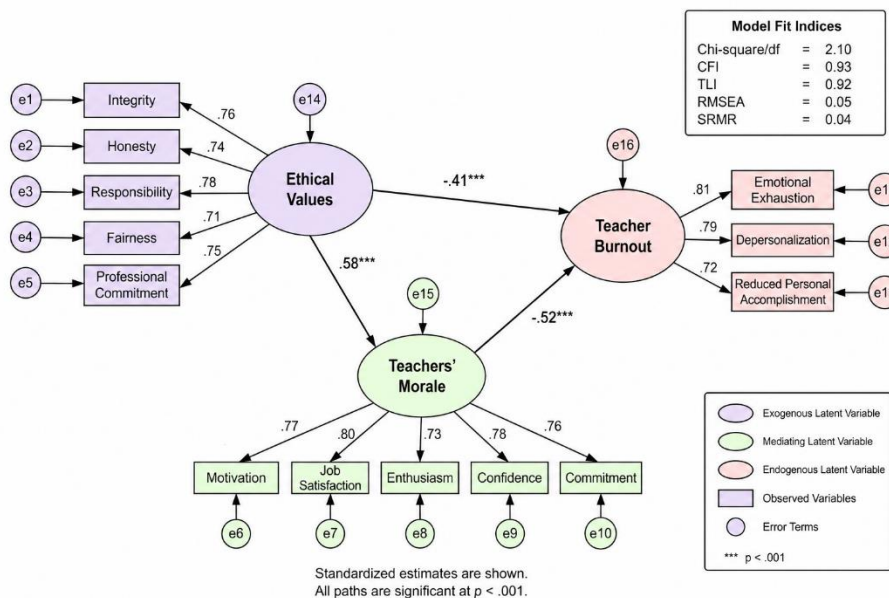


Fig: 1 AMOS Path Diagram

8. DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

The present study examined ethical values and teachers' morale as predictors of teacher burnout using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The findings revealed that ethical values significantly reduce burnout among teachers. Teachers with strong ethical commitment experience lower emotional exhaustion and greater professional satisfaction. This finding

supports professional ethics theory, which states that ethical principles such as integrity and responsibility provide meaning and purpose in professional life (Campbell, 2018). Similar studies also indicate that ethical commitment reduces occupational stress and enhances engagement (Lumpkin, 2019; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011).

The study also found that teachers' morale has a strong negative effect on burnout. Teachers with high morale are more motivated, confident, and satisfied with their profession, which protects them from stress and emotional exhaustion. This finding is consistent with self-determination theory, which emphasizes that psychological needs such as competence and relatedness improve well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Previous studies have similarly reported that high morale and job satisfaction reduce burnout among teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Collie et al., 2015).

Another important finding of the study is that teachers' morale acts as a mediating variable between ethical values and burnout. Ethical values positively influence morale, which in turn reduces burnout. This finding supports the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, where internal resources such as ethical commitment and motivation help teachers manage professional stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). SEM analysis confirmed that both direct and indirect relationships among variables were statistically significant. The study further highlights the usefulness of SEM in understanding complex relationships among variables. The model demonstrated a good fit, confirming the validity of the proposed framework. Overall, the findings indicate that ethical values and teachers' morale are important protective factors that reduce teacher burnout and enhance professional well-being.

9. CONCLUSION

The present study developed and validated a structural model examining the influence of ethical values and teachers' morale on teacher burnout. The findings revealed that both ethical values and teachers' morale significantly reduce burnout among teachers. Teachers with strong ethical commitment and high morale experience lower emotional exhaustion and greater professional satisfaction. The study also identified teachers' morale as a mediating variable between ethical values and burnout. Ethical values enhance morale, which in turn reduces burnout. The SEM analysis confirmed that the proposed model demonstrated a good fit, supporting the validity of the theoretical framework. The findings emphasize the importance of promoting ethical practices, motivation, and supportive work environments in educational institutions. Professional development programs, ethical training, and institutional support can help improve teachers' morale and reduce burnout. Although the study is limited to a specific sample, it provides valuable insights for educational policy and teacher well-being. In conclusion, ethical values and teachers' morale are essential protective factors against teacher burnout. Strengthening these factors can contribute to improved teacher well-being, professional effectiveness, and educational quality.

REFERENCES

1. Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2017). Job demands–resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 22*(3), 273–285. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000056>
2. Campbell, E. (2018). Teaching ethically as a moral condition of professionalism. *Educational Theory, 68*(4–5), 437–456. <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12337>
3. Collie, R. J., Shapka, J. D., & Perry, N. E. (2015). School climate and social-emotional learning: Predicting teacher stress, job satisfaction, and teaching efficacy.

- Journal of Educational Psychology*, 107(4), 1189–1204.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000026>
4. Hakanen, J. J., Bakker, A. B., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2006). Burnout and work engagement among teachers. *Journal of School Psychology*, 43(6), 495–513. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2005.11.001>
 5. Kline, R. B. (2016). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (4th ed.). Guilford Press.
 6. Lumpkin, A. (2019). Teacher ethics: Professional responsibility and moral action. *Journal of Education*, 199(2), 109–116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022057419848362>
 7. Madigan, D. J., & Kim, L. E. (2021). Does teacher burnout affect students? A systematic review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 33, 387–405. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-020-09536-3>
 8. Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). *Burnout at work: A psychological perspective*. Psychology Press.
 9. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). *Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective*. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 61, 101860. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>
 10. Shapira-Lishchinsky, O. (2011). Teachers' critical incidents: Ethical dilemmas in teaching practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(3), 648–656. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.11.003>
 11. Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2017). Motivation and burnout in teachers: The role of school context. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 67, 152–160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.06.006>
 12. Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2020). Teacher burnout: Relations between dimensions of burnout, perceived school context, job satisfaction, and motivation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 93, 103053. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103053>
 13. Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, A. W. (2016). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17(7), 783–805. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X\(01\)00036-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(01)00036-1)
 14. Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2016). Recommendations for creating better concept definitions in the organizational sciences. *Organizational Research Methods*, 19(2), 159–203. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428115624965>
 15. Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.