

Association Between Stress and Burnout Syndrome Among School Teachers - An Exploratory Study

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Association Between Stress and Burnout Syndrome Among School Teachers - An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This article is an exploratory study which investigates the association between stress and burnout syndrome found among schoolteachers. It shows how schoolteachers can handle healthily their pressure to experience satisfaction in their job. It is also an attempt to resolve the question of whether stress is the real cause of burnout, which results in mental illness and dissatisfaction and thereby to quit one's teaching profession. This paper seeks to propose and test some hypothesized relationships between stress attribution domains and burnout syndrome.

Design/Methodology/Approach: To explore the relationship between stress and burnout, the methodology employed here is the exploratory study with an inductive approach. This study uses qualitative methods for data collection. In this exploratory method, both primary and secondary data are mixed intermittently to identify the depth of the association between stress and burnout. A total of 15 teachers were included in this study. The questionnaires such as DASS-21 and Life Satisfaction Scale were provided to collect evidence regarding how their stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout negatively influence the quality of their lives.

Finding/Result: After exploring and analyzing the facts, it is found that there is a strong association between stress and burnout. It is also noted that in some teachers, stress will not end up in burnout syndrome if those teachers are zealous about their profession. Nevertheless, those teachers who are not passionate have a high risk of ending up in burnout when they come across failures that lead to dissatisfaction in life due to various factors.

Originality/Value: This exploratory study illustrates that those teachers who are not passionate about their profession when confronted with stress can end up in one of the three stages of burnout while those teachers who are passionate easily cope with the stress they undergo. However, when the former group is sufficiently made aware of the causes of their stress, they can gradually come out from the first and second stages of burnout and become capable of facing those challenges in their lives. At the same time, if they are in the third stage of burnout, it will take years to come out with the assistance of proper guidance and medication.

Paper Type: Exploratory Study Article.

Key Words: Exploratory Study, Stress, Burnout Syndrome, School Teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION:

In this article, we investigate the association between stress and burnout syndrome found among schoolteachers. According to the Oxford Dictionary stress is “pressure or worry caused by problems in somebody’s life or by having too much to do” (Oxford Learners Dictionary. [1]). Stress is the result of psychological wounds stored in the body's psychophysical system from conception till now. It is the accumulation of all negativities, which is kept as memory in one's internal system. Similarly, burnout is defined as the feeling of hopelessness and struggles in dealing with work or in carrying out one’s job efficiently. These negative feelings usually have a steady inception. They can stem from the feeling that one’s efforts make no difference, or they can be related to a very high workload or a non-supportive work atmosphere (Bhutani, J., et al. 2012) [2].

The Burnout Syndrome includes symptoms such as emotional tiredness, lack of personal fulfilment at work, and depersonalization (Guadalupe Manzano-García., et al. 2013) [3]. As an exploratory study, it shows how schoolteachers can healthily handle their pressure and thus experience satisfaction in their jobs. It also attempts to determine the question of whether stress is the real cause of burnout, which results in mental illness and dissatisfaction in life to quit one's teaching profession. This paper seeks to propose and test some hypothesized relationships between stress attribution domains and burnout syndrome.

The present study uses qualitative methods for data collection. In this exploratory study method, both primary and secondary data are mixed intermittently. A sample of 15 teachers were included in this study. The questionnaires such as DASS 21 and Life Satisfaction Scale were provided to the selected group of schoolteachers for gathering information on how their stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout negatively influence the quality of their lives.

This exploratory study also reveals the understanding that those teachers who are not passionate about their profession due to various reasons when faced with stress, easily succumb to any one of the three stages of burnout syndrome. On the other hand, the passionate teachers cope with the stress they undergo. However, when the former group is sufficiently made aware of the causes of their stress, they can gradually come out from the first and second stages of burnout and become capable of facing those challenges in their lives. At the same time, if they are in the third stage of burnout, it may take years to come out from that stage. At this third stage, one may require assistance of proper guidance and medication (Antony, D. John. 2011) [4]. These pieces of evidence demonstrate that there exists a strong association between stress and burnout syndrome.

