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Does Equity Sensitivity Moderate the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Teacher Burnout?

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The purpose of this study was to examine the question whether equity sensitivity has a moderating effect on the relationship between self-efficacy and the three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement. A total of 271 secondary school teachers (65% male and 35% female) participated in this study. Three questionnaires dealing with burnout, self-efficacy, and equity sensitivity were administered. The findings show that equity sensitivity has a significant though small moderating effect on the relationship between perceived self-efficacy and two dimensions of burnout, i.e. emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. No evidence was found for the moderating effect of equity sensitivity on the relationship between self-efficacy and depersonalization. Implications of the study's findings are discussed.

Burnout among teachers

Teachers play an important role in the education of our children. Without teachers it is hard to imagine how cultural and intellectual achievements could be passed on to a next generation. However, the tasks of teachers are so demanding and heavy that quite a few teachers experience feelings of exhaustion during their career (Albertson & Kagan, 1987; Burke & Greenglass, 1993; Friedman, 1996; Merseth, 1992; Van Horn & Van Dierendonck, 1998). Farber (1991) found that approximately 5 % to 20 % of all teachers in the USA would be burned out at a given moment in their career. As early as 1984, Cox and Brockley concluded "...work appears as a major source of stress for working people with teachers appearing to experience more stress through work than non-teachers" (p. 84). Subsequent research among British teachers showed that about a third of them experienced the job of a teacher as extremely

stressful (Borg, 1990). Dutch figures point in the same direction. In a study on views about employment among Dutch workers, teachers indicated they were least able to cope with job-related workloads in comparison with industrial workers, civil servants, caregivers, and commercial workers (SEO, 1988; Van Veldhoven & Broersen, 1999). In the USA, too, it appeared that teachers suffer from higher levels of stress than the average population (Travers & Cooper, 1993). Some of the work stresses teachers may encounter today are occasioned by educational changes (Burke & Richardsen, 1996), or stem from work overload (Schaufeli & Buunk, 1992) or difficulties in managing pupils (Emmer & Hickman, 1991; Brouwers & Tomic, 1999). Blase (1982) identified burnout as one type of chronic response to the cumulative, long-term negative impact of work stresses.

Burnout is generally defined as a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that results from long-term involvement in work situations that are emotionally taxing. Burnout consists of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is defined as feelings of being emotionally

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overextended; depersonalization refers to an indifferent or distant attitude towards people one works with or for; personal accomplishment refers to satisfaction with past and present accomplishments (Burke, Greenglass & Schwarzer, 1996; Freudenberger, 1974; Glass & McKnight, 1996; Greenglass, 2001; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Burned out teachers are not able to properly perform their job any longer. So it is obvious that burnout is found to be related to negative outcomes for the *individual* teacher (mental and physical disorders, lack of satisfaction, doubt of personal capabilities, diminished level of self-efficacy), the *school organization* (lack of continuation in the educational process of students, teacher absence through illness, difficulties in finding adequate replacements), and *society* in general (level of education, disablement insurance benefits), (Burke & Richardsen, 1996; Burke et al., 1996; Van Dierendonck, Schaufeli & Buunk, 1998). We assume that gaining an insight into the moderating role of equity sensitivity between self-efficacy and burnout among teachers may be helpful in finding means to increase job satisfaction thus preventing the onset of burnout (O'Neill & Mone, 1998).

