

TEACHER BURNOUT

Dr Vatika Sibal

St. Andrew's College University of Mumbai

ABSTRACT:

The aim of this study was to examine the effect of teachers' personal and job characteristics on the level of stress they experience from various sources, as well as their perception of the effectiveness of cognitive, behavioral and emotional coping strategies. A questionnaire was used to explore teacher stress amongst teachers in colleges in Mumbai. Twenty-six per cent of the teachers reported that being a teacher was either very or extremely stressful. The main source of stress identified was the changing education policies of the government, authority, leadership, crab mentality. The profession of teaching is known for its high levels of stress. Burn out occurs when a teacher, who was once passionate and excited about the field, experiences feelings of chronic exhaustion and hopelessness about the job. Teachers experiencing burn out feel that the more they do, the less they are appreciated. In a sense, teachers feel that their efforts will never be enough to meet the standards they are required to meet. This chronic stress that teachers experience can lead to many negative consequences. We know that stress impacts levels of teacher effectiveness on student learning. Moreover, burn out can cause educators to retire early or to leave the profession of teaching all together after just a few years of teaching. The most effective coping action reported was having a healthy home life.

Introduction

Being a teacher can be incredibly stressful, tiring and emotionally draining which can lead to burnout or teacher burnout. A teacher's role has changed drastically throughout the years. Currently, some of them face delicate situations such as lack of resources, loss of authority, conflicting students, etc. All these factors can make the teacher feel overwhelmed and disoriented. Even if the teacher starts off their career motivated and excited, it's likely that in a few years he/she may become frustrated and unsettled. The fact that teachers can suffer from burnout syndrome can give children a vision of a hectic, complicated and difficult world, which is not the reality most parents want their kids to learn.

Stress and unmotivated teachers are becoming a common issue among faculty. Low self-esteem, work overload, emotional exhaustion and difficulties in dealing with disruptive, uninterested, rebellious students, etc. Discharges from anxiety and stress have increased among teachers. What is teacher burnout? Does it have consequences? Teacher stress is defined in terms of unpleasant negative emotions, such as anger, frustration, anxiety, depression and nervousness that teacher experience due to some facets of their job (Kyriacou, 2001). Teaching, as a profession, is recognized as demanding and stressful (e.g., Griffith, Steptoe & Cropley, 1999) and teachers experience stress when the demands of the situation exceed their ability to cope with these demands. Some researchers even attribute the substantial attrition rates among teachers in some parts of the world, to significant levels of job-related stress that teachers experience and fail to manage (Chaplain, 2008; Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007).



One wonders how teachers can reach this low point. It is a difficult concept to grasp as many educators enter the field so full of passion and excitement. Let's review some of the causes for teacher burn out. Research has revealed that teachers are exposed to various sources of stress. Major among these are: teaching unmotivated students; sustaining discipline in the classroom; a demanding workload; being exposed to frequent changes; being evaluated by others; undergoing difficult or challenging relationships with colleagues and administrators, and poor working conditions (Kyriacou, 2001). As Kyriacou (2001) noted, stressors experienced by one teacher are unique to him or her and are reliant on the specific interaction between the teacher's personality, values, skills, and circumstances. In addition, many factors, such as means of coping and strategies, personality traits and characteristics of the environment can interactively affect teacher's perception of the degree to which situations are stressful.

In order to deal with stressful events and to alleviate feelings of distress, teachers use means of coping that include cognitive, emotional and behavioral strategies of comforting and adaptation to the stressful situation (Admiraal, Korthagen, & Wubbles, 2000; Kyriacou, 2001). The transactional model of stress and coping, by Lazarus and Folkman's (1987) concentrates on how challenging events create stressful experience, when confronted by a given event, the individual engages in two consecutive processes of appraisal. The event which is stressful or pleasant depends on the environmental resources to deal with it. Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model also predicts that individuals will make use of several types of coping strategies (cognitive, emotional and behavioral) to deal with any given stressful event.

Based on extensive review of the literature on teacher stress and a broad review of theoretical teacher stress models, Montgomery and Rubb (2005), proposed a model of key constructs related to teacher stress and coping and their interrelationship. According to their model, teachers are involved in intra-individual processes that consist of the experiences and evaluations of external stressful events, which stem from different aspects of teachers' professional life such as students, administration, colleagues, workload demands, and features of the school environment. Furthermore, problems in teachers' personal life, such as relationship with a partner or financial problems may also affect their emotional, cognitive and behavioral state.