2. OBJECTIVES:

This research article is intended to understand the problems related to stress and burnout among teachers. Further, it also interrogates whether there is any positive relation between stress and burnout syndrome. If at all there exists any positive relation, what are the contributing factors that enhance or mitigate this relationship? Since this positive relation adversely affects the efficacy of their job and satisfaction, a deeper study on the same is needed. Hence, this study tries to investigate numerous factors which establish a link between stress and burnout syndrome among schoolteachers and tries to recuperate burnout syndrome that can make schoolteachers more vulnerable in their lives. The precise goals of this explorative Study are the following:

- (1) To determine the relationship between Stress and burnout among schoolteachers.
- (2) To have a better understanding of the problems and their negative impacts on teachers' profession can become a subject matter for the Mega research.
- (3) To arrive at new insights about the topic by exploring the nuances of the concepts and their variables without conducting any interventions
- (4) To have an in-depth knowledge of the variables like burnout and stress that lead to identifying the real problems by formulating concepts and hypotheses for Mega research with better clarity

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE/ RELATED WORKS:

3.1. Stress:

Stress is a non-specific response of the body to any perceived situation. Stress occurs when the pressure is larger than the responses ($\text{Stress} = \text{Pressure} > \text{Response}$). Several studies show that job stress is undoubtedly the major source of stress (Handbook of Stress Series, Volume 1. 2016) [5]. A publication from the Comprehensive Care Corporation of Tampa, Florida reveals some vital facts regarding stress. Many sicknesses such as ulcers, bronchial asthma, high blood pressure, and some forms of cancer, are due to stress. Similarly, chronic stress is also a salient reason for suicides, child and spouse abuse, killings etc. (Howard, Edington. 1985) [6]. Selye distinguishes between constructive and destructive stress. Constructive stress is known as eustress, and destructive stress is known as distress. However, nowadays, when we talk about stress, we usually mean anguish, yet we can all recall wonderful occasions or circumstances that have also caused us stress, such as weddings, births, promotions, receiving awards, running into old acquaintances again, and many more. Whether a change is for the

better or worse, our body must respond to adapt and bring us back to our normal level of calm (Hamblin, E. 2018) [7]. Moreover, the American Physiological Association distinguishes stress into three types such as acute, episodic, and chronic stress (Handbook on Stress Management Skills, 2017) [8]. Stress can be incredibly useful in people's everyday lives as an important evolutionary response to danger. It helps us run faster, jump higher, see more clearly, and think faster (Howatt, 2018) & (Buttrick, N. 2020) [9]. Stress is the result of psychological wounds stored in the body's psychophysical system from conception till the present. It is the accumulation of all negativities, which is kept as memory in one's internal system. An unhealthy psychological reaction to such dangers is distress, which can encompass a range of affective and cognitive states like worry, melancholy, frustration, a sense of powerlessness, or sadness (Handbook on Stress Management Skills, 2017) [10]. Stress is the result of psychological wounds stored in the body's psychophysical system from conception to the present. Stress is the accumulation of all negativities, which is kept as memory in one's internal system. Kemeny also observes that an unhealthy psychological reaction to such dangers is distress, which encompasses a range of affective and cognitive states like worry, melancholy, frustration, powerlessness, or sadness (Kemeny, 2003) [11].

The underlying cause of personality disorders is due to human misery. Tension in the emotions relates to psychosomatic diseases. Research has confirmed that stress and other threats activate the sympathetic nervous system. Tension from long-term frustration, high success striving, etc., is the source of migraine headaches. An inflexible drive for achievement, intolerance, a perfectionistic mindset, and trouble adjusting to new sexual experiences are all linked to individual migraine pain records from the Rorschach test. It intensifies the conflict between an individual's personal and professional life. Hypertension, peptic ulcer etc. are manifestations of this disorder (Louis P.1950) [12].

