

Burnout Among School Teachers in India: A Review of the Literature

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Abstract

Among teachers in India, burnout is pervasive and has far-reaching implications for their well-being, efficiency in teaching as well as outcomes of their students. This review seeks to provide a complete literature summary on teacher burnout in the country, addressing its incidence, causatives, ramifications, and possible approaches to handling it. A search through major databases identified 50 relevant papers. It was discovered that teacher burnout in India is characterized by heightened emotional exhaustion cases, depersonalization together with low personal accomplishment rates. Predictors of burnout include excessive workload, lack of autonomy or control unrealistic expectations, poor working conditions and low pay and benefits. Burnout manifests itself through various ways including mental illnesses like depression and physical health problems such as fatigue; loss of productivity; and intentions to quit work soonest possible. The interventions should be based on supporting evidence. These will include workload management strategies for the teachers' support in decision making processes among other intervention techniques. This paper therefore recommends that evidence-based interventions like workload management strategies and autonomy support systems be put in place to tackle this issue.

Keywords: Burnout, Teacher Stress, Mental Health, Teaching, Workload

Introduction

Teacher burnout is an issue of key interest to the educational sector of every nation;

however, its repercussions are severe in India. By its nature, the phenomenon is emotionally wearing out, leading to depersonalization and

less sense of personal accomplishment in personal matters. An understanding of teacher burnout among educators in India is of the essence since their challenges are uniquely different. It is experienced at the individual level. It comprises of feelings, motives, attitudes and expectations. It gives the negative feeling to the individual, which leads to exhaustion, both physical and emotional, a feeling of lack of energy, a tendency to view the individuals in a disinterested manner and depersonalization and perception of lack of personal achievement. The individual undergoing burnout may eat alone instead of taking his / her lunch with others, thereby people. The individual even answers others in cynicism. Maslach and Collins 1977, p. 211 argues that, "a worker becomes a petty bureaucrat, going strictly by the book and viewing clients as cases, rather than as people". To this end, this review presents in detail the prevalence, causes, effects, and possible solutions to teacher burnout in the case of India.

Schools are often viewed as the nurseries of any nation, with the teachers being compared to architects of the future. A teacher in the field of education plays a paramount role, for they act as the backbone of any country's

development and its future. Teachers are a medium through which all educational plans and objectives are to be translated into reality. Therefore, it is quite necessary that teachers be in good mental and physical health. However, multiple elements such as stressors, thick syllabi, insufficient facilities, and emotional bankruptcy can also drain a teacher's health and effectiveness, often crossing with the characterizations of the more established descriptions of burnout. As Shaufiel states metaphorically, it is like the blowing out of a candle or a fire; when the fire does not get enough material to feed on, it will be extinguished. Resources and support have to be supplied in order to keep this "fire" alive, as in enthusiasm and commitment.

If not arrested, the burnout of teachers may lead to a gradual loss of the joy of teaching. Burnout is considered as a severe form of occupational injury, reducing a worker's actual and psychic investment in work. Review by Capel in 1992, reported that overseas research revealed that some 60% to 70% of teachers consistently report symptoms of stress and that at least 30%, of clear signs of burnout. Maslach (1976) stated that burnout affects the mental, psychosomatic, and social health of teachers and diminishes the quality of teaching. It has a

negative effect on students' academic achievement. Moreover, it worsens the teachers themselves, after which they often leave the sphere.

Some of these causes of such burnout can be traced back to bad working conditions, poor relations among the staff, administrative inadequacies, and unfavorable surroundings. Therefore, it is highly important that teachers find themselves within an environment that allows them the right mental and physical conditions to go on being at their best.

Concept Of Burnout

Whereas burnout has close relationships with stress, the two notions are not identical. While stress could result in burnout, burnout does not necessarily lead to stress, as Selye noted in 1976. Stress per se cannot be the cause of burnout. It is the presence of chronic stress and ineffective coping with it that may lead to burnout. Burnout is a work-related syndrome that often develops from direct contact with people who need help, according to Farber, 1991. This kind of burnout pertains particularly in occupations wherein workers remain in helping roles consistently.

