

Burnout among secondary school teachers

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Burnout, a term originally coined by *Freudenberger (1974)*, is commonly associated with human service professionals such as teachers. It broadly represents a response to the chronic emotional stress of dealing extensively with others in need. Burnout is reflected in emotional exhaustion and apathy, physical fatigue, lack of energy, psychosomatic illness, increased alcohol and drug consumption, cynicism, inappropriate anger, depression and lack of personal achievements. Now, it is observed that teachers are also showing symptoms of burnout, which directly or indirectly affect their teaching performance. Teacher burnout often cited as a large contributor to teacher retention rates. In addition teacher burnout has been shown to have negative effect on teacher and student performance.

Teaching is generally viewed as stressful occupation (*Bardo, 1979; Cedoline, 1982; Friesen & Williams, 1985*). The day- to- day interaction with students and colleagues and incessant and fragmented demands for teaching often lead to overpowering pressure and challenges which lead to stress and finally burnout. As a consequence, many teachers are finding that their feelings about themselves, their students and their profession are more negative than they were initially. These teachers are susceptible to developing chronic feelings of emotional exhaustion and fatigue, negative attitudes towards their students and a loss of feeling of accomplishment in the job. If this is the reality, then it is rather frightening to think that many teachers are wasting themselves, spending their lifetimes in doing something which has no meaning for them, which gives them no sense of satisfaction and personal worth. In psychological terms such type of teachers are called burnout teachers. There is extensive literature which examines burnout in teachers (*Gold & Roth, 1993; Jackson, Schwab & Schuler, 1986; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982a, 1982b*).

Freudenberger (1977) describes burnout as physical and emotional exhaustion resulting from excessive demands on energy, strength or resources. He says that when frustration, tension or anxiety persist or increase, stress develops into a syndrome labeled as burnout. He also noted that sometimes burnout people do not see themselves as cynical and depressed. They find fault with everything and everyone around them, complaining about the organization and reacting critically to whatever is suggested by others. *Hindrickson (1979)* points out that a burnout teacher is losing or has lost the energy and enthusiasm needed to teach children.

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Kahn (1986) has explained burnout as "a syndrome of inappropriate attitudes towards clients and towards self often associated with uncomfortable physical and emotional symptoms as well as with deterioration of performance". *Capel (1991)* explains burnout is a negative response to long-term stress. *Kasinath and Kailaslingam (1995)* believe that burnout is a syndrome of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion and reduced personal achievement that can occur among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind.

Maslach (1984) defined burnout as the loss of concern for the people with whom one is working. Further, she explained burnout as the syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that results from interpersonal contact. She states that for the people who work continuously with other people, long term stress can be emotionally draining and can lead to burnout. They are usually required to work intensely and intimately with people on a large scale, continuous basis and become involved with their client's psychological, social and physical problems. This type of professional interaction arouses strong feelings of emotional and physical stress that can be disruptive and incapacitating. This may lead to defense in the form of 'detached concern' – of establishing some psychological distance from the client while still maintaining a concern for the person's wellbeing. A subsequent part is, the development of negative, cynical and dehumanized perceptions of and feelings about one's client and they are treated accordingly (depersonalization). Such negative reactions to clients however are not an inevitable consequence of emotional exhaustion, although they are quite prevalent. A third aspect of the burnout syndrome is the tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, particularly in regard to one's work and clients. People in this dimension of burnout feel unhappy about themselves and dissatisfied with their accomplishments. Thus, burnout is seen as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment.

