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An Analysis of the Issue of Burn-Out of School Teachers: Looking Back, Looking Forward

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Abstract: *Is there any relationship between organizational culture and teacher's burnout in schools? This is a hot question asking for an answer. This research study has been conducted to explore and understand this relationship. Literature provides for a different outcomes from different studies in different settings and countries. However, majority of studies provide for and establish the relationship between organizational culture and burnout. It suggests that poor or uncondutive organizational culture where there is a lack of opportunities for promotions, growth and other professional rewards provide an imputes for teachers to quit jobs. Exactly the opposite happens if there are opportunities for growth and development and teachers prefer to stay with their jobs for longer. However, certain findings in different countries challenge this assumed relationship on empirical grounds and suggest that there may be other factors that contribute to teachers' burnout in schools. In the course of this research work, secondary sources of which the majority are books are consulted to establish the assumed relationship between the dependent and independent variables.*

Key Words: Burnout, School Teachers, Job Stress, Job Satisfaction, Working Relation

Introduction

The main purpose of this research study is to throw light on the relationship between organizational culture and teachers' burnout in the light of available literature. Though plenty of research has been conducted on the connection between organizational health and its influence on employee's burnout, however, detailed empirical study needs to be carried out in light of the past research to know the exact correlation between the indicators of organizational health and teacher's burnout in an ever-changing world. In an attempt to explore the relationship between organizational health and teacher burnout, various models and theories have been proposed by academicians and writers. The subject under study will be helpful in making a generalized conclusion that it is the organizational health that may be the chief factor responsible for demotivating teaching staff in schools, while another study carried out from an organization's platform

may suggest its staff be responsible for the unacceptable or low level of productivity as well as negatively affecting the culture of the organization. In the course of conducting this study, efforts will be made to maintain objectivity and impartiality. Since the purpose of this study is limited in order to determine if there is any relationship between schools' health and teachers' burnout, efforts will be made to explore this aspect of the issue in detail.

The Problem at Hand

Jobs are a major source of stress and anxiety. However, as said earlier, teaching as a profession is more vulnerable to mental stress and tension. For that reason, teachers are more exposed to burnout. Consequently, this seriously damages the performance and delivery of teachers in schools. Though a lot has been done to ascertain and explore the causes of burnout, what remains

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unexplored is to find out the relationship between organizational health and burnout. This deficiency and lacuna in research have led to wrong conclusions and faulty policy options. What is needed here is to find out the exact relationship between the two and make policy recommendations.

What to Learn from the Available Literature

Existing literature is filled with scholarly articles and writings on the phenomenon of burnout in schools and other organizations. These writers and scholars discuss and analyze the issue of burnout for professionals from different angles and perspectives. Some writers try to explore the causes and means for what exactly causes professional to burnout. These writers have comprehensively thrown light on some of the major causes of the issue at hand. While other writers have tried to reach into the consequences of burnout. These writers have found out as how negatively burnout can affect the organization in terms of output and productivity. Still, there are other scholars who have tasked themselves with the responsibility to make suggestions and policy recommendations as to how one can cope with the problem of burn out.

Sarah Bousquet, in *Teacher Burnout: Causes, Cures and Prevention* talks in detail about the reasons for burnout among teaching professionals, its remedies, and ways as to how to prevent it. The writer opines that burnout is a serious negative chronic psychological condition that damages the performance of teaching professionals. A professional who undergoes burnout feels physically exhausted and experience a sharp decline in morale and self-esteem. The writer says that twenty-first-century teachers are more vulnerable to burnout because 1). The profession has become more and more demanding, 2) increased pressure to maintain standards in their teaching and defend themselves against the public criticism for not being able to deliver on their expectations, and 3). Career-related stressors and work overload are some of the causes of burnout among the teaching community. To cure the issue, the writer makes two basic suggestions. First, reduce teachers' workload and allow them some time to relax, and provide them an opportunity so that they may separate themselves from career challenges.

Second, provide teachers and their students with better facilities in schools. A teacher who sees his students making progress feels more enthusiastic and energetic about his profession.

