

## TEACHERS' BURNOUT: A FLAMING ISSUE

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### ABSTRACT

Radical changes are taking place in the education system every day. These changes are likely to increase rather than reduce the stress level among teachers. The popular belief is that burnout is the result of excessive stress. It is a state of emotional, mental and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. This occurs when a person feels overwhelmed and unable to keep up with the constant demands. This is not the result of stress, but the unmotivated stress of not being able to deal with the stress, having no outlet for it, no buffer, no support-system, and no compensation. Burnout reduces a person's productivity and drains his energy, making the person feel more helpless, depressed, cynical and angry. Burnout is "a type of psychological distress – a chronic negative psychological state that results from increased day-to-day work stress" (Rolloff and Brown, 2011). Teachers who experience burnout primarily have three categories of symptoms: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal accomplishment. No single factor can be found responsible for the problem of burnout. Various factors such as level of stress, type of stress, personality, and organizational climate, nature of job, lifestyle, role style, coping style and non-working life may be responsible in increasing the burnout problem among teachers. The article also provides some techniques that can be adopted to prevent burnout among teachers. Since the quality and continuity of education is directly related to the occurrence of teacher burnout, intervention programs can be designed in collaboration with administrators and counsellors to prevent it.

**Key Words:** Burnout, Teachers Burnout, Emotional Exhaustion, Stress, Depersonalization, Personal Accomplishment, Prevention of Burnout

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Burnout is associated with many negative experiences and outcomes for teachers. These include changes in mood and well-being, as evidenced by increased irritability and symptoms of mental ill health (Capon, Joshanloo, & Park, 2019; Hakanen, Becker, & Schaufeli, 2006). Burnout also affects how likely a teacher is to remain in their job (Billingsley and Bettini, 2019). This is because it may result in increased absenteeism, decreased job commitment, and increased turnover intentions (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000). This theory proposes that teacher well-being and social-emotional functioning influence teachers' ability to effectively lead academic instruction and manage classroom behavior. These factors will in turn influence student outcomes such as performance and motivation (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). More specifically, when teachers struggle with their well-being, including when they experience burnout symptoms, they are more likely to have adverse relationships with their students when students do not follow instruction. Become angry, and have negative thoughts toward their students (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). These factors are likely to impact student experiences and outcomes. There are also theoretical explanations that are rooted within burnout theory. In this regard, Maslach and Leiter (1999) proposed that teacher burnout, and specifically emotional exhaustion and scepticism, would lead to less involvement and effort in lesson planning and less favourable social attitudes toward students. It is also possible that burnout will lead to other relevant withdrawal behaviors.

Empirical support exists regarding the impact that teacher burnout has on students. Specifically, a meta-analysis of the relationship between teacher burnout and student misbehavior found that all dimensions of burnout were associated with higher levels of disruptive behavior (Elo, Amo, & Shanahan, 2014). However, evidence of other students' experiences and outcomes is less clear. For example, there is evidence that teacher burnout has no effect on academic achievement (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012) and evidence that it inhibits achievement (Klusman, Richter, & Ludtke, 2016). The effects of teacher burnout are also unclear with respect to student-reported outcomes such as motivation, well-being, and social perceptions (e.g., Braun, Schonert-Reichl, & Roeser, 2020). Emotional strain and scepticism will result in teachers becoming more critical and providing lower levels of encouragement in response to student success. In turn, students may feel less competent and less likely to internalize the goals for studying, collectively reducing the potential and depth of their learning (and subsequent motivation and achievement). It is also possible that the distance that is created between students and their teacher will have consequences for students' sense of belonging, belonging, and well-being.

In the field of education or in any specific teaching-learning situation, the teacher is the ultimate agent who imparts knowledge, decides the time-table, selects the reading material, plays the role of subject expert, and coordinates the learning outcomes. Evaluates and helps the students to overcome their difficulties and personal problems and thus plays an important role in the success of any educational programme. Educationists generally agree that the goodness of an educational program is largely determined by the quality of the learning process. Whenever the learner fails to achieve pre-specified goals, there is something wrong with the teacher, either in the plans he makes or the way he implements them. Again the success of the learner largely depends on the qualification of the teacher. Dr. Radhakrishnan (1949) has aptly said in this context, "The place of the teacher in the society is very important. It serves as the pivot for the transmission of intellectual traditions and technical skills from generation to generation and helps keep the lamp of civilization burning. Radical changes are taking place in the field of education system. These changes are likely to increase rather than reduce the stress level among teachers. Teachers experience high levels of stress due to difficult situations when dealing with students. Overcrowded classrooms, heavy curriculum and inadequate facilities make the job of teachers more complex.

