Does teacher-student relationship mediate the relation between student misbehavior and teacher psychological well-being?

Mohamad Arief Rafsanjani¹
Heni Purwa Pamungkas²
Etika Dhewi Rahmawati³

¹,²Department of Economic Education, Faculty of Economics, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia
³SMA Negeri 1 Turen, Malang, Indonesia
email: mohamadrafsanjani@unesa.ac.id

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.26675/jabe.v4i1.8411

Abstract: One dominant determinant of teacher psychological well-being is the problem of student discipline. This study seeks to describe how the process of student disciplin (seen of student misbehavior) may affect teacher psychological well-being (seen of enthusiasm and emotional exhaustion) by including a mediator variable, namely teacher-student relation. This study was conducted on 159 economics teachers of senior high schools in Malang (Malang City and Malang Regency) using a total population sampling. We used structural equation modeling (SEM) for data analysis, followed by a sobel test the mediating role of variable in teacher-student relationship. The results showed that student misbehavior had a negative effect on work enthusiasm but a positive effect on students' emotional exhaustion. This study also found that teacher-student relation mediate the relationship between student misbehavior and teacher psychological well-being. The results of this study explain the process of student misbehavior in establishing teacher-student relations which ultimately influences teacher work enthusiasm and emotional well-being.

Keywords: Psychological Well-Being, Student Misbehavior, Teacher-Student Relationship.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher psychological well-being is one theme that is always interesting to discuss as it is continuously associated with motivation and achievement of student learning outcome and teacher teaching quality. This is because teacher well-being often observed from its work enthusiasm and emotional exhaustion, will affect the teacher in creating an optimal learning condition and therefore its well-being impacts directly on student motivation and learning outcomes (Arens & Morin, 2016; Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Lüdtke, & Baumert, 2008; Shen et al., 2015). This notion illustrates that teacher psychological well-being is one of the important determinants in the success of learning in a classroom.

There are various factors that influence teacher psychological well-being. In terms of variable, one of the dominant factors is associated with the exposure to stress at work. Previous researches show that
teacher psychological well-being is influenced by exposure to stress in the workplace (Aldrup, Klusmann, & Lüdtke, 2017; Duygulu, Ciraklar, Guripek, & Bagiran, 2013; Kyriacou, 2011; Rafsanjani & Rahmawati, 2019). One of the dominant causes of stress for teacher is student misbehavior (Aldrup, Klusmann, Lüdtke, Göllner, & Trautwein, 2018; Kyriacou, 2011). In this particular study, it is related to disciplinary violation, disturbance in classroom that interrupts the learning process and disrespect towards the teacher (Aloe, Shisler, Norris, Nickerson, & Rinker, 2014; Dicke et al., 2014). Based on this view, it is believed that a decline in teacher psychological well-being has been linked to student misbehavior in classroom (Aldrup et al., 2018).

The previous findings that showed student misbehavior, always linked as one cause of reduced teacher psychological well-being (Aldrup et al., 2018; Aloe et al., 2014; Kyriacou, 2011). However, this relationship left us with a question on how exactly the process student misbehavior may have affected the teacher psychological well-being. In the model of teacher well-being, it was suggested that the teacher-student relationship is thought to be one of the mediator variables that may explain the relationship between student misbehavior and teacher psychological well-being teachers (J. L. Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2012).

The model of teacher well-being stated that student misbehavior was thought to influence the relationship between teacher-student relationships, for example when teacher feels less respected, making the teacher feel rejected in classroom, thereby building unhealthy teacher-student relationship, which ultimately decreases teacher psychological well-being (JL Spilt et al., 2012). On the other hand, building positive relationships between teachers and students is a fundamental goal for teacher to support achieving the learning goal, so if teacher-student relationship does not go well, it will have an adverse affect on teacher psychological well-being (Butler, 2012; Klassen, Perry, & Frenzel, 2012). This is the basis of a hypothesis that teacher-student relation can explain how a psychological process that underlies student misbehavior may influence the teacher psychological well-being.

The teacher-student relationship reflects the closeness that exists from an interaction between the two. Teacher-student relationship is generally characterized by a mutual respect, trust, warmth, and of low conflict (Aldrup et al., 2018). Such relationship plays a vital role in students development because it makes the students feel safe and attached to their teachers (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991) and makes the students feel appreciated and supported by their teachers, and in the end, they are motivated to attain positive learning outcomes of cognitive, affective and behavioral (Aldrup et al., 2018; Cornelius-White, 2007; Kunter et al., 2013; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). But the relationship between teacher-student relations and the teacher psychological well-being is often overlooked. This is based on the observation that this variable is rarely studied (Klassen et al., 2012; J. L. Spilt et al., 2012). This is certainly surprising because building relationships with students is part of a core task in teacher profession (van der Want et al., 2015).