Burnout occurs at the individual level. It involves feelings, motives, attitudes and expectations. It is a negative feeling for the individual that leads to exhaustion (both physical and emotional), a feeling of lack of energy, a tendency to view the individuals in a disinterested manner (depersonalization) and the perception of a lack of personal achievement. The individual undergoing burnout may eat alone instead of taking his/her lunch with others, thereby avoiding mixing with others. The individual may even respond with cynicism to others. *Maslach and Collins (1977)* state that, "a worker becomes a petty bureaucrat, going strictly by the book and viewing clients as cases, rather than as people". Teachers belong to a profession which involves working with students. Thus, they belong to the group of those who do 'people work' of some kind. *Clouse and Whitekar (1981)* point out three stages of teacher burnout:

Stage 1-Loss of Enthusiasm

Most teachers enter the profession with a sincere desire to help the students. Their energy levels may be high, ideals strong, value systems decent, sense of motivation high and they nurse an inner hope that something positive can be done about the students. However, when their expectations are not met, their enthusiasm falters.

Stage 2- Frustration

Frustration is one of the earliest signs of burnout. Lowered teacher morale at this point increases the frustration and burnout level.

Stage 3- Alienation

Alienation of the professional from the work environment may be viewed as a response or result of powerlessness, frustration and loss of meaning in one's work. Alienation is associated with detachment, withdrawal and isolation within the work environment. A teacher at this stage may view students as impersonal objects, may not be available when the students need help or even refuse to help them. Thus, a teacher who is undergoing burnout would perceive a lack of enthusiasm, lowered sense of morale and high levels of frustration, a sense of detachment and would withdraw from work.

A review of the related literature reveals that *Bloch (1977)*, *Cheniss (1980)*, *Freudenberger & Richelson (1980)* conducted study on teachers separately and concluded that teacher experienced high level of burnout. The research also contends that teaching is stressful occupation (*Borg & Riding, 1991a; Travers & Cooper, 1993*). *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. *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)*.

Although many studies have been conducted in this area in foreign countries, only a few are reported in relation to India. *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 house wives. 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.

The quality and continuity of education are directly concerned with the phenomenon of teacher burnout. Many studies show that teacher burnout and student dropout stem from the same source. The investigator felt that for quality education, full utilization of human resources and to create a healthy environment for the development of students, this area required special attention and so made an attempt to study burnout in secondary school teachers. The main aim of this study was to study the phenomena of burnout and its effect on teachers grouped on the basis of gender.

Objectives of the Study

This study has focused on the following points:

- To find out the level of burnout among secondary school teachers.
- To find the level of burnout in male and female secondary school teachers.
- To compare the level of burnout between male and female secondary school teachers.

Method

Sample: The sample of the present study consists of 200 secondary school teachers teaching in *Jaunpur city*. First of all the list of all secondary schools was made by researcher, then 15 schools were selected by lottery method. The required number of teachers (i.e. 100 male and 100 female teachers respectively) was chosen from these schools using a stratified random sampling procedure.

Instrument

In this study The *Maslach Burnout Inventory (M.B.I. Form Ed.)* constructed by

Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson and self developed Personal Data Sheet for factual information related to demographic aspects of teachers were used. The M.B.I. Form Ed. has been taken from the *Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual* (Second Edition, 1993). In this manual, burnout is perceived as a three dimensional syndrome- the three dimensions being Depersonalization (DP), Emotional Exhaustion (EE) and Personal Accomplishment (PA). Each of these aspects is measured by a separate subscale. The Emotional Exhaustion subscale assesses the feeling of being over-extended and exhausted by one's work. The Depersonalization subscale measures an ill feeling and impersonal response toward recipients of one's services, care, treatment or instruction. The Personal Accomplishment subscale assesses the feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people.

Validity

Maslach and Jackson reported a comparison of scores on the MBI and the JDS measure (*Job Diagnostic Survey, Hackman & Oldham, 1974*) of general job satisfaction ($N= 91$ social service and mental health workers) which showed a moderately negative correlation with EE ($r = -0.23, P < 0.05$), DP ($r = -0.22, P < 0.02$) as well as a slightly positive correlation with PA ($r = 0.17, P < 0.06$).

