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Burnout – The level of satisfaction in teaching of secondary school teachers: An analysis with focusing potential sources and demographic variable

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Abstract:

Present study attempts to highlight Job satisfaction which is a set of favourable or unfavourable feelings and emotions with which employees view their works. It refers to a collection of attitudes that workers have about their job. The present study was conducted to investigate the level of satisfaction of secondary school teachers along with responsible potential sources and demographic variables. Study was descriptive in nature. The data were collected from different secondary sources like books, journals, published and unpublished thesis and from the government documents to test the research questions. Generally teachers were less satisfied with advancement, compensation, supervision human-relation, and working conditions. Many demographic variables and potential sources are responsible for the dissatisfaction of teacher's levels of teaching.

Key words: Burnout, Job satisfaction, secondary school teachers, potential sources and demographic variable etc.

Introduction

Job satisfaction is an attitude, which results from balance, and summation of many specific likes and dislikes experienced in connection with the job. This attitude manifests itself in the evaluation of job and employing organization. This evaluation may rest largely upon one's success or failure in the achievement of personal objectives and upon the perceived contributions of the job and employing organization to these ends. Thus a worker may like certain aspects of his work yet thoroughly dislike others. Newstrom (1986) defined job satisfaction, as "it is a set of favorable or unfavorable feelings with which employees view their work." According to Brayfield and Rothe (1951), job satisfaction refers to the individual's attitude (feeling) toward his work.

A number of factors have been shown to influence teachers' decisions about staying on or leaving the profession, including job stress, job satisfaction, resilience, and self-efficacy (e.g., Chan, et al., 2008; Day, et al., 2009). Typically, they include stressors in the areas of work role (e.g., workload); administration; class size; role ambiguity and conflict, (e.g., the sometimes conflicting demands of school management); the pressures of the teachers' roles (e.g., counsellor, facilitator); poor working conditions; little recognition and low remuneration; lack of involvement in decision-making; student recalcitrance; lack of effective communication, as well as the many emotional demands of teaching (e.g., Blix, et al., 1994; Brown & Ralph, 1992; Cooper & Kelly, 1993; Punch & Tuetteman, 1990). In addition, a study in Bahrain by Al-Khalefa (1999) observed work conditions, salaries, bonuses and allowances, status of physical education, supervision, school

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facilities, workload and career development to be the major causes of stress for physical education teachers. Teachers who become burned out may be less sympathetic toward students, may have a lower tolerance for frustration in the classroom, may plan for their classes less often or less carefully, may fantasize or actually plan on leaving the profession, may feel frequent emotional or physical exhaustion, may feel anxious, irritable, depressed, and in general, may feel less committed and dedicated to their work (Farber & Miller, 1981).

Review of related literature

In recent years, the issue of burnout has received considerable research attention. A plethora of studies on burnout have consistently documented that this phenomenon results in significant consequences, both at work and in family life (**Hellesoy et al., 2000**). For example, burnout has been associated with job turnover, absenteeism, low morale and reduced feelings of job satisfaction for those suffering it. Among the various definitions that researchers have suggested for the comprehension of the burnout phenomenon, **Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, (2001),** approach seems to be accepted by the majority of the researchers. These authors conceptualized burnout as "… a tridimensional syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism (depersonalization), and reduced efficacy (reduced personal accomplishment)". Burnout has mainly been associated with the helping professions, such as education, health, and social services (**Alexander and Hegarty, 2000; Grunfeld, et al., 2000; Koustelios, 2001; Koustelios & Tsigilis, 2005; Tsigilis et al., 2004).**

As far as teaching is concerned, it has been characterized as a profession very susceptible to burnout (**Maslach et al., 2001). In fact, Maslach et al. (2001**) reported that teachers have the highest level of emotional

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exhaustion, whereas the other two components are close to average. The importance of burnout syndrome in the educational setting is even more emphasized, because apart from affecting the mental, psychosomatic and social health of educators it also decrease the quality of teaching and work performance, which in turn may negatively influences students' academic achievement (**Blandford, 2000**). **Maslach and Jackson (1986)** recognized the deleterious effects of burned – out teachers on themselves, their students and finally on the learning process, and the importance of studying burnout phenomenon in the educational environment. According to the related research studies, burnout in- teaching profession (**Cheek, Bradley, Parr & Lan, 2003; Dorman, 2003; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). As Wood and McCarthy (2002)** indicated when teachers have burnout, it can have consequences for their professions. Besides increasing burnout in teachers 'professions makes teachers hate their career and it affects their students 'achievement. Various studies have been conducted to investigate the influence of background variables such as gender, age, teaching experience on educators burnout scores (**Antoniou et al., 2006; Koustelios, 2003; Smith & Leng, 2003; Van Horn, et al., 1997).** However, Maslach (1999) pointed out that job factors are more strongly related to burnout syndrome than background characteristics.

