

## **The Burnout Syndrome: A Review Study**

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The experience of burnout is nothing more than the feeling of dissatisfaction or stress in workplace; however it should not be considered the same as job dissatisfaction and stress. Around the 1970s, very few studies addressed teachers' burnout. Later on, in the preceding decades, not only did the concept of teachers' burnout emerge, but it also became the subject of frequent research across countries. A review study on the chronic stress syndrome of teachers' burnout over the past few years was conducted. The purpose of this study was to analyze empirical studies (42) on teachers' burnout by employing the literature review method. The focus of review was to examine how likely teachers are to become prey for burnout. Among other service-providing professions, teaching is a demanding job. It is found that factors, effects and consequences associated with teachers' burnout at the personal and organizational levels. The considered studies emphasized the concept, occurrence, multi-dimensional nature, and influencing factors of burnout through a specific lens. Findings reported that burnout deteriorates the physical and mental health of teachers. Certain conditions of teachers due to burnout are directed toward low teacher performance, low student achievement, and poor quality education. Teachers' personal and professional performance suffers and the recipients of service also face the same effects. The selected studies provided a clear overview of the entire phenomenon of teachers' burnout. Another aspect of the findings highlights ways to make burnout research more application based; social factors can be added to burnout measurement tools. A careful future view was suggested regarding control channels at the personal and job levels.

*Keywords.* Teachers, Burnout, Review, Empirical Studies

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### **Introduction**

Around the 1970s, very few studies addressed teachers' burnout. Later on, in the preceding decades, not only did the concept of teachers' burnout emerge, but it also became the subject of frequent research across countries. Indeed, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019) has labeled burnout as an occupational disease among the international classification of diseases. In addition, a large list of articles, reports, and journals have addressed teachers' burnout. Moreover, such literature published the present interest in teachers' stress and visibly the term burnout visibly became prominently used in oral communication and in published correspondence in the form of seminars, conferences, and courses.

The experience of burnout is nothing more than the feeling of dissatisfaction or stress in the workplace; however, it should not be considered the same as job dissatisfaction and stress. Keeping aside the antecedents and precursors when defining burnout is precocious. It is pertinent to conduct thorough study of this phenomenon.

Burnout is a diverse and emerging construct that deals with the feeling of stress that saps one's energy from work. This phenomenon has similar meanings in different national settings as research has expanded over the past decades. Burnout produces a feeling of increasing hopelessness, helplessness, and resentment toward clients (Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh 2015; Madigan et al., 2023; Hurley, 2021; Rezai, 2024).

Burnout is a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and inadequate personal achievement. The wearisome condition of teachers in response to adverse working conditions, known as emotional exhaustion. The continuous condition of tiredness leads to resentful and cynical behavior toward clients, which is called depersonalization. When an individual performs with self-doubt, it creates a sense of a lack of personal accomplishment (Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh 2015; Dawes et al., 2024; Rezai, 2024; Hanju, & Shiquan, 2024). It is more prevalent among service-providing professions; simple to say that people who do work are victims of this stress syndrome.

The occurrence of this syndrome is gradual, but the result is permanent. This state is a state of physical, mental, and emotional drain in

energy under the chronic stressors in the workplace. The sufferer undergoes the fatigue and frustration that the available resources appear less than required, ultimately resulting in lower performance (Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh 2015; Madigan et al., 2023; Hurley, 2021; Rezai, 2024). Burnout among teachers can be defined as a sense of physical and psychological exhaustion that originates from complex working conditions and causes frustration and fatigue (Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh 2015; Polatcan, Cansoy and Kılınc 2020; Madigan et al., 2023).

Extensive work reports varied definitions of burnout in use (Shaheen&Mahmood, 2015; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2016; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2018; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2014; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2018; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2020). The precise definitions employed must account into consideration.

The phenomenon of burnout is more prevalent among service-providing professions. Out of the service professions, teaching is the most sucking and tiring job (Hanju, & Shiquan, 2024; Madigan et al., 2023). Teaching involves physical and mental involvement of teachers in the course of classroom teaching and learning. The primary effect of burnout is on the physical and mental health of teachers. However, these two healthy states of teachers cannot be compromised to ensure quality education. The role of school management is prominent in the way of not only providing but also keeping the school environment a happy, healthy, and stress-free workplace for teachers (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2014; Madigan et al., 2023). Research findings have shown that teachers facing burnout encounter stress, emotional drain, and physical tiredness (Hanju, & Shiquan, 2024; Madigan et al., 2023; Dawes et al., 2024). Certain conditions have devastating effects on the individual's performance and on the position of recipients of the services (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2020; Madigan et al., 2023). In general, the teacher-pupil link suffer (Madigan et al., 2023).