Self-efficacy and teacher burnout

Self-efficacy, a central component of social cognitive theory offers insight in the relation between the individual and work-related attitudes (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura, self-efficacy influences the individual's beliefs concerning his or her own capabilities. The Individual's level and perseverance of actions are substantially influenced by his or her self-efficacy beliefs. Many researchers have supported Bandura's findings with respect to the central role self-efficacy plays in teaching and other professions (Deforest & Hughes, 1992; Parkay, Greenwood, Olejnik, & Proller, 1988; Rick, Lev & Fisher, 1996; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998; Vrugt, 1995). Teachers' efficacy appeared to be related to quite a few school dimensions, such as classroom behavior and relations with the school organization (Rich et al., 1996). In various studies significant relationships were found between self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and burnout (Wolpin, Burke, & Greenglass, 1991; Smith & Bourke, 1992). Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy appeared to have high levels of job satisfaction and low levels of burnout. This finding is consistent with Bandura's contention (1997) that it is not the tasks

as such that are the sources of negative stress and burnout, but the individual's low self-efficacy beliefs to successfully perform tasks imposed on him or her. There is an abundance of evidence supporting the assumption that low levels of self-efficacy are related to relatively high levels of burnout, and high levels of self-efficacy to low levels of burnout (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1986, 1997; Borg & Falzon, 1993; Leiter, 1992; Van Dierendonck, Schaufeli, & Buunk, 2001; Wu & Short, 1993). Strong self-efficacy beliefs may function as a buffer against negative stress originating from non-realizable personal expectations (Jayaratne & Chess, 1986). Following on this, results of a German study (Schmitz, 2001) also hint at the protective function of self-efficacy with regard to negative stress and the onset of burnout among teachers. As for the specific domain of classroom management activities, a significant relationship has been found between perceived self-efficacy and burnout (Brouwers & Tomic, 1998; Evers, Brouwers & Tomic, 2002; Evers, Brouwers, Tomic & Van Alphen, 2001; Woolfolk, Rosoff & Hoy, 1990). On the whole, the importance of self-efficacy beliefs in relation to burnout is aptly put in the following statement "...one must feel efficacious in areas that are meaningful and significant in order to escape burnout" (Cherniss, 1993, p.141).

Equity sensitivity, a moderator between self-efficacy and burnout?

Equity theory (Adams, 1963, 1965) assumes that all individuals are equally sensitive to equity. According to equity theory individuals compare inputs and outcomes of their own behavior to the input / outcome ratio of comparable others. When individuals perceive iniquity in relationships they experience *distress* and try to restore equity in the relationship (Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1985). However, it was found that individuals differed according to the *perception* of equity (Huseman et al., 1985, 1987; King, Miles, & Day, 1993; Miles, Hatfield, & Huseman, 1989; Patrick & Jackson, 1991). It means that Adams's norm of *universal* equity had to be replaced by an *individual* norm of equity. Miles et al. (1989) suggest that the *individual* perception of inequity leads to feelings of *distress*, too. Although equity sensitivity theory claims that each individual differs according to his or her perception of equity, it still proposes to categorize individuals into three classes depending on their different preferences for levels of

equity: benevolents, equity sensitives, and entitleds (Miles, et al., 1989). Individuals of the first class prefer inputs to exceed outcomes, or have a greater 'tolerance' for inputs (Huseman et al., 1985, 1987; King & Miles, 1994). Equity sensitive persons prefer inputs to equal outcomes, and entitled persons prefer outcomes to exceed inputs. Benevolent persons, compared with entitled persons, seem to be less vulnerable to feelings of distress when they perceive that their inputs exceed their outcomes when contrasted with comparable others. Equity sensitivity is found to be a personality trait of importance in understanding someone's behavior in organizations (Kickul & Lester, 2001).

Someone's self-efficacy beliefs predict goals and performance attainments of future behavior. As for burnout it means that weak occupational self-efficacy beliefs are important mediators in the onset of burnout (Bandura, 1997). Various studies on teacher self-efficacy validated Bandura's theorem, but it is an interesting question whether other variables might play a role in the correlation between self-efficacy and teacher burnout (Bliss & Finneran, 1991; Brouwers, 2000; Evers et al., 2002; Greenwood, Oleynik, & Parkay, 1990). Could not it be that equity sensitivity, an important variable in the relation between individual and organization, might have a moderating influence on the correlation between self-efficacy and the onset of burnout? Or in other words, do self-efficacy and equity sensitivity interact in the onset of teacher burnout?