Once the stressful event is appraised, teachers engage in active or passive coping strategies and perhaps both. Active strategies can take the forms of cognitive, behavioral, or emotional strategies. This type of strategy is also evident in individuals' physical responses or health posture. On the contrary, passive coping strategies such as resignation, wishful thinking and avoidance are characterized by lack of direct engagement with the stressful event en route to its resolution.

The entire intra-individual situational process as has been described thus far is mediated by personality traits, so called personality mediators (i.e., attitude posture, driven behavior) that affect the magnitude of the relationships depicted in Montgomery and Rupp's (2005) core model. In addition, the degree to which individuals feel supported in the vocational and the domestic environments mediate the relationships. Characteristics of the vocational environment such as grade level taught, average class size, subject taught, type of school and background characteristics such as gender, educational



qualifications, and years of experience are stable characteristics that may have some effect on intra-individual processes of dealing with stress effects.

1. Purpose of the Study

Sources and levels of stress that teachers experience as well as the extent to which they apply different coping strategies and value their effectiveness may depend on their personal and job features. This study address these issues by examining the effect of teachers' personal and job characteristics on the level of stress they experience from various sources, in addition to their perception of the effectiveness of cognitive, behavioral and emotional coping strategies.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Data were obtained from college teachers in Mumbai representing diverse personal and job characteristics. Among hundred participants, fifty per cent are teachers (both male and female) with more than 15 years of experience. Other fifty per cent were teachers with less than 15 years of experience.

2.2 Instrument

Responses to the stress coping items are given on a five-point Likert scale Factor analysis of the stress data yielded five main reasons of teacher stress (workload, relations with colleagues, school climate, student behavior, and educational policy) that account the stress. Factor analysis of the coping data yielded five factors of personal coping strategies (active-behavioral-improve teaching practice, health posture, sharing-social support, distancing, and emotional control) that account for coping data. The coping factors are lower than those corresponding to the stress factors. Data about teacher personal characteristics that is gender, experience and culture and job characteristics were also obtained.

3. Results

The analysis were done from the teachers and students perspective along with the coping strategies to handle this problem

3.1 What is Teacher Burnout?

The teacher has feelings of low personal fulfillment. This is characterized by a feeling of failure at the workplace and in their personal life. Their work relationships are inefficient, most of the time having the impression of not being able to control any situation let alone the students. This tends to develop into helplessness, defeat and anxiety symptoms. It implies emotional exhaustion. It's usually followed by sadness and feelings of defeat. It's common for these emotions to have physiological outlets, presented by insomnia, headaches and upset stomach.

Teacher burnout leads to symptoms of Depersonalization. Feeling useless and incapable of getting through the day, the teacher tends to draw away from routine. Becomes distant

with coworkers and students and can't do much about it or doesn't realize this is happening. This can lead to missing many days from college and even depression.

Do you imagine going through this every day? Clearly, all your relationships would change drastically. Christina Maslach has done great work regarding teacher burnout and even developed a test called the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Some of the burnout indicators that she proposed are the following. Ask yourself whether you experience them Not at all, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, or Very often:

1. Do you feel run down and drained of physical or emotional energy?
2. Do you find that you are prone to negative thinking about your job?
3. Do you feel misunderstood or unappreciated by your co-workers?
4. Do you feel that you have no one to talk to?
5. Do you feel under an unpleasant level of pressure to succeed?
6. Do you feel that you are not getting what you want out of your job?
7. Do you feel that you are in the wrong organization or the wrong profession?
8. Are you becoming frustrated with parts of your job?
9. Do you feel that organizational politics or bureaucracy frustrate your ability to do a good job?

These questions lay the foundation and make the teacher think deeply about their role and way they can handle situations and themselves in the given environment.

3.2 How does teacher burnout affect students?

Are our children really affected by this? When teachers suffer chronic stress and depression their attitude towards their students is poor and irritable. They are less sensitive to the children's issues and become less involved in the learning process.

High levels of teacher burnout prevent the teacher from developing and maintaining a positive attitude towards the students and their specific needs. This can lead to children being less involved in the learning process and less motivated to study. Many difficulties like dyscalculia, dyslexia, emotional issues, autism symptoms, etc might be overseen, leading to a delay in therapy and cognitive training. Recent research has suggested that teacher stress can be contagious making the students and other teachers more anxious.