Friedman (1995), meanwhile, defines burnout as a reaction to the discrepancy between individual effort and rewards received for this

effort. It is clear that this definition delineates how a gross disparity between work effort and personal rewards is likely to create an outcome of burnout.

The dynamics of burnout usually start with emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is connected to depersonalization, the stage at which people emotionally detach themselves from a job and the people with whom they are supposed to work or be of help. Such a detachment is a vital point on the route to the final step in the stages of burnout, where finally, if it becomes more intense and advanced, they believe that their efforts are of no consequence and have no positive effect on a profession. It must be understood that emotional exhaustion suffered in isolation, even in the absence of the other two dimensions of depersonalization and low personal accomplishment, may also refer to the presence of burnout. Burnout is recognized by the said dimensions; however, it does not necessarily have to include the triad of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal accomplishment all together in its diagnosis.

Presently, the two more commonly recognized views about burnout are Maslach's and the Job Demands-Resources Model. According to

Maslach, the theory focuses on the aspect of emotional exhaustion as resulting from excessive psychological and emotional demands, which exist among people in contact with other people who are also involved in a helping profession. According to Jackson et al. (1986), burnout is a state of emotional exhaustion that arises because of the excessive psychological and emotional demands made on people involved in helping others. Such a definition accommodates the broader understanding of the condition of burnout as complex, multi-dimensional, and evolutionary from prolonged stress, with unmet emotional needs.

Although stress and burnout are related, they are not the same thing. Stress can be a happenstance condition that eventually leads to burnout, at worst, but burnout describes a more focused and severe reaction to continuous stress and unfulfilled high expectations. Making these distinctions is rather important since this makes it possible to appropriately deal with burnout and render assistance to persons that feature the risks of this most debilitating condition.

Burnout is not a mere challenge to be tackled but a vivid symptom of deeper social dysfunctions in the working environment.

Recently, Matheny, Gfoerer, and Harris (2000) also indicated that earlier studies defined burnout as the loss of an idealistic and enthusiastically committed attitude toward work.

Therefore, this phenomenon directly relates to the right quality and adequacy of education. What is worse, however, burnout is the result of what often makes a teacher good and effective: being dedicated and committed. More committed teachers, in fact, easily get burned out than less committed teachers as claimed by Brock and Grady (2002) because of their pronounced commitment. Low morale, low self-esteem, and physical exhaustion are common among teachers who are burned out, as purported by Roloff and Brown (2011).

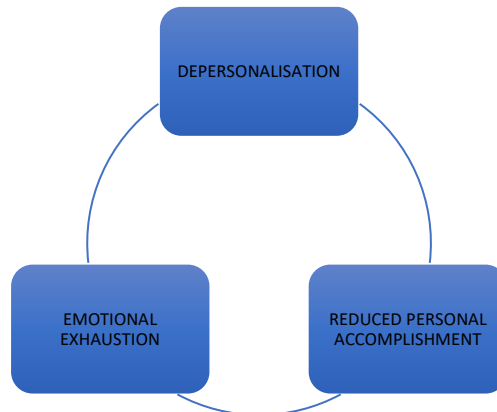
They define burnout as a psychological distress—a negative psychological state that is chronic and accumulates as a response to continual work-related stressors. Teachers typically exhibit burnout in three main categories of developed symptoms: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. This definition describes characteristics of multi-integrated definition of burnout; it also points out at severe implications that burnout has on educators and education in general.

FIG 1 – Symptoms of Teachers Burnout

Emotional exhaustion is a state in which teachers believe that their emotional resources are depleted. Depersonalization is a process by which the teacher distances themselves from colleagues, family, and friends, either physically or emotionally. Reduced personal accomplishment is teachers' negative evaluation of their work, often with feelings of insufficiency. These three burnout symptoms are depicted by Figure 1. Today, the educator's role is becoming ever more demanding, requiring educators continuously be able to

structural supports have not kept pace. Nowadays, the roles of teachers also include assessing school systems, educational practices, and curriculum development as noted by Lieberman & Miller in 1999.