For this reason, this study follows a hypothesis from J. L. Spilt et al. (2012), namely to examine the teacher-student relationship as a mediator variable to explain the influence of student misbehavior on teacher psychological well-being. In addition, related to the teacher psychological well-being, the variable teacher-student relation is still rarely examined (Klassen et al., 2012; J. L. Spilt et al., 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Teacher psychological well-being is a psychological state and work experience in an optimal condition (Ryan & Deci, 2001), characterized by positive matters that are felt or experienced by a teacher, e.g. feeling of job satisfaction and work enthusiasm, and lack of negative experience e.g. stress and emotional exhaustion (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Kunter et al., 2008; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).

Work enthusiasm is a condition felt by a teacher when one enjoys, likes and feels happy about the profession or work one does as a teacher (Kunter et al., 2008). This positive psychological condition will
influence the quality of teaching which will ultimately influence student motivation and learning outcomes (Keller, Goetz, Becker, Morger, & Hensley, 2014; Kunter et al., 2013).

On the other hand, to achieve such optimum psychological function, in this case psychological well-being, a teacher needs low emotional exhaustion, wherein emotional exhaustion refers to its stress dimension, including feelings of strain and the depletion of emotional resources due to work or profession which will eventually lead a person stay away from work both emotionally and cognitively (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Emotional exhaustion is a negative emotional condition and peak fatigue as a result from the work done. This is manifested in physical, psychological and emotional exhaustion at its lowest point (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). Emotional exhaustion is a factor that causes a decline in teacher psychological well-being, in which emotional exhaustion is the main factor that causes a person to despair, give up and quit his job. Emotional exhaustion refers to stress dimension experienced by a person, including feelings of tense, depressed and decreasing the level of patience (Maslach et al., 2001), which ultimately has an adverse impact on student learning outcomes (Klusmann, Richter, & Lüdtke, 2016; Shen et al., 2015).

**The Influence of Student Misbehavior on Work Enthusiasm through Student-Teacher Relationship**

There are two models that are often used to explain the origins of occupational well-being: the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and the job demands-resource model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). The core of these models states that job stressor experienced by a person is triggered by prolonged pressure that drains physical, psychological and emotional effort.

In relation to teaching profession, the main stressors are student behavior deviation known as student misbehavior which includes student discipline problems, lack of respect towards the teachers and other disorders that distract learning process in the classroom (Aloe et al., 2014; Dicke et al., 2014; Kyriacou, 2011). In previous studies, deviation in student behavior was linked to teacher psychological well-being, which caused feelings of anger, anxiety and increased sentiments experienced by the teacher and ultimately decreased pleasure and job satisfaction (Aloe et al., 2014; Dicke et al., 2014; Klusmann et al., 2008; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

On the other hand student misbehavior is closely linked in creating the relationship between teacher-student. This variable (teacher-student relationship) is the building blocks of daily interactions in classrooms (Pennings et al., 2018). Teacher-student relation plays an important role in creating quality learning that will lead to positive learning outcome and student motivation (Cornelius-White, 2007; Pianta, 1999; Roorda et al., 2011), and teacher psychological well-being (Jantine L. Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011).

The same notion was revealed in a study, which stated that positive teacher-student relation is generally reflected in a respectful, warm and trusting relationship and a low level of conflict (Aldrup et al., 2018; Davis, 2003; Roorda et al., 2011). This is vital in supporting student development as it makes the student feel safe and develops a close relationship with the teacher (Deci et al., 1991). Findings from previous studies also stated that when students feel appreciated and supported by their teachers, they will produce positive learning outcomes from affective, behavioral and cognitive aspects (Aldrup et al., 2018; Cornelius-White, 2007; Kunter et al., 2013; Roorda et al., 2011).

In the model of teacher well-being proposed by Jantine L. Spilt et al. (2011) suspect that teacher-student relations play an important role as a determinant of teacher psychological well-being, one of which is work enthusiasm. This variable (teacher-student relationship) can be used to explain how the student misbehavior influences the teacher's psychological well-being.