Reliability

Internal consistency was established by Maslach by using *Cronbach's coefficient alpha* ($N= 1,316$). The reliability coefficients for the sub-scales were the following: 0.90 for EE, 0.79 for DP and 0.71 for PA. The reported test-retest reliability coefficient was ($N= 53$) 0.82 for EE, 0.60 for DP and 0.80 for PA. The reliability for the components of the sub-scales was calculated separately by the authors because, the sub-scales were considered separate but related aspects of burnout.

Since the original MBI is in English, it was not suitable for use on teachers who were from a pure Hindi medium background. Hence, in the present study, Hindi translation along with the original items in English was used by the researchers. For this, firstly, all items were translated into Hindi and appropriate words which were more common and applicable to Indian situations were used. At this stage, care was taken that the meaning and idea of each item remained the same as in the original one. After the translation, both forms of Hindi and English version were given to experienced English-Hindi translators and also to a few senior teachers who have command over both the Hindi and English language. They were asked to judge the suitability of the translations and give their suggestions. Their views were received, discussed and adopted wherever necessary. After this, the

inventory was administered on 20 secondary school teachers just to find out the gross defects in the language, structure and complexity of the items, hence to make it more easily understandable. Only one or two changes in the wording were made. Thus, the final form with both English and Hindi versions was prepared and used.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The sample teachers were requested to fill their personal details in the Personal Data Sheet and give responses to all the items on the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* as accurately and honestly as possible. They were assured that their answers would be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only. Once all the data was collected, it was tabulated for ease in analysis and interpretation. Scores obtained from the *Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)* were categorized separately for the three aspects of Burnout (BO) namely Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP) and Lack of Personal Accomplishment (PA). Burnout is considered as a continuous variable ranging from low to moderate to high degrees of the above feelings and is not viewed as a dichotomous variable which is either present or absent. The number of teachers belonging to the three levels of burnout i.e. high burnout, average burnout and low burnout were counted for each sub-scale according to the Norms Table for Secondary School Teachers presented in the Manual.

Table -1- Norms Table

Burnout Dimension	Range of score		
	Low Burnout	Average Burnout	High Burnout
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	-	17-26	≥ 27
Depersonalization (DP)	≤ 8	9-13	≥ 14
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	≥ 37	31-36	≤ 30

The number of teachers was converted into percentages for easy comparisons. The tabulated information for the total sample as well as for its subgroups based on gender is given in Tables 2, 3, and 4. The mean for each dimension was computed. To test the related hypotheses, means and standard deviations were computed and a 't' test was used to determine the significance of difference between the means of the subgroups of the sample teachers. Objective wise analysis and the interpretation of the data are presented below.

Objective 1:

To find out the level of burnout among secondary school teachers.

Analysis and Interpretation

The number of teachers displaying high, average and low burnout in each of its dimensions and its conversion in percentage is presented in Table 2. From Table 2, it is clear that the total sample of secondary school teachers is displaying some degree of burnout across all the three dimensions.

Table-2 *Number and Percentage of Secondary School Teachers on Three Levels of Burnout*

Dimension of Burnout	Burnout Level	Total Sample (N=200)		Mean Score of Burnout
		Number	%	
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	High Burnout	46	23	18.05
	Average Burnout	52	26	
	Low Burnout	102	51	
Depersonalization (DP)	High Burnout	34	17	7.08
	Average Burnout	36	18	
	Low Burnout	130	65	
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	High Burnout	54	27	35.73
	Average Burnout	34	17	
	Low Burnout	112	56	

- (a) In the Emotional Exhaustion Dimension of burnout, Emotional Exhaustion is an important phenomenon in burnout. In this dimension, 51% of teachers are showing low burnout, 26% average burnout and 23% high burnout. Although nearly half of the sample teachers are falling into the low burnout category, nearly one-fourth of the sample is showing a high degree of burnout which is quite alarming. Emotional detachment is suicidal for their professional life as teaching is a dynamic process which involves very active interactions between teachers and students. Emotionally exhausted teachers fail to respond properly towards their students and colleagues and when they are withdrawn and alienated from them it hampers the creation of a congenial atmosphere for learning.