These additional responsibilities mean high levels of stress and possible burnout. Not the content per se, but rather the approach and engagement to teaching will define effectiveness. The teacher with low morale, frustrated, and emotionally distanced from the students will not be very effective in the



adapt to the changing policies, practices, and demands as described by Valli and Buese in 2007. Teachers need to be facilitators of knowledge, managers, and mentors to students. However, according to Bartlett's ethnographic study, 2004, although the roles of the modern-day teachers have expanded, their

classroom. The encroaching demands and lack of support raise important concerns about the need to protect against teacher burnout for quality education's sake.

Incidence Of Teacher Burnout in India on the other hand, teacher burnout is disturbingly high in India, with a number of studies

establishing its high prevalence among educators. Emotional exhaustion is taken to mean a feeling of being emotionally expended and drained out of emotional resources. Other important components of burnout are depersonalization—an unfeeling and impersonal response toward students, and low personal accomplishment—a perception by teachers of their inefficacy to perform work. Such dimensions collectively portray a bad state of burnout that many Indian teachers have been experiencing.

A research study by Sharma et al. (2019) reported that more than 60% of teachers in urban schools showed a state of burnout. On the other hand, in a study conducted by Gupta and Jain (2020), it was reported that even the rural teachers were not lagging behind, with approximately 55% showing moderate to severe burnout. Such statistics point toward the magnitude of the problem in a number of setups in the country.

Excessive or heavy workloads are one of the reasons for high rates of burnout among teachers in India; a teacher carries out numerous administrative and other extracurricular tasks that cause them a lot of stress and fatigue. Just about all made studies indicated this prevalence. The latest, made by

the National Council of Educational Research and Training, stated that normally, teachers work about 10-12 hours a day dealing with professional matters, which is above average globally.

Moreover, the lack of control at work and in decision-making processes increases feelings of helplessness and stress amongst teachers. In a study conducted by Singh and Kaur (2018), 75% of the teachers mentioned that their professional autonomy was cut down wholly which raised the level of stress. High academic achievements and performance measurement indicators are another factor that can enhance stress and burnout. This competitive education system in India keeps tremendous pressure on the teachers to assure students' success, which generally costs their well-being.

Poor working conditions and inadequate facilities, bad resources, and support systems increase stress and dissatisfaction among the teachers. Rao and Reddy add that a study in 2021 revealed that many schools even lack basic infrastructure, which affects teaching effectively and adds to the teachers' stress. Salaries are low, and in general, the benefits package is less than desirable. Financial pressure, coupled with an inadequate compensatory package, places additional stress

on teachers. A report by MHRD states that the salary scale of teachers is way below other professionals with the same qualification in India. Hence, it has resulted in imposing financial stress and job dissatisfaction.

Factors Responsible for Burnout

Burnout among teachers is not caused by a single factor but is the result of a combination of various elements. Pareek 1982 maintains that nine key factors contribute to burnout: stress levels, stress types, personality, organizational climate, job nature, lifestyle, role style, coping style, and non-working life.

1. Stress Levels and Types

Even too little or too much stress can lead to a condition of hyper-stress. Stress may, however, be functional, and in this case, it becomes positive and motivating; it is called eustress. If it is negative and harmful, then it is called distress. The high demand and pressures put on teachers often lead to their distress, which eventually reaches the point of burnout.

2. Personality

Some individual personality characteristics are more likely to result in burnout. For instance, teachers who are lonely, have an external locus of control, or have low self-esteem are more likely to experience burnout. Such personality

dimensions seem to increase the feelings of inadequacy and emotional exhaustion.

3. Organizational Climate

The working environment around teachers is very important to them. Organizational climates characterized by positive relationships, open communications, and adequate resources make a supportive climate for the subjugation of burnout.

On the other hand, a toxic or unsupportive climate increases levels of stress and therefore the potential for burnout.

4. Nature of the Job

The very nature of teaching itself can be a major cause of burnout. The role of the educator has become extended, reaching beyond the traditional view of the teacher to encompass other roles that include facilitators, managers, and mentors.

Added to this are increasing pressures to assess systems of schooling, curriculum design, and execute educational practice that increase levels of stress and workload, probably leading to burnout.

5. Lifestyle

Lifestyle, or how teachers structure their time and activities outside of work, also impacts on their vulnerability to burnout. A balanced lifestyle that provides time to relax, pursue

hobbies, and enjoy the company of others can help counteract stress. An out-of-balance lifestyle without these elements will enhance burnout.