Individual teacher work performance becomes low. The interaction with students becomes ruined in form of not being able to provide maximum teaching. Research has evidenced the fact that teaching style, teacher effectiveness and motivation diminish up-to the level of sacrificed

quality of education (Dawes et al., 2024). Ultimately, the primary outcome of teaching may not be achieved, such as low student achievement.

The current study extracted the theoretical aspects, measurement, work-related factors, effects, and management of burnout using a literature search method among selected research articles.

### **Theoretical Background of Teachers' Burnout**

Is it the individual or the working conditions that put teachers at risk of burnout? There exists plenty of work exploring the cause of burnout.

Burnout is rooted in the early 1960s. The work of Greene's (1961) initially appeared on the research surface through the publication of 'A burnout case' with the description of the feeling of emotional withdrawal from work that led him to move toward the African jungles. It was the first time to introduce this term. Later on, it took the position of a social and an occupational problem. Initially, burnout was defined by detailing its symptoms of emotional, mental, and attitudinal aspects. Freudenberger (1974), a psychoanalyst, was pioneer to introduce this term followed by personal experience. An array of proportioned work appeared from 1970s to onward. It was considered that burnout starts from the feeling of stress but the work of Christina Maslach, (1976), a social psychologist, emphasized the existence of working conditions that cause burnout. Out of the aspects of investigation, measurement, size, scope, and theoretical and methodological investigations, the number of investigations grew to develop a more explicit understanding of burnout. The work from the 1980s to onwards followed a broader vision that resulted in generating models to describe burnout under adverse working conditions (Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh 2015; Dawes et al., 2024; Rezai, 2024). The refinement of work has opened new avenues for research. Burnout was described using a multidimensional theory that describes this syndrome in three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. The view of burnout is emphasized when studying it from the perspective of work and social background (Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh 2015; Hurley, 2021; Pressley, 2021; Hanju, & Shiquan, 2024; Nineza, Hagutin, & Chua, 2023).

The key element of this theory is to understand the demands of teacher's work on varied tendencies of burnout. It is crucial to acknowledge the personal condition workers and determine how likely they can employ coping mechanisms over constant workplace conditions.

### **Rationale of the Study**

The primary function of a review is to provide a meaningful synthesis of the topic, describing the current research, and to reach an existing state of issues and avenues for future research. This study is based on thorough evaluation of the existing literature by interpreting the available evidence (Hanju, & Shiquan, 2024). In order to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of teacher burnout; a critical review was presented on the leading factors contributing to it. The probable precautionary measures were to be arrived at, in turn helping to explain the phenomenon as well as reaching the consequences faced by teachers and students. In order to develop a standard for making local comparisons on teachers' burnout, certain systematic review studies should be encouraged, keeping in view the concept and nature of burnout; and determining the uniform set of its influencing factors.

### **Objectives**

The major objectives of this study were to describe the concept of teachers' burnout through an array of published research and synthesize aspects of teachers' burnout from selected research studies.

### **Research Question**

#### **How should we deal with burnout?**

The spectrum of teachers' burnout originates from the following:

- Burnout leads to poor health (physical and mental),
- Sensitivity toward the provision of a high quality work-environment to teachers,
- Likelihood of damaged teacher-pupil interaction, and Compromised teaching quality.

The overall attitude of teacher absenteeism, retention, transfer, and early retirement claim are the mounting evidence for studying this callous stress syndrome.

## **Method**

The thorough literature search was used to achieve the objectives of this study. This includes the study selection criteria, producer, measures, factors and management view.

### **Study Selection Criteria**

A thorough collection of empirical research in the field of education and research on teacher burnout were selected for examination. The selected studies employed various research procedures, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. These studies were published from 1981 to 2024. The reason for selecting old articles such as those, in the year of 1981 was, that it was the pioneer work on teacher burnout, whereas, adding research until the year of 2024 was synthesizing the work on teacher burnout to the current date. A total of 42 articles were selected to describe teachers' burnout, ranging from its history to the current state of burnout description.

The review criterion was followed by the following points:

- a) The selected articles focused on the main variable of teachers' burnout.
- b) These studies were published in the field of education.
- c) The factors associated with burnout were significantly discussed in the selected studies.

The selected articles were initially categorized into two sections. The first section was about the articles published on the concept, meaning, nature and history of burnout. To achieve this, the likely initial articles were added and reviewed. The second section was about the articles those describe the associated factors of teachers' burnout. It was emphasized to include studies published in the local context on teachers' burnout; for example physical health, and conditions of COVID-19 with teachers' burnout (Pressley, 2021), use of managing classroom strategies to minimize burnout, its effect on job satisfaction of teachers, and systematic published reviews.