- (b) In the Depersonalization Dimension, Depersonalized teachers withdraw themselves from school affairs and avoid mixing with students or colleagues. The scores of this dimension show that 17% teachers have high burnout, 18% average burnout and 65% low burnout. In this dimension also, the teachers in the low burnout group are the most, but 17% who fall in the high burnout group need attention. Their depersonalized attitude is harmful for the students. Additionally, their psychological detachment and social distancing disrupts their professional life.
- (c) In the Lack of Personal Accomplishment Dimension, among the sample teachers, 27% are displaying high burnout, 17% average burnout and 56% low burnout. High burnout in the Lack of Personal Accomplishment dimension signifies that 27% of the sample teachers feel a sense of failure in their professional life. They feel that they are no longer effective in their professional responsibility.

From Table 2, it is also observed that the mean value for the total sample ($N = 200$) for the Emotional Exhaustion dimension of burnout is 18.05, which falls under average burnout category, though on the lower side (according to the norms table given in the manual). The Mean value for the Lack of Personal Accomplishment dimension of burnout is 35.73, which also comes under the average burnout level but at the higher side of the limit. Moreover, the Mean value for the Depersonalization dimension of burnout, which is 7.08, shows that on an average, secondary school teachers show low burnout levels in the area of Depersonalization.

Objective 2:

To find out the level of burnout in male and female secondary school teachers.

Hypothesis:

Male and female teachers do not differ significantly in their level of burnout.

Analysis and interpretation

Related studies suggest that gender difference plays an important role in determining the degree of burnout in a person as gender automatically encompasses many socio-cultural-economical variables. Thus, a gender-wise level of burnout among teachers was made and is displayed in Table 3.

- (a) In the Emotional Exhaustion Dimension of Burnout, as evident from Table 3, the percentage of male and female teachers falling under the category of high burnout is 20% in males and 21% females respectively. An average degree of burnout is observed in nearly the same number of cases in males (21%) and females (25%). A slightly higher percentage of males 59% show low burnout as

compared with females 54%. Thus, emotional exhaustion appears higher in females as compared to males.

- (b) In the Depersonalization Dimension, when the number and percentage of male teachers and female teachers are compared on the different levels of the Depersonalization dimension of burnout, the trend appears to be the same. Almost the same number and percentage of male and female teachers on different levels (i.e., 17% and 16% on high burnout, 23% and 24% on average burnout and 62% and 60% on low burnout respectively) of Depersonalization are observed. In both cases, the highest percentage falls under the low burnout category.

Table 3 *Number and Percentage of male and female Secondary School Teachers on Three Levels of Burnout*

Dimension of Burnout	Burnout Level	Gender			
		Male (N=100)		Female (N=100)	
		N	%	N	%
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	High Burnout	20	20	21	21
	Average Burnout	21	21	25	25
	Low Burnout	59	59	54	54
Depersonalization (DP)	High Burnout	17	17	16	16
	Average Burnout	23	23	24	24
	Low Burnout	62	62	60	60
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	High Burnout	32	32	25	25
	Average Burnout	14	14	12	12
	Low Burnout	54	54	63	63

- (c) In the Lack of Personal Accomplishment Dimension, higher numbers of males show a lack of personal accomplishment than females as their percentage at the high burnout level is 32% as compared to females at 25%. Additionally, 54% of males are showing low burnout in comparison to 62% of female teachers. Average burnout is found in 14% males and 12% females. Therefore, a lack of personal accomplishment is more prominently seen in male teachers than in their female counterparts.

Objective 3:

To compare the level of burnout among male and female secondary school teachers.

Hypothesis:

Male and female teachers do not differ significantly in their level of burnout

A gender-wise comparison of burnout among teacher was made and is displayed in table-4. Table gives the 't' values for differences between means of males and females for the Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Lack of Personal Accomplishment dimensions of burnout.