Student misbehavior can trigger bad interactions between teacher-student. This is supported by previous findings which stated students with behavioral and discipline problems causes the relationship with their teachers worsen (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Buyse, Verschueren, Doumen, Van Damme, & Maes,
2008; Nurmi et al., 2018) Such student misbehavior ultimately makes teacher feel rejected and hurt and it is difficult to give attention and affection to student with problematic behavior (Hargreaves, 2000; Newberry & Davis, 2008). Ultimately, this makes the teacher feel reluctant and no longer enthusiastic in carrying out their duties and work. Based on the above explanation, the researcher developed a hypothesis as follows:

\[ H_1 = \text{Student misbehavior negatively influences teacher work enthusiasm through teacher-student relations.} \]

**The Influence of Student Misbehavior on Emotional Exhaustion through Student-Teacher Relationship**

With regards to transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and job demands-resource model (Demerouti et al., 2001) that discuss job stressor and its trigger and its impacts on physical, psychological and emotional well-being, one of the main causes of stress experienced by teachers is student misbehavior.

Student misbehavior is a violation of discipline that occurs during a learning process both inside and outside classroom. As explained earlier, student behavior is closely linked to creating both positive and negative teacher-student relationship, and ultimately influence teacher psychological well-being. This is reinforced by previous research that revealed student misbehavior would disrupt the learning process in classroom (Robers, Zhang, & Truman, 2012).

In another study, teachers were the subjects who said that they spent significant time related to student behavior problem (Beaman, Reynolds, & Stephenson, 2011), one in three teachers stated that student misbehavior interfered with their teaching activities (Robers et al., 2012) which have an impact on teacher-student relation to decline and ultimately cause teachers' emotional conditions increase.

Such condition was predicted by Jantine L. Spilt et al. (2011) that teacher-student relationship is believed to link the relationship between student misbehavior and teacher psychological well-being, and in this case: teacher emotional exhaustion. This is reinforced by previous findings in that building positive teacher-student relation is at the core of identity of a professional teacher (van der Want et al., 2015) and it is teacher's main goal. Hence when teacher fails to build a positive relationship with the student, it causes the teacher feeling stressful to increase and also results in an increased emotional exhaustion and reduced work enthusiasm (Aldrup et al., 2018; McCormick & Barnett, 2011). Based on the above explanation, the researcher developed a hypothesis as follows:

\[ H_2 = \text{Student misbehavior has positive influence on teacher emotional exhaustion through teacher-student relationship} \]

**METHODS**

**Sample**

This research was conducted on economic teachers of senior high school and equivalent, in Malang City and Regency. Based on data from the local education office, there were 159 economic teachers. Because this study uses Structural Equation Models (SEM), the minimum sample requirement is between 100-400 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010) therefore we took that all these teachers as our sample (saturated sample/total population sampling).

**Instruments**

The variable student misbehavior in this study was assessed using an instrument developed by Kunter and Baumert (2006) based on teacher's perception regarding the extent students pay attention to
and obey the teacher during the teaching learning process in classroom. This instrument consists of 5 items with a reliability level of \( \alpha = 0.84 \) (Aldrup et al., 2018).

With regard to variable of teacher-student relationship, this study adopted the scale measurement of Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) developed by Pianta (2001), in which it measures teacher’s perception if the students appreciate, likes and respect the teacher. This instrument consists of 4 items with reliability level \( \alpha = 0.85 \) (Aldrup et al., 2018). 5-point scale yields score on Conflict and Closeness.

With regard to teacher psychological well-being, we observed based on two indicators, namely work enthusiasm and emotional exhaustion. Teacher work enthusiasm was assessed using an instrument developed by Kunter et al. (2008) which consists of 4 items. Emotional exhaustion was assessed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Educators Survey (MBI-ES) instrument developed by (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997) which consists of 4 items. All variables in this study were assessed using instruments with likert scale measurement ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

Data Analysis

This study used path analysis to analyze the data, to see the relationship between endogenous variables (student misbehavior), mediator variables (teacher-student relation) and exogenous variables (teacher psychological well-being). For this analysis researchers used SEM (structural equation modeling). In addition to analyzing the relationship between latent variables (student misbehavior, teacher-student relationship and teacher psychological well-being), we also wanted to make sure that the manifest variable (indicators) that we use to measure latent variables were correct (confirmatory factor analysis/CFA).