3.2. Burnout:

Burnout is described as the feeling of hopelessness and difficulties in managing the work or in carrying out one's job efficiently. These unpleasant emotions typically start slowly. They can shoot from the feeling that one's efforts make no significant difference, or they can be related to a very high workload or a non-supportive work situation (Bhutani, J., et al. 2012) [13]. The term "burnout" is not used in medicine. Some experts believe that other disorders, such as depression, are to blame for burnout. According to experts, human attributes such as personality traits and family situations can become a source of burnout (Mayo Clinic. 2023) [14]. Tiredness brought on by a constant state of overwork is also known as burnout. It is the result of extreme emotional, bodily, and mental stress that is sustained over time. Consequently, workplace stress is often associated with burnout. Excessive work, emotional exhaustion, and being unable to meet life's never-ending expectations are the signs of burnout (Jennifer Casarella, MD. 2022) [15]. Individuals with emotional exhaustion experience a lack of vigour and vitality to cope with daily work settings. Dissatisfaction at work can pave the way to negative self-evaluation, feelings of inadequacy, lack of motivation, and low self-esteem. Depersonalization or dehumanization occurs when negative thoughts and attitudes emerge, leading to affective dissembling and distance towards those in direct touch with professionals. The individual may exhibit estrangement, worry, irritation, and discouragement (Bernardo Massa, L. D., et al. 2016) [16]. According to Frankle, "The primary motivational force in man is the striving to discover meaning in one's life" (Victor E. Frankl 1984.) [17]. When they fail to find meaning, satisfaction, or fulfilment in life, especially in their occupation, people experience burnout (Pines & Keinan 2005) [18].

Burnout Syndrome includes symptoms such as emotional tiredness, lack of personal fulfilment at work, and depersonalization (Maslach C., et al. 2001) [19] & Massa, L. D. B., et al. 2016) [20]. According to John D. Antony, burnout candidates are the ones who work under the most demanding and distressed people because they manage an excessive amount of administrative paperwork, and engage in rescuing others, besides having the attitude of a perfectionist or a guilty person. They often lack valid success metrics and are introverts in nature. Moreover, they take on responsibility more than they can handle and lack personal time. Those in the helping profession, who are highly sensitive by nature, have strict standards and high expectations for their performance in the profession. Hence, they can easily become impatient, agitated, and unable to find time for themselves. They are prone to live in compromise with everything and so become potential burnout candidates. Similarly, an unstructured work schedule, social isolation, and competitiveness with others in the same field can also contribute to burnout (Antony, D, John. 2011) [21].

3.3. School Teachers' Association between Stress and Burnout:

A teacher is also known as an educator who assists students in gaining knowledge and making them capable of self-standing by inculcating values and virtues in them. Hence, a teacher must play a substantial role in the educational system to lead the students from ignorance to knowledge (Gama, R. B. 2015) [22]. Teachers are the source of support for building future citizens. Unfortunately, many individuals have been the victim of emotionally immature behaviour due to childhood conditions (Cowie, H., et al. 2004) [23]. Such emotional immaturity causes many conflicts in life. Consequently, those people become less adaptive and lack both emotional expression and social maturity. Some researchers identified that when the number of negative emotions increases it leads to frustration. At the peak of frustration, they become more unpleasant and gradually quit their job (Louis P. Thorpe. 1950) [24]. In some, it also leads to situations of emotional breakdown and excessive drug use. The long-term stress on teachers thus makes them incapable of performing their work most satisfying manner which results in quitting their jobs (Watts & Short, 1990) [25]. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe define "teacher stress" as follows:

The negative effect (such as anger or depression) by a teacher is usually accompanied by potentially pathogenic physical or biological and biochemical changes... resulting from parts of the teacher's job 'mediated by the perception that' demands made upon the teacher constitute a threat to his self-esteem or well-being and by coping mechanisms activated to decrease the apparent threat (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978) [26].

Hence, when teachers undergo stress for a long period and followed by repeated failures, they are prone to end up with burnout syndrome which in turn leads them to emotional and mental issues, excessive drug use, and quitting their jobs. The following table will show the summary of the review of the literature on the concepts and terms mentioned above.

Table 1: Literature review summary

Sl. No	Area & Focus of the Research	The result of the Research	Reference
1	This article discusses several techniques and means of dealing with stress and burnout on various occasions.	This article describes the disparities in stress and burnout among teachers in a single local school authority in England. According to this article, stress and burnout are inherent in all professions. Generally, environmental stressors are considered the most common causes of stress and burnout.	Capel, S. A. (1992). [27]
2.	This article examines the association between job pressures and teachers' mental health.	Epistemologically, this article emphasizes that teachers are more prone to stress and burnout than other groups, which leads to depression and psychosomatic symptoms, alcohol usage, and burnout. Similarly, it points out that burnout may be better understood as a depressive syndrome rather than as a unique entity.	Schonfeld, I. S. et al. (2017). [28]
3.	This article emphasizes how Contemporary neuroscience techniques help to reveal the intricate brain circuits that underlie anxiety by directly examining theories derived from accepted psychological theories.	This article offers a path towards the development of potential future treatments by showing an updated conceptual model for how brain circuit disruptions may cause pathological anxiety.	Calhoon, G. G., & Tye, K. M. (2015). [29]