A burned out teacher has lost interest in teaching and education. These levels of exhaustion have made the teacher more flexible or rigid to certain conducts making them less coherent in their discipline. Children also tend to copy their teacher's mood so if a teacher is depressed or angry the child might exhibit these behaviors at home.

3.3 Teacher burnout Solutions

How Prevalent Is Teacher Burnout? Is Teaching Really So Hard? Teachers are well educated. They meet a specific requirement that is by passing rigorous assessments in order to obtain their teaching credentials. Teachers also enter the teaching profession

with selfless intentions. When asked why they became teachers, many say that it was because they wanted to make a difference in children's lives. Even students note teachers' good intentions. Students believe their teachers care about their learning. We know teachers are committed to the profession, so it must take something major to overcome such devotion and prompt a teacher to quit. The following have proven to be dominating factors that make the teaching job difficult and are main contributors to burnout: Too much to do and not enough time. Environment plays an important role, veteran teachers who find themselves doing the same thing year after year and does not typically pertain to new teachers, behaviour pattern of students, management behaviour, administration when it is ineffective and/or antagonistic or relations which can potentially disrespect teachers or not support teachers adequately

There are many other challenging aspects to what is arguably our world's most noble profession. However, the issues listed above directly trigger teacher burnout. Mindset also plays an important role, but this does not mean teachers should simply have a better attitude about a horrible situation, rather, exercising a growth mindset involves trying new approaches to problems in search of success, which helps tremendously while applying strategies to combat burnout.

Teachers can take important steps to prevent burnout. For example, overwhelming work volume can be combatted with better grading practices, effective collaboration, not overcommitting, acquiring better curriculum or using sources that make finding such curriculum fast and easy, and leveraging the right technology tools that make a teacher's job easier. However, the prevalence of burnout warrants more steps by those around teachers (e.g., administrators, policymakers, media, parents, and communities) to make the job more sustainable.

Conclusion

As an integral part of educational system, happy teacher in India has to be responsive to socio-cultural ethos and national development. For this teachers and work environment needs to undergo rapid change in keeping pace with the demand of learning and expectations of learners, community and society as a whole. Various efforts have been made to improve but these are not enough because gaps are still visible and wide. It is essential to keep in mind that student-teacher relationships are built through purposeful and continual effort, primarily on the part of the teacher. Student psychological perception is totally affected by the behavior of the teacher. Teacher affects each student learning outcomes, future achievements and success. Teachers must never overlook the importance of cultivating positive student-teacher relationships in their classroom. Emphasis on four modern teaching approaches such as constructivism, comprehensive learning, contextual pedagogy and ICT integration needs to be highlighted. The role of teacher educators today is to mend the existing system with vision to help the system grow as a profession and produce quality teachers for the new generation. It should aim to upgrade the standard of teachers, enhance professionalism and produce quality teachers for our institutes, upgrade the social status of teachers and develop sense of commitment among them.

References:

- ✂ Admiraal, K. & Wubbles, A., (2000). Effects of student teachers' coping behavior. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 7, (1), 33-52.
- ✂ Chaplain, R. P., (2008). Stress and psychological distress among trainee secondary teachers in England. *Educational psychology: An International Journal of Experimental Educational Psychology*, 28, (2), 195-209.
- ✂ Griffith, J., Steptoe, A. & Cropley, M., (1999). An investigation of coping strategies associated with job stress in teachers. *British Journal of Psychology*, 69, 517-513.
- ✂ Jelinek, C. A., (1986). Stress and the pre-service teacher. *The Teacher Educator*, 22, 2-8.
- ✂ Kaiser, J. S. & Polczynski, J. J., (1982). Educational stress: Sources reactions, preventions. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 59, (2), 127-136.
- ✂ Kyriacou, C., (2001). Teacher stress: Directions for future research. *Educational Review*, 53, (1), 27-35.
- ✂ Kyriacou, C. & Chien, P-Y., (2004). Teacher stress in Taiwanese primary schools. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, 5, (2), 86-104.
- ✂ Kyriacou, C. & Kunc, R., (2007). Beginning teachers' expectation of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, (8), 1246-1257.
- ✂ Lazarus, R. S. & Folkman, S., (1987). Transactional theory and research on emotions and coping. *European Journal of Personality*, 1, (3), 141- 169.
- ✂ Montgomery, C. & Rupp, A., (2005). A Meta analysis for exploring the diverse causes and effects of stress in teachers. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 28, (3), 458-486.