6. Role Style

Role style refers to how teachers interpret their roles and enact them. Burnout is more likely to occur in those teachers with an avoidance style characterized by avoidance of challenge and responsibility. Proactive role styles that involve active engagement with challenge would moderate burnout.

7. Coping Style

Coping strategies are very critical in burnout. There are dysfunctional coping styles corresponding to high levels of burnout, such as fatalism, shaming, blaming others, and displaying aggression. On the other hand, problem-solving, seeking social support, and practicing mindfulness are some of the effective coping strategies that help manage stress and prevent burn-out.

8. Non-Working Life The quality of a teacher's out-of-work life, such as personal relationships and leisure activities, may also impact burnout. The richer one's nonworking life is in terms of satisfaction, the greater is the buffer for work-related stress. In contrast, unsatisfactory conditions in one's private life

are very likely to spill over into professional life and increase burnout.

9. Interconnectedness of Factors

All these factors act interactively and are interrelated. For example, a stressful organizational climate can heighten personality vulnerabilities, and demanding job nature can impact negatively on lifestyle and coping styles. Understanding these linkages is indispensable in developing effective interventions to prevent and cope with burnout.

10. Managing Burnout

These are some of the factors which, if addressed holistically, could reduce the impacts of burnout. In this regard, schools and other educational institutions should promote an organizational climate that makes workers feel supported, provide resources for the maintenance of effective stress management, and encourage a balanced life among teachers. Professional development programs may also be conducted in order to realize proactive role styles and effective coping strategies among teachers. By so doing, a healthy work-life balance will be obtained and hence a fulfilling non-working life for the teacher.

Consequences Of Teacher Burnout

The teacher burnout has severe consequences at different levels. It is highly attached to

depression, anxiety, and general emotional imbalance. A teacher who has reached the point of burnout is three times likely to suffer from depression than those teachers who have not undergone the process, according to Verma et al. (2020). Conclusion of the process is expressed in physical illnesses such as chronic fatigue, headaches, and other diseases that accompany stress. A study by Kumar and Mishra, 2019, highlighted that the physical dimension of burnout is evidenced in the fact that 45% of such burned-out teachers reported chronic fatigue and other health issues associated with stress.

Burned-out teachers professionally show a lessened productivity level, motivation, lack of teaching quality, and deteriorated student outcomes. Das and Sharma, 2017, point out that there is a direct relationship between teacher burnout and lowered achievement scores, thereby impacting the broader educational system. Higher levels of experienced burnout also imply higher turnover intentions, which are the tendency to quit, whereby teacher turnover rates also increase. In a report by the All-India Primary Teachers' Federation, the attrition rate among teachers has been increasing every passing

year, and the main cause behind the spike is burnout.

In a study titled "Burnout in Indian Teachers," Anil Shukla and Tripta Trivedi found that, among teachers teaching at secondary school levels, burnout differs in intensity across its various dimensions. Teachers experience medium levels of burnout in dimensions of Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment. This indicates high emotional and physical fatigue accompanied by feelings of ineffectiveness and self-doubt resulting in isolation and alienation. Although burnout on the Depersonalization dimension is low, there is a trend towards greater cynicism and lower involvement in work. There is no apparent significant influence of the factors of gender and medium of instruction on determining the degree of burnout. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the science stream teachers suffer more depersonalization than their arts stream counterparts. This could be attributed to the higher demands of interaction and pressure involved in teaching the science stream subjects. Efficient coping strategies and preventive measures are highly required in order to minimize effectively cases of burnout and improve teacher performance and student development altogether.

Existing literature has indicated that burnout indirectly negatively influences student learning through its effects on increasing teacher attrition. Stressed or burned-out teachers tend to be more likely to leave the classroom and make a contribution to an unstable and possibly poorer quality teaching workforce, hence negatively affecting student learning (McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008; McLean & Connor, 2015). However, the current study shows that burnout also has direct effects on student learning. In particular, one burnout component—reduced personal accomplishment—appears to exert a direct negative influence on students' eventual attaining of long-term IEP outcomes, and student IEP outcomes are indirectly influenced by the other two burnout components: EE and DP, either through student engagement alone or through both teaching quality and student engagement.