RESULTS

The results of data analysis in Figure 1, show that student misbehavior has a significant negative effect on work enthusiasm with \( \beta \) coefficient=\(-0.393\), \( \alpha=0.00 \) and vice versa has a significant positive effect on emotional exhaustion with \( \beta \) coefficient=\(0.384\), \( \alpha=0.00 \). Whereas for misbehavior, it also has a significant negative effect on teacher-student relationship with \( \beta \) coefficient=\(-0.415\) \( \alpha=0.00 \), and student-teacher relationship has a significant positive effect on work enthusiasm with \( \beta \) coefficient=\(0.248\) \( \alpha=0.00 \) and has a significant negative effect on emotional exhaustion with \( \beta = -0.325 \) \( \alpha = 0.00 \).

![Figure 1. Results of Data Analysis](image-url)
The results of the analysis (table 1) also show that direct effects of student misbehavior on teacher work enthusiasm is -0.393, this is higher than the indirect effects (the effects of SM on WE through TSR) of 0.103 (-0.415 × 0.248) thus giving a total effects of student misbehavior towards teacher work enthusiasm of -0.496.

Furthermore, the student misbehavior has direct effects on teacher emotional exhaustion of 0.385, this is higher than the indirect effects (the effect of SM on EE over the TSR) of 0.135 (-0.415 × -0.325), which in turn, influences the student total misbehavior towards teacher emotional exhaustion of 0.520.

### Table 1. Direct and Indirect Effect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Work Enthusiasm (WE)</th>
<th>Emotional Exhaustion (EE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Misbehavior (SM)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct effects</td>
<td>-0.393</td>
<td>0.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect effects (through TSR)</td>
<td>-0.105</td>
<td>0.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Effects</strong></td>
<td><strong>-0.496</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.520</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first sobel test was conducted to see the role of teacher-student relationship as a mediator variable from the influence of students’ misbehavior on teacher work enthusiasm (Table 2). The results show that student-teacher relationship variable plays a significant role as a variable that mediates the influence of student misbehavior on teacher work enthusiasm (p <0.05).

### Table 2. Sobel test for indirect effects SM→TSR→WE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input</th>
<th>Test Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$t_a$</td>
<td>-4.866</td>
<td>Sobel test: 2.496211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t_b$</td>
<td>2.908</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second sobel test was conducted to examine the role of mediator of teacher-student relationship variable on teacher emotional exhaustion in Table 3. It also showed that the teacher-student relationship variable played a significant role in mediating the influence of student misbehavior on teacher emotional exhaustion (p < 0.01).

### Table 3. Sobel test for indirect effects SM→TSR→EE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input</th>
<th>Test Statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$t_a$</td>
<td>-4.866</td>
<td>Sobel test: 3.01394165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t_b$</td>
<td>-3.839</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISCUSSION**

**Relationship between student misbehavior with teacher work enthusiasm and emotional exhaustion**

Findings of this study show that student misbehavior has significant negative effects on teacher work enthusiasm. This means that student misbehavior or student delinquency such as disciplinary violations at school may cause a decrease in teacher enthusiasm towards work (i.e. teaching). On the other hand, findings of this study indicate that student misbehavior has significant positive effects on teacher emotional exhaustion which is illustrated with an increase in student misbehavior at school lead to increased teacher emotional exhaustion.

These results explain that student misbehavior characterized by disciplinary violation, disturbances in both inside and outside the classroom, ignorant towards teacher instruction teacher, and student disturbance during the learning process can ultimately lead to a decrease in teacher enthusiasm in teaching in the classroom. The decline of teacher's enthusiasm towards work will be marked by
psychological conditions experienced, namely they feel no longer enjoy, like, and happy in carrying out their duties as teachers.

In addition, these findings also confirm the results of previous studies stating that the decline in the teacher psychological well-being seen from work enthusiasm is caused by student misbehavior (Aldrup et al., 2018; Aloe et al., 2014; Dicke et al., 2014; Klusmann et al., 2016; Kyriacou, 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). This of course must get the main attention from all parties involved, because if the student misbehavior is not found a solution, it will make the teacher no longer feel enthusiastic to work, which eventually will result in the teacher not being optimal in carrying out the duties in teaching which surely impacts on the student learning outcomes (Keller et al., 2014; Kunter et al., 2013).

Other findings in this study indicate that student misbehaviors that cause disturbances during the teaching and learning process in classroom may cause an increased teacher emotional exhaustion. This emotional exhaustion would be seen from the stress experienced which manifests in teacher physical and psychological (emotional) exhaustion, including feeling depressed, decreased level of patience, irritability, frustration and sadness. This also confirms previous findings that explain student misbehavior is one of the causes in increased teacher emotional exhaustion (Aldrup et al., 2018; Dicke et al., 2014; McCormick & Barnett, 2011).