Literature on equity sensitivity clearly shows that individual workers compare their organizational input / outcome ratio with the same ratio of comparable other individuals (O'Neill & Mone, 1998). As teachers also work in a social setting, they will very likely be involved in the same comparison process as other workers: teachers are concerned about rewards and recognition (Smith & Bourke, 1992). Teachers invest their own training, certificates, time, attention, understanding and patience into the relation with the school. They are rewarded with money, and perhaps appreciation and gratitude of pupils, parents, and school board. A teacher might very well believe that he or she is under-rewarded, for harder work does not result in higher income, status or social appreciation. It also happens that teachers, who initially looked upon their job as a vocation and advanced idealistic motives for having chosen the teaching profession, may go through disappoint-

ments with regard to this. Teachers are also wage earners and members of a highly materialistic society. Van Horn and Schaufeli (1996) showed that teachers who feel dissatisfied with the perceived imbalance between inputs and outcomes at an organizational level (teacher-school) suffer from at least one dimension of burnout, emotional exhaustion. Byrne (1991), too, found that organizational factors significantly contributed to teacher burnout. As was said before, highly self-efficacious teachers appear to be more satisfied and display fewer symptoms of burnout than low-efficacious teachers. Work satisfaction, an important predictor of teacher burnout, decreased significantly as a result of for instance work overload, lack of promotional prospects, and lack of collaborative decision-making structures.

In short, there is ample evidence that two personality variables, self-efficacy and equity sensitivity are important in the onset or prevention of burnout among teachers. Self-efficacy beliefs are constructed from various sources, for instance from feedback originating from referential comparisons with others (Bandura, 1997). As feelings about over- or underreward serve as important feedback information for molding someone's self-efficacy beliefs, we assume that they may positively or negatively influence teachers' general self-efficacy levels, thus serving as a moderator between self-efficacy and the beginning of burnout. For that matter, Kickul and Lester (2001) found that equity sensitivity moderated the relation between psychological contract breach and employees' attitudes and behavior.

Hypothesis

The present paper examines the question whether the correlation between self-efficacy and burnout is moderated by someone's equity sensitivity. In view of the theoretical reflections in the preceding parts we propose the following *hypothesis*: Equity sensitivity has a moderating effect on the relationship between self-efficacy and the onset of burnout among teachers. We assume that the nature of the effect will be stronger for low efficacious benevolent teachers than for low efficacious entitled teachers. Benevolent teachers are inclined to give. However, low efficacious benevolent teachers are not very successful in their job. They shun challenges, and do not have satisfying relations with students and colleagues. In short, their inclination to "give" is hampered by their low level of self-efficacy. Negative self-evalua-

tions that ensue, will probably lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and stress. Entitled teachers have a greater tolerance towards outcomes. As low efficacious entitled teachers are not so much focused on their capability to give students, colleagues, and the organization their due, they will probably be less frustrated by the lack of inputs in the various relationships. In comparison with low efficacious benevolent teachers, low efficacious entitled teachers will therefore experience fewer disappointments because of the lack of trust in their capabilities.

Method

Participants

We asked 545 teachers of 12 secondary schools in the Netherlands to participate in our study. As our country consists of twelve Provinces (comparable to counties), we selected 1 school at random per Province. The total number of respondents was 271: 175 participants were male (64.6 %) and 96 were female (35.4 %). Their average age was 45.57 years ($SD = 8.39$), with a range of 23 to 62 years. The average teaching experience in years was 18.99 ($SD = 9.25$) with a range of 0 to 39 years. The average number of hours spent in the classroom was 21.6 ($SD = 5.87$), ranging from 7 to 33 hours. Dutch secondary education employs teachers of the first (academic training), second and third degree (teacher training colleges). 41.1 % of our respondents were first degree teachers, 44.1 % second degree, and 14.3 % third degree teachers, while 0.4 of our respondents were not qualified at all.