Rationale of the study

From the preceding discussion, it may be concluded that the quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of its citizens depends upon the quality of their education. The quality of their education depends upon quality of their teacher. Therefore ultimately a nation is what its teachers are. If teachers are well the nation is well and vice versa. Well and contented teachers are the assets for the nation

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and therefore discontented teachers are liabilities. Teachers experiencing burnout can never be assets for a nation.

Consequences of burnout teachers seem not only to affect the human elements of an educational institution but it also has a great impact on the institution and on the society as a whole. Burnout teachers hamper the productivity of the institution. Finding solutions to the teachers experiencing burnout and causes of burnout are necessary to help the teachers to function in a way they should. With this in mind the researcher has taken up the present project to discover the potential sources and symptoms of burnout among the secondary school teachers to suggest preventive measures. These kinds of studies may not thoroughly demonstrate the demographic specific variables effect on burnout factors. Scarcity of studies on samples teachers was motivation for the present study. Thus, lack of knowledge about the construct of 'executive burnout' in the educational context and its determinants provided impetus to undertake the present study. This paper focuses on evolving an Indian model of the determinants of executive burnout. This is an attempt to survey the burnout level of secondary teachers in the teaching profession in selected sample district of rural as well as urban areas and to possibly try to test the following issues in hand:

Issues in hand
1. What are the different problems in teaching of secondary school teachers?
2. How the demographic variables are responsible and causes of burnout level for secondary school teachers?
3. What are the potential sources responsible for burnout?

Objectives
1. To highlight the problems in teaching and the levels of satisfaction of secondary school teachers

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2. To analyse the levels of burnout with relation to the demographic variable in the secondary school teachers
3. To elaborate the responsible potential sources of burnout in teaching

Methodology

Descriptive survey method used in the study as the investigators tried to get information about more than one variable also with better understanding of perceptions of stakeholders (Hittleman and Simon, 1997). Through this method information about conditions, situations and events that occur in the present can be obtained (UNESCO, 2005). Therefore, in the present study the investigator used this method to explore all possibilities to measure and highlight potential sources and symptoms along with the level of burnout due to dissatisfaction in teaching of secondary school teachers.

Secondary data collection

The sources of secondary data are the published and unpublished reports. Data from secondary sources were gathered from books, articles, journals, published reports, and Government documents. Quantitative information with regard to current impact, issues on burnout in secondary school teachers.

Discussion

Societal and social structural factors in teacher burnout

There are numerous structural and organizational factors involved in teacher burnout. To mention only a few one might cite the declining public confidence in public education that has tended to devalue the teaching professional, especially in advanced industrialized nations. Opinion polls over the past 30 to 40 years have shown that the public believes that schools are

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not performing anywhere as well as they did in the past. Often the competence of public school teachers is mentioned as a contributing factor.

Many middle class parents today meet teachers in the parent-teacher conferences assuming that they are interacting with a less able individual than themselves and even offer to "teach" the teachers how to introduce subject matter. By contrast, in the 1940s the teacher was the skilled expert.

Yet another factor affecting teacher morale is the gap between the expectations created in pre-service training and the experiences of teachers in classrooms, especially the highly stressful classrooms of high-poverty schools. Pre-service public school teachers come to expect through their training that they will be accorded professional autonomy and professional respect. They often feel that teaching is a calling and that their students will eagerly accept the knowledge that they have to offer. Their experiences are at considerable odds with their expectations. They are often faced with few resources in the classroom and treated with little respect and much abuse. Studies by the National Center for Education Statistics recount abuse and attacks on teachers in many schools. Teachers are victims of thefts and physical attack. Furthermore, as public school teaching is a career dominated by women the pool of potential teachers becomes restricted in terms of abilities as higher paying, more prestigious occupations become more available to women. Whilst teaching is thought to possess many universal characteristics, the question that arises is why do some secondary teachers in particular all other levels of teachers in general succumb to the pressures of teaching and exhibit burnout while others fare admirably well**. Is this because of:**

(a) The varying individual backgrounds of secondary teachers such as sex, locality, stream, teaching experience, type of management and nature of the job.

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(b) The different educational organizations that have different effects on teachers with regard to the extent of stress and burnout they generate.

(c) The educational authorities who, in their attempt to improve educational outcomes of pupils, lose sight of understanding the needs and importance of teachers.

(d) The effect of political interference in education which, according to Iwanicki (1983:28), is a source of distress placed upon schools.

(e) The rigid hierarchical organisational structure of schools where more attention is paid to maintaining the bureaucracy than to meeting the needs of teachers and pupils.