Jin-Chuan, Chun-Liang, and Shu-Hui (2014), in their article titled 'The influence of school organizational health and occupational burnout on the self-perceived health status of primary school teachers, say that illness caused by work related stressors has gone up in the recent past. This stress is a major reason for burnout among teaching professionals. They argue that burnout may be more likely in some situations than others and in some individuals than others ([Lee, Chen, & Xie, 2014](#)). The reason is that the personal traits as well as organizational factors contribute significantly to burnout in any organization. To address the issue of burnout at the elementary level, the writers make the following suggestions: develop good working relations with parents of students, relevant community members, and non-governmental organizations; reduce pressure from actors outside to the organization; schools must learn to respect the professional autonomy of teachers; schools should not allow a small number of parents to influence the policy of schools; the schools should not allow the teachers' morale to come down by, 1) providing them with professional training opportunities and teaching resources, 2) working on improving their mental and physical health and 3) providing them with all possible opportunities necessary for their professional growth and development so that they may feel more satisfied and develop a personal attachment with the organization he works in.

Dr. Marami Goswami in his work 'A Study of Burnout of Secondary School Teachers in Relation to their Job Satisfaction,' explores the relationship of burnout with job satisfaction and demographic elements such as age and sex. The writer believes burnout to be a kind of feeling experienced by those whose professional responsibilities require exposure to an emotionally charged social environment ([Goswami, 2013](#)). It is a kind of professional hazard that is most possibly experienced by those in helping professions, including teachers. Teaching is, of course, a high-stress profession because it requires intense interaction with students, parents, community, and other administrative staff along with other factors such as overcrowded classrooms, misbehavior from students, insufficient salaries,

lack of infrastructural support, and many other related factors. Furthermore, the writer has identified symptoms of burnout and has grouped them into three categories: behavioral, psychological, and physical.

The writer takes burnout to be a dependent variable and age, sex, job satisfaction and location of the school as the independent variable. The study has reached to the conclusion that demographic factors like age and location of job where one is posted may lead to job burnout. However, sex doesn't affect burnout. He further concludes that teachers' burnout is too costly for an organization. He suggests that burnout can be decreased by making the right decisions and devising and implementing scientific intervention programs.

Einar and Sidsel have also conducted a study that explores various aspects of teachers' burnout along with how stressors at school may cause burnout among teachers. The study addresses the influence of four potential stressors (discipline problems, time pressure, low student motivation, and value dissonance) in a school on three dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) of burnout. The study establishes that all four potential stressors had different impacts on three dimensions of burnout. In comparison to other factors, work overload or time pressure had a much stronger effect on emotional exhaustion while it had very little or no effect on depersonalization and personal accomplishment. On the other hand, the disruptive behavior of students was comparatively a stronger predictor of personal accomplishment and depersonalization. Furthermore, these findings suggest that the three dimensions of teacher burnout may possibly develop independently of each other, but at times they may also affect each other in a reciprocal way. That is, teacher burnout may not always start with the development of emotional exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Bo, Nate, Jeffrey, Alex, Noel, and Mariane talk about the correlation between the burnout of teachers and students' motivation in their article 'The relationship between teacher burnout and student motivation. The writers suggest that burnout can seriously damage the quality of life and teaching efficiency of those in the teaching profession. As teachers' burnout go up, their

involvement with class and attachment with the profession come down. This results in increased criticism from students on their teachers, a change in their feelings towards teachers, and a change in attitude in classrooms. All this may ultimately lead to a decrease in motivation level, thus reducing the opportunities for learning and engagement.

The study confirms the relationship between teachers' burnout and students' motivation level by suggesting that teacher burnout leads to reduced students' motivation. Though the three aspects of burnout are interrelated, each may play a different role in affecting the level of motivation of students. The study further suggests that students are not only influenced by a teacher's teaching style; they are also affected by a teacher's outward emotions and physical gestures. In the end, the study makes suggestions as to how to address the problem. The writers recommend to improve working conditions and classrooms environment along with organizing training workshops for teachers on stress management and coping skills to resist burnout (Shen et al., 2015).

Constantinos M. Kokkinos in his work 'Job stressors, personality and burnout in primary school teachers', empirically examines the relationship between job stressors, personality traits and teacher's burnout. The study found that both job stressor and personality characteristics were strong predictors of job burnout. Among personality traits, neuroticism and conscientiousness were found to be the key predictors of job burnout among teachers. As long as job stressors are concerned, certain factors were found to be strongly linked to job burnout. Students' misbehavior and time constraints in their job were the two major factors for job burnout among teaching professionals (Kokkinos, 2011). It was further found that certain personality features may decrease on the increase the incidence of burnout for teachers.