Table 4 *Significance of Difference between Means of Male and Female Teachers for Burnout*

Dimension of Burnout	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Level of Significance
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	Male	100	17.34	10.45	0.87	Not significant
	Female	100	18.76	12.65		
Depersonalization (DP)	Male	100	6.48	6.95	1.31	Not significant
	Female	100	7.67	5.90		
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	Male	100	35.95	9.89	0.31	Not significant
	Female	100	35.51	10.25		

From the Table above, it is evident that all the three 't' values representing the mean difference between male and female teachers on Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Lack of Personal Accomplishment are not significant even at the .05 level because to be significant at the .05 level for $N = 200$, 't' should be at least 1.97. Thus, the observed difference between the means of males and females may be due to chance factors and is not due to gender differences in the population. Thus, the hypothesis stating that male and female teachers do not differ in their level of burnout is retained.

Discussion

Our findings in the present study reveal that burnout is present in secondary school teachers in varying degrees. An average level of burnout was found in the Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment dimensions and a low level of burnout in the Depersonalization dimension. This reflects the fact that the secondary teachers of today are feeling exhausted not just physically but

emotionally too. They think that their job has taken up all the energy and 'life' which was theirs and so they feel drained and used up. They feel ineffective in their job environment and are losing confidence in themselves. They have apprehensions about any new assignment or project given to them and feel they will never be able to complete it properly. This has developed a sense of alienation and escapism in them and they have started working in isolation; maintaining a psychological distance from everyone related to their job. This situation is really catastrophic for the well being of the students who are in constant company of such teachers as their pessimistic feelings hinder their own healthy development. These feelings are found in an average or moderate level among the teachers and immediate remedial measures are required, otherwise they may reach the high or chronic stage from which recovery would be very, very difficult. In the area of Depersonalization, the level of burnout was found to be low but it does not mean that it is absent. This finding is a warning bell that teachers on an average have started displaying cynicism towards their job. They have begun minimizing their involvement at work and thus indifference has started creeping in. The burnout state of the secondary school teachers, as revealed from the findings of this study, indicate that it is present among the teachers at a stage at which it can be curbed, otherwise it may reach the point of no return.

Teachers, when grouped on the basis of gender, showed no significant difference in their burnout tendencies. Therefore, burnout affects one and all with the same intensity. Both males and females are at equal risk and once hit they do not show any marked difference in their state.

This finding is in addition to the findings of *Calstrudo (1981)*, *Mulkins (1990)*, *Dabrowski (1991)* and the studies by *Nusbaum*. However, *Mc Intyre (1982)*, *Burke and Greenglass (1989)*, *Pierce and Molloy (1990)* and *Iwanski (1990)*, in their respective studies, have revealed contradictory results in that teachers of two sex groups differ in their burnout states. Being more critical, *Mc Intyre*, *Iwanski* and *Burke and Greenglass* supported the idea that male teachers showed a more advanced phase of burnout than females.

Conclusions

After conducting this analysis, interpretation and discussion, the following conclusions were arrived at:

- Secondary school teachers are displaying moderate burnout levels in the areas of Emotional Exhaustion and lack of Personal Accomplishment and low burnout in the Depersonalization dimension.
- Male and female teachers as well as Hindi medium and English medium teachers display similar levels of burnout.

The present study has important implications for the teaching community in general and for the educational institutions in particular for improving the effectiveness, efficiency and the quality of education. The present study helps to create awareness among teachers about burnout and its impact on health. The study has developed a profile of burnout teachers in terms of Depersonalization, Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment. The findings of this study will be beneficial to teachers. They can use the knowledge of the findings in developing effective coping strategies and a pro-active behavior for the burnout process, so that it can be reversed in the initial stages through effective coping strategies. The institutions can also develop models to reduce burnout. Similarly, these findings can be utilized by administrators and the educationists alike to develop and improve teacher performance and prevent the on-set of burnout; preventive measures are always better than remedial action. Stress management or coping mechanisms may be taken as an input in teacher education programs. These findings can also be used to develop special provisions to encourage the reinvigorate the teachers.

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