4.	This article highlights that certain portions of the brain stem appear to suppress pain perception.	Brain stems such as Endogenous opioids play a function, although nonopioid systems are also involved. It also shows that Stress seems to be a natural trigger for pain relief. Besides that, electric foot shock features also help to determine whether opioids or nonopioids cause stress-induced analgesia.	Terman, G. W., et al. (1984). [30]
5.	The focus area of this article is the use of circuit-based methodologies to study how the brain regulates fear and anxiety and how it orchestrates defensive adaptations	The article examines brain circuits that regulate fear, anxiety, and defensive behaviours, offering insights into their mechanisms and potential therapeutic applications.	Tovote, P., et al. (2015). [31]
6.	The journal explores the existential view of people's need to find value and meaning in their existence, highlighting how a sense of meaninglessness and lack of purpose can result in burnout.	The journal concludes that the need for meaning is essential to mental well-being, and feelings of meaninglessness can lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout.	Yiu-Kee, C., et al. (1995). [32]
7.	This paper describes an etiological model for the development of burnout in psychiatrists based on the connection of predisposing, precipitating, and perpetuating factors. Further, it also gives some recommendations for future research.	The paper finds that burnout in psychiatrists arises from a combination of predisposing, precipitating, and perpetuating factors. It emphasizes the importance of addressing these interconnected factors and suggests directions for future research to better understand and mitigate burnout.	Kumar, S., et al. (2005). [33]
8.	This article summarizes the attitude exhibited by teachers during the pandemic (COVID-19) when they faced too much stress and burnout that arose from challenges like remote teaching, uncertainty, and blurred work-life boundaries.	This article also acknowledges how others can augment their mental health and thus make them effective in their profession.	Vargas Rubilar, N. et al. (2021). [34]
9.	This book focuses on a model that explains job stress and burnout by exploring various factors like workplace conditions, individual traits etc.	The book finds that job stress and burnout are influenced by factors like workplace conditions and individual traits. It also highlights ways to manage stress effectively, which can improve employee productivity.	Ray, E. B. et al. (2014). [35]

10.	This article examines job stress and burnout among teachers who are in the technical and industrial fields.	This article explores the factors contributing to stress and burnout in this specific professional field, such as workload, lack of resources etc. Further, it discusses how to develop their well-being among them	Brewer, E., et al. (2003). [36]
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4. MATERIALS AND METHODS:

This study uses an exploratory inductive methodology with a qualitative approach by mixing primary and secondary data. The primary research data includes both discussion and survey-based data collected from the group of fifteen schoolteachers in Kollam District. The secondary data was obtained from the previously published literature in digital sources as well as in the books and articles related to the topic. To collect primary data through the survey method, two scales are used namely DASS -21 (to measure the stress) and Quality of Life (to measure the Burnout syndrome). The researcher randomly chose 15 samples out of these 43 participants for the present article study.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

This study identified a link between stress and burnout syndrome. In earlier research, it is noticed that school teachers who are facing situations such as ongoing failures, discontentment, physical and emotional declines, and higher demands from parents, students, management, and others often have failed to live up to the expectations, which in turn lead them to dissatisfaction in life and compelling them to quit or change their careers (Khan, A., et al. 2012) [37]. This experience of helplessness would result in chronic stress and consequently, would culminate in burnout syndrome. A questionnaire consisting of 21 questions (DASS-21) regarding stress, anxiety and depression was provided to 62 teachers. Similarly, a questionnaire consisting of 5 questions (regarding Quality of Life) to evaluate the burnout syndrome among them was provided. The Secondary data was obtained for an in-depth study about the variables such as stress and burnout syndrome and to assess the validity of the same in the present study. The population under study was a group of 62 schoolteachers who participated in a group discussion. However, the data was gathered only from the 43 teachers who voluntarily consented to respond to the questionnaires. Through the survey method, data was collected from those 43 teachers who voluntarily answered the questionnaires. The researcher randomly chose 15 samples out of these 43 participants for the present study. These fifteen teachers consisted of 10 female and 5 male teachers. It was observed that among five male teachers, one was a widower who was under chronic stress while the rest of the two exhibited clear signs of moderate stress. Among ten female teachers, five of them were in chronic stress while the other five were showing signs of moderate stress. Since it is an exploratory study, no statistical methods were adopted for the analysis. However, the researcher has found in and through personal interviews with those who are with chronic stress that they are on the verge of leaving their teaching profession owing to the stressors.