In comparison with a recent national study among secondary school teachers, with 3004 respondents, (Berkhout, Zijl & Van Praag, 1998) the sample of the present study was representative in terms of sex ($c^2 (1)$) = 0.66), $p > .0500$, and in terms of age ($t = 0.06$), $p > .050$.

As 545 teachers were approached and 271 teachers participated, the response rate was 50 %, which is not only adequate according to Babbie (1994), but also in accordance with the findings of Asch, Jedrziewski, and Christakis (1997).

Procedure

Using telephone directories, we first at random called several school principals per Province to explain the purpose of our study and asked for their cooperation. Names of schools that agreed to participate were put in 12 boxes (1 box per prov-

ince). From each box we at random selected one school per Province and sent self-report questionnaires on burnout, self-efficacy, and equity sensitivity to the school in question. All teachers employed were asked to complete the questionnaires. To ensure a high response rate, the teachers were sent a written reminder. They were asked to return the completed forms anonymously in postage-paid envelopes. We used telephone reminders for school principals, for according to Asch et al. (1997) telephone reminders are associated with higher response rates.

To obtain the highest possible response rate, we followed the suggestions made by Green and Hutchinson (1996) as far as possible: there were no postal charges, we had precontact with the school principals, and we used brief questionnaires.

Measures

Burnout. Burnout was measured using the Dutch version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory for teachers (MBI-NL-Ed, Schaufeli & Van Horn, 1995; Schaufeli, Daamen & Van Mierlo, 1994; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The questionnaire has been shown to be reproducible and valid (Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Leiter & Durup, 1994; Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996, 1997).

The questionnaire consisted of 20 items divided into three subscales: Emotional Exhaustion (8 items), Depersonalization (5 items), and Personal Accomplishment (7 items). The items are measured on a 7-point scale, ranging from 'never' to 'every day'. Scores on the scales are added separately. High scores on the scales Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization, and low scores on the Personal Accomplishment scale are indicative of burnout. Examples of Emotional Exhaustion items are: "I feel emotionally drained because of my work"; "I feel burned out because of my work". Examples of Depersonalization items are "I've become more callous toward people since I took this job"; "I feel students blame me for some of their problems". Examples of Personal Accomplishment items are "I feel encouraged after working closely with my recipients"; and "I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job". In a study among secondary school teachers ($N = 916$), Schaufeli and Van Horn (1995) found Cronbach's alphas of .87, .71 and .78, respectively. Cronbach's alphas of the MBI_NL_Ed in the present study were .87, .71, and .80, respectively, which is adequate according to the criterion of

Table 1. A Survey of Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, Correlations Between Variables, and Alpha Coefficients in Brackets on the Diagonal (N = 271)

	Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Gender	-	-								
2	Age	45.57	8.39								
3	Experience	18.99	9.25	-.24**	.79**						
4	Equity Sensitivity	28.09	5.57	-.01	.02	-.02	(.81)				
5	Self-Efficacy	41.48	6.51	.05	.01	.02	.19**	(.79)			
6	Depersonalization	6.96	4.33	-.16**	.02	.02	-.20**	-.33**	(.70)		
7	Emotional Exhaustion	17.66	8.23	-.13*	.11	.05	-.11	-.26**	.46	(.87)	
8	Personal Accomplishment	25.80	5.90	.03	-.17**	-.15*	.23**	.43**	-.40	-.43**	(.80)

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Results for Variables Predicting Depersonalization, Emotional Exhaustion, and Personal Accomplishment (N = 271)