'Occupational Stress and Professional Burnout in Teachers of Primary and Secondary Education: The Role of Coping Strategies', a study conducted by Alexander, Aikaterini and Marina. This research work explores the correlation between occupational or professional stress and job burnout of teachers at the primary and secondary level. The study also investigates the relationship of stress and burnout with other important variables such as age, sex, and school

level, as well as coping strategies as to how to do away with stress. It was found that teachers at the primary level experience more stress than teachers at the secondary level. In comparison to male teachers, female teachers are more vulnerable to occupational stress ([Antoniou, Ploumpi, & Ntalla, 2013](#)).

Burnout among Secondary School Teachers and Responsible Potential Sources and Symptoms: A Critical Analysis is a research work that focuses on a comparative analysis of symptoms and sources of professional burnout of teachers in private and public schools. The study has reached the following conclusions: first, almost all teachers at the secondary schools experience burnout, though some may be exposed to high while others to low level of burnout; second, there are a number of factors responsible for burnout like work overload, low salaries and lack of support infrastructure that can help better cope with burnout; third, teachers in private schools are more vulnerable to burnout than those in government schools, however, for those in public schools, their place of posting matters a lot in terms of physical exhaustion; fourth, a big difference was noticed in symptoms of burnout in private and government schools. For example, teachers in government schools experience headaches, cold fever and tiredness, while those in privately managed schools feel frustration and a sense of inferiority (Puhan, Dash, Malla, & Baral, 2015).

Molly H. Fisher has carried out research to look into if there is any linkage between satisfaction in job or stress in job and subsequent burnout of teachers in secondary schools in the Netherlands. A total of 400 teachers were interviewed for the study. The study found that novice teachers are more vulnerable to burnout. However, new teachers and those having a certain number of years of experience in the teaching profession are exposed to a varied level of burnout. The study further found that though the number of years of professional experience may be a significant predictor of job stress, it may not be a that significant predictor for burnout.

It was concluded that stress for one reason or other in the teaching profession are significant predictor of job burnout. Moreover, it was deduced that job stress caused job dissatisfaction, ultimately leading to job burnout. The study

recommended that effective coping skills of teachers can help teachers deal with stress and thus counter job burnout.

Jeffrey Dorman, in his article 'Testing a Model for Teacher Burnout' conducted an empirical study on the predictors of burnout. The scholar interviewed a total of 246 teachers in private schools in Queensland, Australia. The study tried to explore the connection between burnout of teachers with schools environment, classroom environment, workload, the ambiguity of professional responsibility and other relevant factors. Of the total teachers interviewed, 99 were primary school teachers, 103 secondary and 44 were from schools both primary and secondary. The impacts of above mentioned indicators/variables was studied, keeping in view the three dimensions of burnout phenomena. They are depersonalization, emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. The study reached the conclusion that work overload, pressure from administration and poor classroom environment were important precursors for emotional exhaustion. Depersonalization was strongly affected by emotional exhaustion, self-esteem, schools environment and role conflict. Furthermore, self-esteem, efficacy and depersonalization has a strong linkage with personal accomplishment ([Dorman, 2003](#)).

Andre Brouwers, I Will J. G. Evers, and Welko Tomic conducted a study in The Netherlands among school teachers at the secondary level to determine if there is any relationship between social support, self-efficacy in eliciting support at the places where one works and subsequent burnout of teachers. Of the total, 203 were while 74 were female teachers working in secondary schools in the province of Limburg. The average age of these teachers was 45.87 while the average length of their teaching experience was 21.28 years. Schools for the study were selected randomly. They were sent questionnaires through mail and were requested to fill them. The writers used the Dutch version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory to measure burnout among teachers. To measure the perceived self-efficacy to elicit support, the Interpersonal Self- Efficacy scale for teachers was used. Emotional Support subscale of the Social Support List-Discrepancies was used to measure the perceived lack of social support was used.

In the first instance, the writers develop a hypothesis that the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in eliciting support from their coworkers and principals mediate the influence of perceived lack of support on the level of burnout ([BROUWERS, G. EVERS, & TOMIC, 2001, p.1474](#)).

In 'Teacher Burnout and Perceptions of a Democratic School Environment', the writer tries to ascertain how democratic environment and policies in schools affect teachers' burnout and how teacher's burnout influence the democratic instructional style and policies in a school. Data was collected through a questionnaire from as many as 2900 teachers. The study provides that democratic education is the one which is based on mutual trust and respect and there is greater freedom and independence for teachers as well as students. The writer believes that teachers' burnout often results from autocratic and dictatorial policies and practices and thus must be discouraged. In the beginning, the writers raise two questions: first, what may be the effects of democratic policies in a school on teachers' burnout? Second, what may be the effect of teachers' burnout on the campaign for democratic support system in a school? The study reached some interesting conclusions.