The education system has all the elements associated with stress: a bureaucratic structure, continuous evaluation of its processes and outcomes, and increasingly intense interpersonal interactions with students, parents, colleagues, principals, and the community. Therefore, teaching today is considered a high-stress profession. The National Policy on Education (1986) said that of all the factors which determine the quality of education and its contribution to national development, teacher is undoubtedly the most important. It is on his personal qualities and character, his educational qualifications and professional competence that the success of all educational endeavors must ultimately depend. The teaching profession has historically been seen as a label of love and kindness.

It has many internal and external rewards for people entering the academic field. But in the present era, teaching is not without its inherent problems. Problems related to job-related stress top the list of many teachers. Nowadays, it has turned into quite a stressful business (Travers & Cooper, 1996). Teachers have become almost disabled due to RTE Act (2010). The Act does not mention anything about bringing discipline in the classroom. The Act states that students can be admitted up to class 8 according to their age and it is the responsibility of the teacher to conduct bridge courses and take remedial measures to help them reach their learning level. This puts teachers under extreme stress, forcing many to change careers. Teaching is a highly stressful career, and teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate (Hanushek, 2007; Ingersoll, & Smith, 2003). Stress comes from the teacher's perception that the resources available to deal with the stress are not sufficient. Stress is a reality of learning, which can be beneficial or harmful depending on an individual's response. Inability to deal with stress can make a person unable to maintain the enthusiasm, care and commitment that he initially brought to the job and then begins the process of burnout. The concept of burnout emerged in the 1970s and continues to be used today. Therefore it was felt that in order to create a healthy environment for quality education, full utilization of human resources and development of students, there is a need to pay special attention to this area and study the problem of burnout prevalent among teachers at present.

## 2. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

A review of the related literature reveals that Brouwers and Tomic (2000) examined the direction and time frame of relationships between perceived self-efficacy in classroom management and burnout among secondary school teachers.

Evers, Gerrichhausen and Tomic (2000) examined teacher burnout using the self-efficacy theory.

Brock and Grady (2000) offered a research based, practical approach to recognizing, managing and preventing teacher burnout.

Talbot (2000) assessed the correlation of burnout among community college nursing faculty members and their use of humor to mediate academic stress related to burnout.

Hamann and Gordon (2000) judged burnout as an occupational hazard and Croom (2003) surveyed teacher burnout in agriculture education. As work pressure differs for different subject teachers,

Asimeng-Boahene (2003) attempted to understand and prevent burnout among social studies teachers in Africa.

Lackritz (2004) explored burnout among university faculty and burnout and work engagement among teachers was surveyed by Hakanen, Bakker and Schaufeli (2006).

The gender effect was considered important, so the analysis and maintenance of the mental health of female teachers in colleges in China was done by Zhang and Miao (2006).

Work family conflict among female teachers was studied by Cinamon and Rich (2005) and the effect of demographic characteristics on burnout among Hong Kong secondary school teachers was assessed by Lau, Yuen and Chan (2005).

Singh (1989) studied the demographic factors influencing burnout in teachers and concluded that burnout emerged due to physical and emotional strain.

Panda (1990) conducted research on perceived family environment, burnout, and coping strategies among working and nonworking housewives. It emerged in this study that working housewives felt greater emotional exhaustion, while nonworking housewives felt greater depersonalization but less stress.

Misra (1991) explored the interrelationship between organizational conflict in primary level school teachers' stress and burnout in relation to teachers' personality.

Basi (1991) focused her study on the teaching competencies of language teachers in relation to their job satisfaction, locus of control and professional burnout. Kasinath and Kailasalingam (1995) studied burnout among college teachers.

Kudva (1999) investigated the relationship between several components of teacher burnout and various professional factors.

Khan (2000) conducted a factor analysis cum factorial study of stress and burnout variables related to the teachers of deaf and dumb schools.

Emotional exhaustion is experienced when a teacher feels that all of his or her "emotional resources have been exhausted". Depersonalization occurs when someone isolates themselves from coworkers, family, and friends. Isolation can manifest through physical isolation or through emotionally distancing yourself. Low personal accomplishment is the employee's tendency to evaluate his or her work negatively, an evaluation that is often accompanied by feelings of inadequacy. The three symptoms related to burnout are also shown in Figure 1. The role of teachers is very different in the present era as they need to be more adaptable with frequently changing policies, practices and demands (Valli and Buyse, 2007).