Predicting Variable	Depersonalization					Emotional exhaustion					Personal Accomplishment				
	95% C.I. for B					95% C.I. for B					95% C.I. for B				
	B	u.b.	l.b.	β	ΔR²	B	u.b.	l.b.	β	ΔR²	B	u.b.	l.b.	β	ΔR²
Step 1					.03					.03					.03*
Age	-.019	-.120	.081	-.01		.149	-.043	.340	.19		-.097	-.234	.040	-.19*	
Sex	-1.542	-2.655	-.428	-.15**		-2.011	-4.129	.108	-.10		-.173	-1.689	1.343	-.04	
Experience	.007	-.084	.097	.00		-.085	-.257	.087	-.11		-.030	-.153	.093	-.03	
Step 2					.12**					.07**					.21**
Self-Efficacy	-.198	-.275	-.122	-.30**		-.294	-.444	-.144	-.27**		.366	.267	.464	.44**	
Equity Sensitivity	-.108	-.196	-.019	-.12*		-.100	-.274	.074	-.03		.166	.052	.280	-.11*	
Step 3					.01					.02**					.03**
SE X ES	-.010	-.023	.004	-.08		-.034	-.060	-.008	-.16**		.028	.011	.045	.18**	
Overall F for Equation	8.03**					6.02**					16.77**				

Note 1. β is the standardized regression coefficient of the full regression equation with all predictor variables. The increase of R^2 for the variables in one step is based on the F-test for the step in question.
Note 2. The 95% confidence interval: u.b. = upper bound; l.b. = lower bound.

.70 suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

Self-Efficacy. Self-efficacy was measured using the Dutch version of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) developed by Sherer, Maddux, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs and Rogers (1982). The original scale consisted of 17 items that were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Later, 5 items were removed (Woodruff & Cashman, 1993). Bosscher and Smit (1998) translated the 12-item scale into the Dutch language (GSES-12) and found a Cronbach's alpha of .69 (N = 2860). Examples are "When I make a mistake I am just going to do my utmost", and "I suffer from self-doubts". Cronbach's alpha of the GSES-12 in the present study was .78.

Equity Sensitivity. The Equity Sensitivity Instrument (ESI) developed by Huseman, Hatfield, and Miles (1985) measured equity sensitivity. The scale was adapted for the teaching profession in such a way that the English word 'organization' was altered to read "school organisatie" in Dutch [English "school organization"]. The instrument consists of five items, with each stem being followed by two statements. The participants are asked to divide 10 points between the two statements in each set. One example is "It would be more important for me to: A. Help others; B. Watch out for my own good". The added scores of the items decide a person's place on a continuum ranging from highly benevolent (having scored a theoretical maximum of 50 points) to highly entitled (having scored a theoretical minimum of 0 points). Previous studies using ESI yielded Cronbach's alphas of .80 (Huseman et al., 1985) and .86 (O'Neill & Mone, 1998). Cronbach's alpha of the ESI in the present study was .81.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics, the correlations between the variables and Cronbach's alphas. Equity sensitivity and self-efficacy were positively correlated. Self-efficacy negatively correlated with two of the three burnout dimensions, depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, and positively with personal accomplishment. Equity sensitivity significantly correlated negatively with depersonalization and positively with personal accomplishment but had no significant correlation with emotional exhaustion.

Hierarchical regression analysis was applied to examine the moderating effect of equity sensi-

tivity on the relationships between self-efficacy and the burnout dimensions. For each burnout dimension, we entered the control variables age, gender, and experience in the first step of the regression equation. The independent variables equity sensitivity and self-efficacy were entered in the second step. Finally, in the third step, we computed the product of these variables, describing the interaction between them.

The first regression equation reflects the hypothesized moderating effect of equity sensitivity on the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion. The interaction term (self-efficacy X equity sensitivity) shows a significant effect on emotional exhaustion (β = -.16, p < .01), which indicates that equity sensitivity has an effect on the relationship of self-efficacy with the first dimension of the burnout syndrome (Table 2).

To show the interaction effect in diagram form, Figure 1 plots the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion at high (half a standard deviation above the mean) and low levels of equity sensitivity (half a standard deviation below the mean), respectively. It appears that the nature of the moderating effect of equity sensitivity on the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion is significantly stronger for benevolent teachers than for entitled teachers.