The attitude and behavior of a principal had a significant role in teachers' burnout. Democratic policies and practices in a school can have a significant role to discourage teachers' burnout. Support from co-workers and colleagues had a much weaker role to stop or avoid burnout. The study further concluded that burnout teachers were unsupportive of democratic and student centered instructional policies ([Gary Dworkin, J. Saha, & N. Hill, 2003](#)).

Jayakaran Mukundan and Koroush Khandehroo conducted a study on the phenomenon of burnout among secondary school English in Malaysia. The research tries to find the relationship between burnout and demographics of age and workload. The target population was divided in four groups based on age groups of less than 25, between 26 and 35, 36 and 45 and more than 45. Of the groups, the first three groups have encountered emotional exhaustion while the last one has not. The first group, the younger one doesn't experience any feeling of depersonalization, while the older ones are more vulnerable to this syndrome. It was further

revealed that population aging between 26 and 45 are more vulnerable to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Teaching workload was the amount of teaching hours per week divided into four groups of 10- hour intervals. Those who teach more than 10 hours per week were found to be emotionally exhausted, though those with less than 30 hours per week face depersonalization and decreased personal accomplishment. This shows that emotional exhaustion is controlled by reduced workload while more than 30 hours per week help teachers resolve the issue of depersonalization and reduced efficacy. At the end, it was concluded that burnout exists at a higher level in English teachers at secondary level, while there is a significant relationship between certain age groups and workload (Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010).

Nikolaos Tsigilis, Eleni Zournatzi and Athanasios Koustelios in their article conclude that burnout is mostly experienced by those in helping professions including those associated with education. They further suggest that among helping professions, teaching is the one that is most susceptible to burnout, especially emotional exhaustion.

In order to conduct the study, the writers chose as many as 437 full time physical education teachers in Greece from public and private schools. Two hundred and seven of teachers were from primary schools while the rest were chosen from secondary schools. To measure burnout among physical education teachers, Maslach Burnout Inventory was used. The data from these teachers was collected through questionnaire. The study was primarily aimed at finding whether physical education teachers experienced different levels of burnout in relation to the education level they work. The findings of the study suggest that physical education teachers feel emotionally more exhausted at primary level than their colleagues at secondary level. These findings are in line with those of other writers who conducted researches on the same matter in Greece. Furthermore, it was revealed that the link between three dimensions of burnout was comparatively more evident in primary than secondary school teachers. Study also indicates that the level of education of those who teach physical education also influences the frequency of burnout, and so it is important to take these features into consideration when the

government is serious about addressing the issue at hand (Tsigilis, Zournatzi , & Koustelios , 2011).

Way Forward

Now that a relationship has been established between organizational health and teachers' burnout in

schools, it is very important to recommend measures and methods as to what to do to avoid burnout of teachers. In the first place, schools' policies should be designed in a way to be employee-friendly. These policies should not have an element of victimization and deprivation. Schools' policies should be more democratic to incorporate more and more input from teaching and administrative staff. A close coordination and mechanism for interaction should be decided upon between the teaching and administration staff. In this regard, periodic meetings with faculty members should be held to listen to their complaints, grievances and other genuine needs and demands. For this purpose, a grievances committee should be formed, including members from both administration and teaching faculty.

The major reason for emotional exhaustion is work overload for teachers. In this regard, it is recommended that at the time of appointment, a proposed workload should be decided upon with mutual consent and the organization must then stick to that work load and should avoid any extra work pressure. Teachers must be paid for any extra

work and responsibilities they undertake in the organization where they work. Moreover, the school should have a complete package of remuneration as well as compensation for its faculty. It should cover medical allowances, insurance and loans and grants on soft terms. Annual dinners and get together should be arranged in which certificates of appreciation and acknowledgment should be distributed among the performers.

Perhaps, it is of greater importance that the schools' timings should not be such so as to disturb the private and personal life of the staff. After schools' working hours/timings, they should, for no, reason be called to duty or any other work into the school. The essence is that not to disturb the family and personal life of teachers. The school should share in advance the yearly vacations and holiday plan with its staff so that they may be in better position to schedule their activities.

It is of immense importance that counter-burnout policies at the school level should be proactive rather than reactive. For this purpose, a psychologist should be appointed permanently in schools to help teachers cope with any feeling of burnout. That psychologist should be trained enough to locate and designate the possible victims of burnout in advance. This will help a great deal in not letting the teachers fall prey to the syndrome of burnout.

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