(f) The criticism of the educational system by the community as well as extra-parliamentary forces which according to Rubin (1979:540) has a debilitating effect on teachers and administrators of education, irrespective of whether such criticism is valid or not.

(g) The personality of the teacher, for example, whether he has an internal or external locus of control.

(h) Lastly low salary structure maintained for them in govt. as well as in private sector.

Demographic Characteristics and burnout

Of all the demographic variables that have been studied, age is the one that has been most consistently related to burnout. Among younger employees the level of burnout is reported to be higher than it is among those over 30 or 40 years old. Age is confounded with work experience, so burnout appears to be more of a risk earlier in one's career. The reasons for such an interpretation have not been studied very thoroughly. However, these findings should be viewed with caution because of the problem of survival bias—i.e. those who burn out early in their careers are likely to quit their jobs, leaving behind the survivors who consequently exhibit lower levels of burnout.

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The demographic variable of sex has not been a strong predictor of burnout (despite some arguments that burnout is more of a female experience). Some studies show higher burnout for women, some show higher scores for men, and others find no overall differences. The one small but consistent sex difference is that males often score higher on cynicism. There is also a tendency in some studies for women to score slightly higher on exhaustion. These results could be related to gender role stereotypes, but they may also reflect the confounding of sex with occupation (e.g. police officers are more likely to be male, nurses are more likely to be female).

With regard to marital status, those who are unmarried (especially men) seem to be more prone to burnout compared with those who are married. Singles seem to experience even higher burnout levels than those who are divorced. As for ethnicity, very few studies have assessed this demographic variable, so it is not possible to summarize any empirical trends.

Some studies have found that those with a higher level of education report higher levels of burnout than less educated employees. It is not clear how to interpret this finding, given that education is confounded with other variables, such as occupation and status. It is possible that people with higher education have jobs with greater responsibilities and higher stress. Or it may be that more highly educated people have higher expectations for their jobs, and are thus more distressed if these expectations are not realized.

Sources Vs. burnout

Finally, in his survey of a nationally representative sample of U.S. teachers, Ingersoll finds teacher dissatisfaction to be among the primary reasons for teachers leaving the profession; the others are retirement, school staffing action, personal issues, and alternative employment. About a quarter of all

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public school teachers in his sample identify dissatisfaction as a reason for their turnover. Among the causes of dissatisfaction for those who stayed in the profession but changed schools, most are clearly school-level conditions and the remaining could be ameliorated in part through school-level action. In order of strength, the conditions are:

- Poor salary
- Inadequate administrative support
- Student discipline problems
- Lack of faculty influence
- Lack of community support
- Unsafe environment
- Lack of student motivation
- Excessive administrative paperwork
- Time constraints
- Number of students
- Parent expectations
- Extracurricular and supervisory duties
- Variation in students' ability and need
- Lack of support and recognition from administration and parents
- Excessive course load; ever-changing curriculum
- Multiple role expectations
- Student attitudes and behaviour
- Student discipline problems
- Apathy and increasing burnout among colleagues
- External personal factors
- Sense of powerlessness

Other studies included in our review identify the following working conditions associated with teachers actually leaving their school or district or quitting the profession:

- low salaries, especially relative to other nearby districts
- employment opportunities outside teaching

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- leadership style of principal/lack of support from school administrators
- lack of autonomy
- lack of influence on school decisions
- inadequate facilities
- student characteristics, for example, race, ethnicity, apathy, indiscipline, and low achievement
- lack of access to professional development
- low status of the profession in the community
- poor relationships with parents and the community
- negative images of teaching in the popular media
- class load including average class size
- teaching outside one's area of certification
- burden of non-teaching duties
- government policies (erratic and unresponsive) creating
- confusion and uncertainty
- accountability and increase in use of high-stakes tests

Educational Implications

The findings hold implications for teacher training courses, professional development and the overall well-being of teachers. This is of importance given the increasing incidence of burnout and that it has a detrimental effect upon individual teachers which can impact on the quality of service that is delivered by an organization. In teaching this is relational to productive teaching and learning environments.

- teachers should work together to achieve a shared goal
- staff should friendly to each other
- teachers should share experiences with one another
- the school works hard to make learning more effective
- the school values contributions by its members
- there should be a climate of achievement in the school
- classrooms should stimulate pupil learning

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- classrooms should have an atmosphere conducive to learning

Conclusion

The present study concludes that it is a field that was born out of a social problem, and that has grown towards a more coherent set of theoretical models and empirical studies. It has yet, however, to achieve solutions to the original problem itself, and it is here that the future of burnout research may be most promising. The expanded directions that we outlined in the latter part of the chapter have the potential to make a major breakthrough in our understanding of what burnout is, what causes it, and what we can do about it.

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