The second regression equation reflects the hypothesized moderating effect of equity sensitivity on the relationship between self-efficacy and depersonalization. Table 2 shows that the interaction term (self-efficacy X equity sensitivity) was not significant (β = -.08, non-significant) and that there was no incremental change in R^2.

The third regression equation reflects the hypothesized moderating effect of equity sensitivity on the relationship between self-efficacy and personal accomplishment. The interaction term (self-efficacy X equity sensitivity) shows a significant effect on personal accomplishment (β = .18, p < .01), which indicates that equity sensitivity has an effect on the relationship of self-efficacy with the third dimension of the burnout syndrome (Table 2). The significant incremental change in R^2 was .03, significant for $p.$ < .01.

To show the interaction effect in diagram form, Figure 2 plots the moderating effect of equity sensitivity on the relationship between self-efficacy and personal accomplishment at high (half a standard deviation above the mean) and low
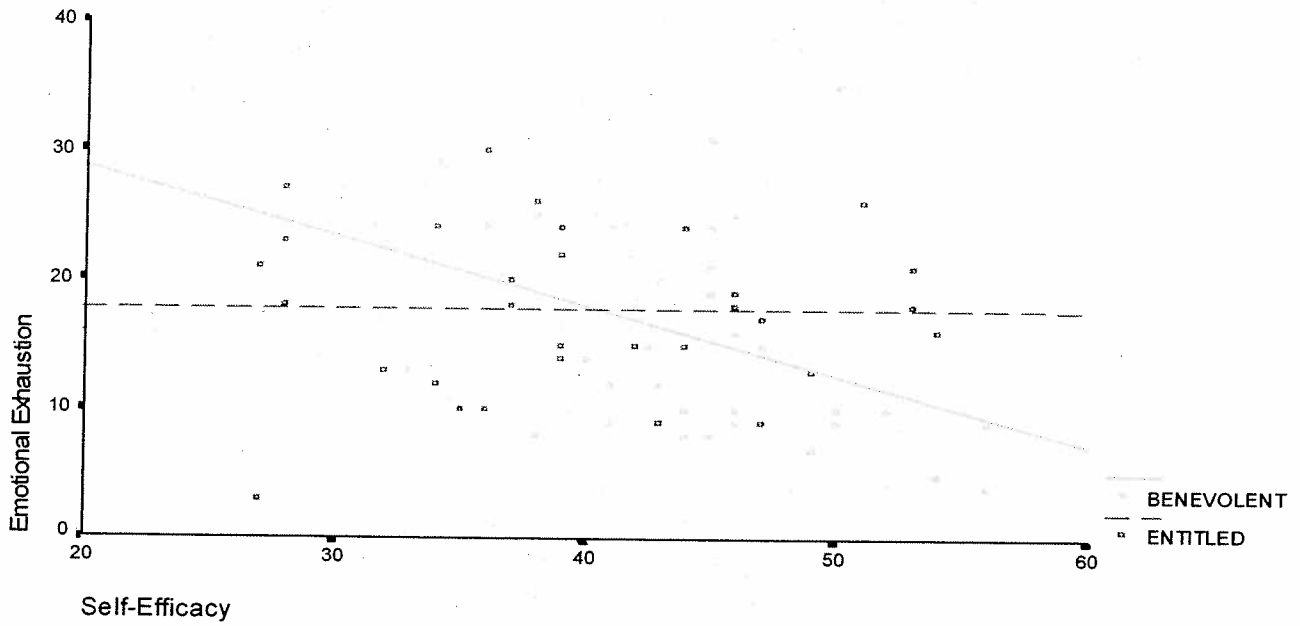
Figure 1. Equity Sensitivity as a Moderator of Self-Efficacy and Emotional Exhaustion

levels of equity sensitivity (half a standard deviation below the mean). It appears that the nature of the moderating effect of equity sensitivity between self-efficacy and personal accomplishment is significantly stronger for benevolent teachers than for entitled teachers.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to examine whether equity sensitivity had a moderating effect on the relationship between self-efficacy and the three dimensions of burnout among teachers. We formulated the following hypothesis. Equity sensitivity will have a moderating effect on the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout in teachers. We moreover assumed that the nature of effect would be stronger for benevolent teachers.