Chronic stress is also created by the changes in the neural pathways of the brain that result in painful syndrome. It causes excessive fatigue, tension, or frustration during work time. It can also lead them to extreme anger and irritation. Moreover, as a way out from their painful and helpless situation, they begin to use drugs and other intoxicating stuff to the extent of addiction to those substances as a mode of relaxation. Nevertheless, recent studies also categorically affirm that there exists a link between stress and burnout syndrome which demonstrates that people who face job dissatisfaction and failure are at a higher risk of developing burnout syndrome. Hence, this exploratory study re-affirms the connection between stress and burnout syndrome in schoolteachers and helps them to be more productive and efficient in their field (Hanif & Pervez, 2004) [38]. This article also explores how schoolteachers can mitigate their stress which is having the potential to reach burnout syndrome and to be contented in their profession and life. Thus, it is explicitly clear that there exists a link between stress and burnout syndrome. Further, if one is helped to handle their stress adequately, then one will not fall into chronic stress and burnout syndrome.

Some people are happy and contented when their expectations and obligations are met. When one's goals are realized or desires come true, it is a wonderful sensation that brings about happiness and serenity. It is an individual's emotional and cognitive assessment of their life (Diner & Rappaport, 2002) [39]. A worker is discontent with work when they are faced with unhappiness in their current position. When employee's expectations are not fulfilled, they develop a bad opinion of the company, which

discourages them from contributing their might and eventually leads to burnout. Here, they adopt a different mindset. Thus, in this study, the null hypothesis can be rejected. Since there exists an association between stress and burnout, the alternative hypothesis can be accepted. In addition, it is also found that there is a positive relationship between stress and burnout syndrome. Thus, the researcher accepts the alternative hypothesis because there exists a positive association between stress and burnout. Since this study is a qualitative exploratory one it lacks quantitative measuring of the data for a comprehensive understanding of the situation. In this work, though there were 63 teachers participated in the beginning, only 43 teachers responded voluntarily to the questionnaire provided by the researcher. However, the researcher selected only 15 samples which limited the extensive scope of the study. Furthermore, focusing only on the teachers from one institution makes the study less applicable to all the areas.

The findings and results demonstrate the correlation between stress and burnout syndrome. Intervention and experimental study can be considered as a model for future mega research. The current exploratory study focuses on the association between stress and burnout syndrome among teachers. To have a comprehensive view of the stress faced by teachers, it is good to include teachers from many other categories such as special schools, CBSE, ICSE, and STATE in future mega research. It will also serve as a comparative and interdisciplinary study to make it more applicable to all categories of teachers.

6. CONCLUSION:

This study proves that burnout syndrome and stress are related. The study findings show that teachers who are not inclined to mood disorders like depression and anxiety can manage their stress positively. On the other hand, those teachers who are passionate about their profession will not easily succumb to undue stress. Meanwhile, those who are less passionate fail to cope with their stress and fall into burnout syndrome. As a result, they give up their job. Indeed, such drastic steps will not solve the issue but rather will make the situation worse. Hence, a proper remedy to handle stress more effectively without leading to the situation of burnout syndrome is recommended. In this regard, this exploratory study threw light on this matter and showed how to handle the stress of teachers more effectively. Teachers who handle their stress are those who love their profession and are content with their jobs. To prevent discontent with job or employee turnover, it's critical to retain them in the workforce and meet their psychological need. We should also provide them with excellent training till they meet their objectives and our expectations (David Luther, 2023) [40]. Although this exploratory study helps us to comprehend the concepts in detail, it is good to make it more interdisciplinary to make it more effective. Similarly, if this study is conducted in a controlled setting, it would be more beneficial to those teachers who are in this group. Moreover, the management of the institutions should be more ignited and empathetic in the case of teachers who are under undue stress and provide them with opportunities to enhance their psychological well-being. This is also achieved by giving them the proper credit for their services in the organization or institution. Thus, employees' productivity may be raised, and their undue stress can be decreased by implementing these simple strategies.

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