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Title:

A Multilevel Exploration of the Influence of Teacher Efficacy and Burnout on Response to Student Problem Behavior and School-based Service Use

Text:

There is an increasing concern about how the classroom context and teacher-student relationships influence student outcomes. For example, when teachers are burned-out, or emotionally exhausted, their relationships with students and the quality of their teaching likely suffer (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Also important is teacher efficacy, or beliefs about the ability to teach all students, which predicts teaching practices and student achievement (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). The current study examined the influence of teacher-level variables, such as burnout and efficacy, on student disciplinary actions (e.g., office disciplinary referrals (ODRs), suspensions) and teacher's use of school-based support services (e.g., referrals to special education), while adjusting for school- and student-level variables. Having an enhanced understanding of the teacher factors that influence student outcomes may inform the development of screenings and teacher-targeted interventions to prevent improper use of services and reduce punitive discipline management practices. Data for the current study were collected during the spring and fall of a single school year from 435 teachers and 8,606 students at 31 schools. The primary objective of this study was to determine whether teacher-rated efficacy and burnout in the fall predicted student-level service use and discipline in the spring of that school year. To examine cross-level effects (i.e., the effects of and interactions between school-, teacher-, and student -level variables), data were analyzed using a three-level model in HLM (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). The outcomes included two types of service use referrals (to the Student Support Team (SST) and for special education assessment) and two types of disciplinary actions (ODRs and suspension). Student demographics (e.g., gender, ethnicity) and teacher ratings of conduct and disruptive behaviors were included at level 1. Classroom-level factors (e.g., classroom characteristics), teacher demographics, and self-reports of teacher efficacy and burnout were entered at level 2. School-level factors (e.g., mobility, enrollment, and teacher-rated organizational health) were controlled for at level 3. Multilevel analyses indicated that poor efficacy ratings in the fall predicted decreased odds of referring a student to SST (OR = 0.53) by the spring. There was a marginally significant effect for fall efficacy on special education referral and suspension (OR = 0.84 and 0.76). Furthermore, fall teacher burnout was associated with a decrease in the odds that a student would receive an ODR (OR = 0.20) and would be suspended (OR = 0.63). Findings regarding changes in efficacy and burnout across the school year on student outcomes will be reported.

Theme Groups: 1 Key social relationships