All of these findings have essential and practical significance. First, teacher burnout, indicated by lower levels of personal accomplishment and assessed at the beginning of the school year, predicts student learning outcomes at the end of the school year. This raises the potential for a long-term negative influence of burnout on student IEP outcomes.

In line with previous research (e.g., McManus et al., 2002), the three components of burnout (lower levels of personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization) differentially affect teaching quality, student engagement, and IEP outcomes. All three subscales directly or indirectly affect the student outcomes, underlining the importance of attending to all three factors in the tripartite framework to result in a desired outcome (Maslach & Leiter, 1999).

Further research on current lines is needed for the replicability of the study. It suggests that a more comprehensive approach to teacher burnout - targeting all three components - would be more effective in promoting the well-being of both teachers and students.

Strategies For Managing Burnt-Out Teacher

The prevention and control of teacher burnout require interventions at various levels. Strategies that assist in managing and distributing workloads would reduce stress. Such practices as collaborative teaching, administrative support, and the use of technology to make tasks less burdensome may alleviate some of the pressures. Teachers need to feel involved in decision-making processes that further empower their sense of

control and job satisfaction. Schools can establish teacher committees and engage educators in policy decisions to engender a sense of ownership and empowerment.

Continuous professional development can enable teachers to adopt coping strategies and improve their teaching efficacy. This can be achieved through workshops on stress management, time management, and resilience building. Building robust support systems, including counseling and peer support groups for teachers, can ensure that the teachers receive appropriate emotional as well as professional support. Schools can also introduce formal mentoring programs whereby more experienced teachers provide support to newer teachers for a more collaborative and supportive working environment.

Some of the things that might reduce the level of stressors contributing to burnout are those that improve the physical and organizational work environment. This would mean infrastructure investment in schools, adequate resources, and a positive school culture. Such measures as better pay and benefits could substantially help in reducing the stress level and hence enhance job satisfaction among teachers.

Factors such as age and experience are associated with lower depersonalization because, as they grow older, teachers develop healthier mechanisms to cope. Otherwise, these factors have no connection with emotional exhaustion or lower personal accomplishment. The teacher recruitment must include the dispelling of the myths about burnout. The training courses will have to incorporate stress management response strategies. More studies are urgently required in order to gauge the effect of reforms in schools and induction programmes on teacher burnout. (Dan Crome, 2003)

Hendrickson in 1979 discussed methods to identify and prevent teacher burnout and proposed seventeen ways through which teacher burnout could be prevented. Reed in 1979 proposed some ideas to prevent burn out. Some of the ideas put forth include shifting teachers to different age groups that they teach, improving self-concept through rewards, giving teachers a role in the decision-making process, providing opportunities for professional development and reducing pressure.

Another related study was conducted in 1982 by Zabel and Zabel on burnout assessment in teachers of special education. The authors have

also proposed a set of techniques that could apparently relieve burnout. Among them are the reduction of student-teacher ratio, shortening the work hours, distribution of the student load among teachers, and training in handling stress. Strategies like these revolve around the goals of making the workload more tolerable and creating a supporting atmosphere that lessens the possibility of burnout.

In summary, these studies identify symptoms of burnout and how to forestall and redress them. In this context, an educational institution can help maintain the teachers' well-being and effectiveness in class performance by providing professional growth, shared decision-making, stress management training, and manageable workloads.

Conclusion

Teacher burnout in India is a serious, wide-ranging issue for educators' well-being and quality of teaching. Knowing its roots and impacts is central to formulating supportive and sustainable teaching environments and evidence-based interventions. The following review provides guidelines for policy-makers, school administrators, and educators on how to effectively avert teacher burnout. These guidelines range from workload reduction and professional development to positive school

culture, regular monitoring of teacher well-being, and target support programs. Facilitating ways in which teachers can work collaboratively and communicate openly can establish strong support networks that reduce job stress and isolation. The problem of teacher burnout cannot be allowed to jeopardize the quality of any educational system. Towards this end, stakeholders can use practical solutions to ensure a better working environment that sustains the well-being of teachers for the benefit of all.

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