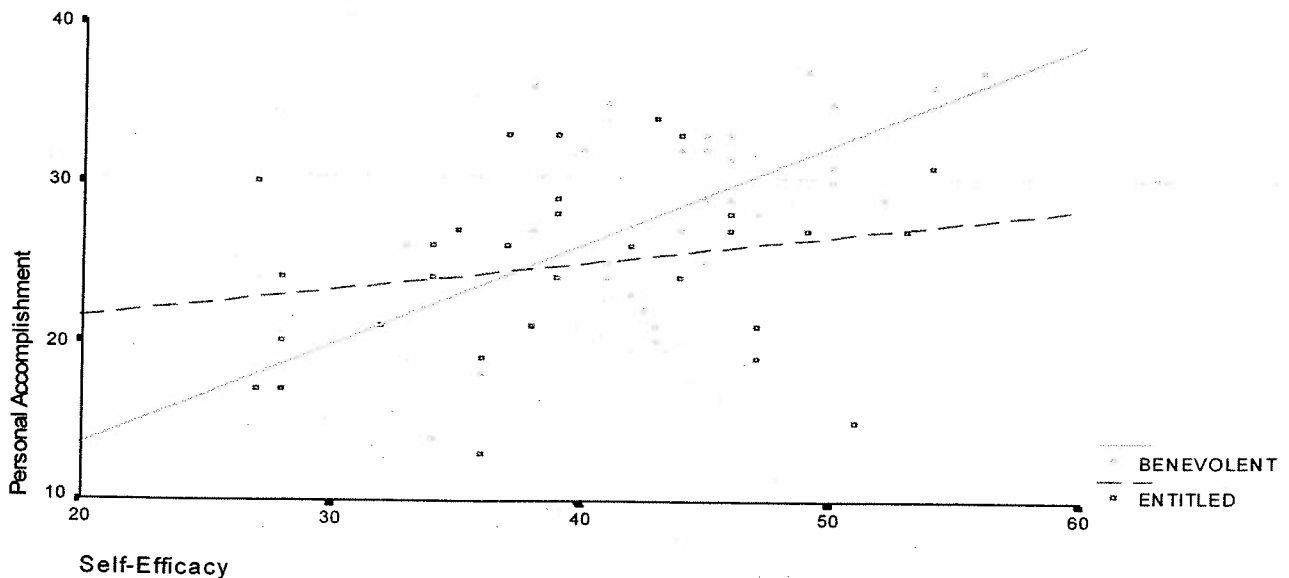The findings of this study partly support the

Figure 2. Equity Sensitivity as a Moderator of Self-Efficacy and Personal Accomplishment

hypothesis that equity sensitivity moderates the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout. First, the results of our study show that there is a significant, though small effect of equity sensitivity on the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion. It also appears that efficacious benevolent teachers run a slightly greater risk of getting emotionally exhausted than entitled teachers do. Second, our findings also show that there is a significant, though small moderating effect of equity sensitivity on the relationship between self-efficacy and personal accomplishment. Cherniss (1980) found that doubts about personal accomplishment were important stressors in the lives of new professionals. When someone performs actions he or she evaluates these actions (Bandura, 1997). Satisfactory evaluations that give rise to self-enhancing feelings raise someone's self-efficacy. Applied to equity sensitivity feelings of a benevolent teacher, it means that lack of successes, in the present study a perceived lack of contributing inputs in the relationship with students, will lead to negative self-evaluations, which in turn results in lower levels of efficacy. Doubts about personal accomplishments will crop up because of past failures, and gradually the benevolent teacher's level of personal accomplishment will diminish. Entitled teachers, however, show a greater tolerance towards outcomes, and they may perceive successes in other domains of their job, thus preventing a noticeable decrease of their personal accomplishment.