Teachers must be facilitators of knowledge as well as managers and protectors of children (Petersson, Postholm, Flamm, & Gudmundsdottir, 2004). As noted in an ethnographic study by Bartlett (2004), while modern teacher roles have expanded in recent times, their structural support has not. Teachers are now often responsible for assessing school systems, educational practices, and curriculum development (Lieberman & Miller, 1999). All of this represents a great deal of stress for the teacher which can result in burnout. How the teacher instructs is more relevant than what is taught. A teacher who is low on morale, high on frustration, and disengaged from students is clearly not going to be effective in the classroom.

### 3. MEANING OF BURNOUT

The term burnout was first introduced into the academic scene by Freudenberg (1974), who defined it as failing, becoming exhausted, or exhausted by making additional demands on energy, strength, or resources. Burnout, as a form of work-related stress, is the result of a significant accumulation of work-related stress. Maslach (1982) defined burnout as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal accomplishment" that can occur in individuals who do some type of people work. In general, burnout is a state of emotional, mental and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress.

When a person feels overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands. It reduces one's productivity and saps one's energy, making the person feel more helpless, depressed, cynical and angry. Ultimately, one may feel as if one has nothing more to offer. Kahn (1986) explained burnout as a syndrome of inappropriate behavior toward clients and oneself that is often associated with uncomfortable physical and emotional symptoms as well as decrements in performance. Hendrix et al. (2000) defined burnout as a response to chronic stress that involves negative interactions between the environment and personal characteristics.

#### Factors for Burnout

No single factor can be found responsible for burnout. There are many factors that can result in teacher burnout. Pareek (1982) has pointed out nine factors that cause burnout i.e. a) Level of stress b) Type of stress c) Personality d) Organizational climate e) Nature of job f) Life style g) Role style h) Coping Style i) Non-work life. Whether stress is less or too much, it causes hyper stress. It can be either functional (eustress) or dysfunctional (distress). Certain dimensions of personality such as feelings of loneliness, externality, low self-esteem etc. have been found to be associated with burnout. Along with these personality factors, organizational climate and the nature of the job have also been linked to burnout. Patterns of structuring one's time i.e. lifestyle, unsuccessful coping style which includes fatalism, blaming, showing aggression etc., and avoidance style: a type of role style is also correlated with burnout tendency. These factors of stress among teachers are also shown in Figure 1.

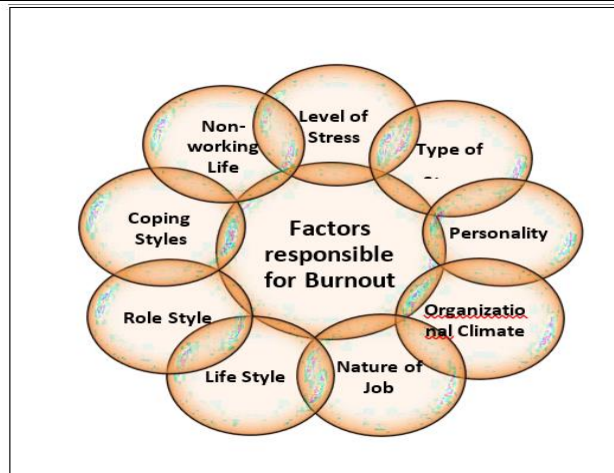


Fig. 1: Factors Responsible for Burnout

#### 4. STAGES OF TEACHERS BOURN OUT

Burnout is a response to chronic stress. This is not a minor problem but a significant measure of larger social dysfunction in the workplace. The quality and continuity of education is directly related to the phenomenon of teacher burnout. The challenging aspect of burnout is that the main factor in its development is the same factor that is often a good teacher's strength, namely dedication: thus, the more dedicated a teacher is to their work, the more likely they are to experience burnout.

He stated that burnout is a type of psychological distress – a chronic negative psychological state that results from the increased stress of day-to-day work. He further explained that teachers who experience burnout have three categories of symptoms: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal accomplishment. Teachers belong to a profession that involves working with students. Thus, they belong to a group of people who do some kind of 'people work'. Klaus and Whitaker (1981) described three stages of teacher burnout:

**Stage 1 – Loss of Motivation-** Most teachers enter the profession with a genuine desire to help students. Their energy levels may be high, ideals may be strong, value systems may be civilized, sense of motivation may be high and they have an inner hope that something positive can be done about the students. However, when their expectations are not met, their enthusiasm wanes.