This situation certainly needs special attention because student misbehavior makes teachers experience depressed emotional conditions, which in turn can make the teacher stay away from the profession or experience reluctance to carry out their duties (Maslach et al., 2001). Emotional exhaustion also causes a person to be at the culmination point of despairing, giving up and ending in stopping his profession as a teacher. When teachers experience this (emotional exhaustion), this will certainly have a negative impact on the process of achieving the goals of classroom learning.

**The teacher-student relationship as a mediating variable**

Finding of the study indicates that student misbehavior is one of the causes of a decline in teacher psychological well-being. In order to observe the process of relations between the two variables, in reference to hypothesis of J. L. Spilt et al. (2012), the researcher included variable teacher-student relationship as a mediating variable from the relationship between student misbehavior and teacher psychological well-being.

The results of this study indicate that student misbehavior has a significant negative effect on teacher-student relations. This shows that student misbehavior when at school causes the teacher-student relationship to be bad, and vice versa. In more detail, this study reveals that teacher-student relations have a significant positive effect on teacher work enthusiasm which means that when the teacher-student relationship is well established, it makes the teacher more enthusiastic and enthusiastic in carrying out his work as a teacher. On the other hand, the teacher-student relationship has a significant negative effect on the teacher's emotional exhaustion that explains to all of us when the teacher-student relationship is at a good level, can reduce the teacher's emotional exhaustion, and vice versa.

The Sobel test results also show that the teacher-student relationship variable plays a significant role in mediating the influence of student misbehavior on the teacher's enthusiasm and also on the teacher's emotional exhaustion. This proves the hypothesis of the previous research which states that the teacher-student relationship variable can explain how the influence of student misbehavior on the teacher psychological well-being (J. L. Spilt et al., 2012). Poor student behavior during class or school will make it difficult for teachers to show affection and attention to these students, which ultimately makes the teacher ignorant of students. This is what will then form teacher-student relationships that are not good, and ultimately affect the teacher psychological well-being. The findings of this study also revealed that the teacher-student relationship was more closely related to student misbehavior, compared to the teacher psychological well-being. This might happen because the teacher will immediately respond to student behavior in the teaching and learning process in the class. The process of teacher-student interaction in this class will ultimately form teacher-student relationships.
Furthermore, this study demonstrates and confirms the previous studies that state positive teacher-student relations will increase work enthusiasm and reduce teacher emotional exhaustion (Aldrup et al., 2018; Jantine L. Spilt et al., 2011). Positive teacher-student relations are characterized by mutual respect, mutual trust, low conflict between teachers and students and heartfelt interactions between the two. When such relation exists, the teacher will become enthusiastic and motivated to teach and guide the students, who in the end, the learning goals will be easily achieved optimally. Positive teacher-student relationships will also reduce teacher emotional exhaustion, because when the teacher feels enthusiastic and eager to work, it will automatically reduce stress on the psychological condition.

This is an important finding because previous research has focused a lot on the relationship between teacher-student relations with student development (Roorda et al., 2011), and research rarely looks at the relationship between teacher-student relations and teacher psychological well-being (Klassen et al. 2012; JL Spilt et al., 2012). This study demonstrates that teacher-student relationship is one of the important determinants that influence teacher psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that student misbehavior has significant effects on teacher psychological well-being as seen from work enthusiasm and teacher emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, this study also shows that teacher-student relationship bridge the influence of student misbehavior on work enthusiasm and teacher emotional exhaustion. The implication of findings of this study describe about the process of student misbehavior influences teacher psychological well-being. In the process, student misbehavior plays a role in causing teacher-student relations to be negative (negative), this makes the teacher reluctant to interact closer with the students (becoming ignorant) and ultimately making the teacher lazy and reluctant to work (decreased enthusiasm for work). On the other hand, student misbehavior also causes the teacher more depressed, the level of patience decreases which was observable from teachers’ attitude where they got easily angry when dealing with student misbehavior (emotional exhaustion). This study has limitations in observing the variable student misbehavior and teacher-student relations from the teacher perception. Therefore, the researcher suggest the following study to reexamine the results of this study by combining measurements from teacher’s perception as well as student’s perception to provide a more accurate result related to the variable student misbehavior and teacher-student relations.

REFERENCES


Keller, M. M., Goetz, T., Becker, E. S., Morger, V., & Hensley, L. (2014). Feeling and showing: A new conceptualization of dispositional teacher enthusiasm and its relation to students' interest. *Learning and Instruction, 33*, 29-38. doi:10.1016/j.learninstruc.2014.03.001