When someone shows symptoms of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization is not far behind. However, in our study we found that the moderating effect of equity sensitivity on the relationship between self-efficacy and the third dimension of burnout, depersonalization, was not confirmed. According to equity theory, feelings of distress and frustration lead to the termination of a particular cognitive or actual relationship, in this case with students (Huseman et al., 1985). As *actual* withdrawal from the relationship is unlikely to take place, because it would mean the loss of a job and income, the only alternative is to adopt the *cognitive*, distress causing withdrawal. However, the only relationship that was found in literature related to equity sensitivity and the *tendency* to leave a job (O'Neill & Mone, 1998; Wolpin et al., 1991). We suggest a few explanations for our erratic results with regard to depersonalization. First, the MBI uses only 5 items to test dep-

ersonalization and results show that the depersonalization dimension is occasionally somewhat less reliable than the other two dimensions of burnout. We came across low reliabilities for the MBI depersonalization scale of only .46 (Betgem & Scheppink, 1993; Van Gorp, Schaufeli & Hopstaken, 1993) and .52 (Evers, Tomic & Brouwers, 2001). The question is whether depersonalization is caused by students only. Iwanicki (1983), for instance, incorporates relationships not only with students, but also with parents and colleagues into the depersonalization questionnaire. Second, teachers often call their jobs a vocation. Cherniss (1995) found that people in the human services who harbor a set of confirmed ideals, e.g. nuns, do not show symptoms of burnout. A teacher knows and morally accepts that inequity in his relationship with students is an essential part of the job. Teachers focus on and are trained in educating, helping and assisting students. Consequently, just like equity feelings, the sense of duty towards students may be so ingrained in the teacher's personality that it prevents feelings of depersonalization from developing. Support for this supposition can be found in Van Dierendonck et al. (1998). They discovered that a cognitively oriented burnout intervention program did not affect depersonalization, which means that the participants' feelings of inequity in their relationship with the recipients of their care were not influenced by the program.

Our study shows that the moderating influence of equity sensitivity on the relationship between self-efficacy and two dimensions of burnout may be taken into account when attempting to understand the development and presence of burnout. Although the three dimensions of burnout are universally recognized, described and determined, burnout itself develops in a way that is unique to each individual. General antecedents appear to have serious, less serious or no serious influences at all on the development of burnout in a particular person. And this finding applies to the approach and recovery of burnout, too. As equity sensitivity is a very individual personality variable, it should be measured before psychologists allocate burned out teachers to an intervention program. The reason is that when feelings of inequity negatively affect the relationship between teacher and school, it may be advisable to first restore the balance of perceived investments and outcomes (Brouwers, 2000). Only after that, programs aimed at enhancing the teachers' skills and

self-efficacy feelings are believed to be successful (Brouwers & Tomic, 1999d). The relevance of this study is that it clarifies the role of a moderating personality trait that seems be important in the onset, prevention and recovery of burnout. Small as the moderating effect of equity sensitivity may be, it can play a part in the approach to teacher burnout.

This study probably suffers from the some of the problems, as do other studies in which the data are obtained from self-reported information such as lack of generalizability, response bias and reliability problems. However, we believe that response bias may be of little importance in our study, as the respondents were granted anonymity. The reliability of our instruments and results would benefit from critical studies involving a larger group of respondents in different job settings and over a longer period. As our results were obtained from a nation-wide random sample of schools, doubts about generalizability may have been obviated .

Although the moderating role of equity sensitivity in the relation between self-efficacy and burnout seems to be a matter of minor significance, past research reveals the importance of feelings of inequity in the relation between workers and their organization. When a person's well-being is at stake, all possibilities should be seized to improve his or her situation and that is why we recommend future examinations among teachers to shed more light on the moderating role of equity sensitivity between self-efficacy and burnout.

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