**Stage 2 – Frustration-** Frustration is one of the early symptoms of burnout. At this point the level of frustration and irritation increases due to low teacher morale.

**Stage 3- Isolation-** The professional's alienation from the work environment can be seen as a reaction or result of powerlessness, frustration, and loss of meaning in one's work. Isolation is associated with isolation, withdrawal, and isolation within the work environment. A teacher at this level may view students as impersonal objects, may not be available when students need assistance, or may even refuse to help them. Thus, a teacher who is undergoing stress will experience lack of enthusiasm, low morale and high levels of frustration, feeling of detachment and will withdraw from work.



Fig. 2: The Global Issue of Teachers Burnout and Attrition: Causes and Solutions

The mental state of the teacher has an additional impact on the society, the state of mental health of the teacher has a direct impact on the educational process.

How the teacher instructs is more relevant than what is taught. A teacher who is low on morale, high on frustration, and disengaged from students is clearly not going to be effective in the classroom. Burnout is not a trivial problem, but an important barometer of major social dysfunction in the workplace.

In such a situation, burnout needs serious attention. Its emotional, financial and social costs are too great to be dismissed any longer.

#### **Suggestions for Prevention of Burnout among Teachers**

Previous research in this area has shown that once teacher burnout develops, it is easier to prevent it than to reverse it. If one recognizes the warning signs of impending burnout in oneself, it will only get worse if one leaves it alone. But if one takes steps to get their life back into balance, they can prevent burnout from breaking out completely.

Timms, Baker, and Dirks (2013) showed that employees who create their own job demands and resources have increased levels of work engagement and reduced risk of burnout. Recent research shows that employees who have mild symptoms of burnout use a variety of coping strategies. Such as selection, optimization, and compensation to maintain their job performance at an acceptable level (Baker, Demerouti, and Leiter, 2014).

In addition to studies related to the factors of teacher burnout, studies related to its solutions and prevention strategies have also been conducted. He offered seventeen suggestions for fighting burnout. Reed (1979) offered suggestions to prevent teacher stress including changing grade levels taught, building self-esteem through positive reinforcement, involving teachers in decision making, promoting professional development, reducing pressure Removing etc. are included. A similar study was conducted by Zabel and Zabel.

(1982) Description of burnout syndrome among special education teachers. They discussed techniques to reduce burnout, including reduced student-teacher ratios, reduced work hours, shared student load, and training in stress management. Some techniques that can be used to prevent burnout problem are given below:

**Start the day with meditation:** Start the day by spending at least fifteen minutes meditating or reading something inspirational.

**Develop healthy habits:** Developing healthy habits will provide energy to tackle the troubles and demands of life.

**Time Management:** Proper management of time will help in removing stress.

**Take a break from technology:** Turn off all gadgets and relax your body and mind.

**Avoid unnecessary stress:** Be positive and try to avoid unnecessary stress.

**Be creative:** Thinking creatively will fill you with joy.

**Have realistic goals:** Setting high goals is inspiring, but setting them too high can be stressful.

**Avoid disputes:** Avoiding disputes will save a lot of time and energy.

**Believe in yourself:** Don't do what others want. Take your own advice and do what you want.

**Positive and optimistic attitude towards profession:** Positive thinking and optimistic attitude will free you from stress.

Although the problem of burnout cannot be reversed, it can be reduced or prevented to a great extent with the help of the techniques mentioned above.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Teacher burnout is a psychological condition that leads to exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased teacher achievement and self-worth (Raines, 2011).

The present article not only explains burnout among teachers, but also explains how teachers can actively work to prevent burnout and also provides some techniques that can be used to prevent faculty burnout can take steps to recover and return to their previous state of health and academic success. Teachers should try to participate in stress-management interventions not only for themselves but to better understand others around them. Intervention programs can be designed in collaboration with administrators and counselors to prevent teacher burnout.

The quality and continuity of education is directly related to the phenomenon of teacher burnout. Many studies show that teacher burnout and student dropout originate from the same source. The investigators felt that in order to provide quality education, full utilization of human resources and create a healthy environment for the development of students, this area needs special attention.

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