### **Procedure**

To describe the current value of teachers' burnout in terms of its precursors, effects, antecedents, and aspects, a list of all selected articles was generated. In this list, the detail of title of article,

publication year, journal, objectives, type of research, population and sampling technique, statistical analysis, findings and conclusions were put together sequentially for tracking the review in the current study. It was counted that in different age brackets, a range of research articles were published that articulated the similarity of the phenomenon of teachers' burnout with its presence and occurrence in educational institutions.

### **Measurement of Burnout**

Methods of estimating the severity of burnout have been plagued by issues related to measuring it. More focus remained on the use of subjective measures including self-reports and interviews (Hiebert and Farber, 1984). The widely used instruments followed the pattern of rotating the titles of multiple service professionals, such as doctors, nurses, lawyers, and teachers etc. led by different theoretical explanations of burnout (Beckstead, 2002; Bernhard, 2010; Hanju, & Shiquan, 2024).

The initial instruments faced the discussion of the multi dimensionality of burnout; considering it a two dimensional (Boles, Dean, Ricks, Short & Wang, 2000) or based on a tripartite model (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli, 2000), Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure (SMBM) (Shirom, 2002), Pines' Burnout Measure (Pines, Aronson, Kafry, 1981), Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), and Burnout Measure (BM) are some reported measures of burnout. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach and Jackson, 1981) is the most frequently used and internationally used instrument for measuring burnout. In order to measure burnout, an instrument was developed and validated to be used among teachers in our national context (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2018).

The measurement of burnout through physical symptoms (high heart rate, body sweating, disturbed sleep, and tiredness etc.) other than the behavioral aspects (anger, cynicism, frustration) are said not to be a sufficient source of informing about burnout due to the involvement of confounding variables. Self-control, individual

differences, and one's reaction to the certain stressful circumstances pertain to variability. The association between teachers' burnout and other issues of education such as absenteeism and retention is sometimes compensated by school holidays, rewards, and tendency of handling burnout across individuals.

### **Work-related Factors**

People need people for the fulfillment of their needs. Sometimes the interaction becomes troublesome. Service providing professionals are expected to be at giving side on their jobs until there is nothing left to give more. Solving the troublesome problems of people is a rewarding task at the cost of health and performance of the giver. It has become a prominent lens through which many studies have explored the relationship between teachers' burnout and person and job factors (Fisher, 2011; Cephe, 2010; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2014; Pressley, 2021). Two sets of factors regarding person and job make this research interesting as well as difficult to determine whether, teachers chose teaching profession by self-choice, and already appointed teachers represent a survival population who strive to remain in teaching in the presence of chronic job stressors (Polatcan, Cansoy and Kılınç 2020; Rezai, 2024; Hanju, & Shiquan, 2024).

The demographic characteristics such as age, gender, rank, experience, marital status and location of teachers have grabbed the attention of researchers in recent years (Cephe, 2010; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2015; Shaheen S& Mahmood, 2016; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2018). Overall the differences based on the demographic characteristics of teachers do not represent concrete evidence; rather, they help to be associated with other factors while moderation and modeling (Burke & Greenglass, 1993; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2020; Hurley, 2021). Provided with an apprehensive attitude toward the prevalence of fear and control among teachers about burnout; the personality aspect of self-control is said to be further segregated as internal or external control for burnout. Teachers are more prone to burnout when using external controls to control stress (Cephe, 2010).

It is evidenced by a vast number of studies that job factors such as working hours, workload, salary, fairness cause a state of fatigue among teachers leading to burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Shaheen &



Mahmood, 2014). Teacher-pupil relationship and pupil behavior are an intense source of teacher burnout. Teachers keep absorbing the pollution in the environment as much as developed by interaction with people or due to mismatch of interest around their surroundings. Enlisting the number of occasionally stress causing factors may not be a good idea when accepting the context-bound nature of work stress among teachers that further causes burnout. Overall, the general level of activeness and vigilance makes teachers not only alert but also keep up with the work stressors at quite unique coping levels.

### **Effects of Burnout on Well-being**

The ultimate outcome of continuous stress is poor work performance at both personal and interpersonal levels (Maslach & Jackson, 1985). At the personal level, lower interest and reduced performance are indicated, whereas lack of interest in the recipients is highlighted at an inter-personal level (Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh 2015; Madigan et al., 2023; Hurley, 2021; Hanju, & Shiquan, 2024). With regard to the theoretical aspect of research on teachers' burnout, this is an occupational stress syndrome that does not affect the job of teachers; instead it adheres to the school and with all what a school possesses (Christle, Jolivette & Nelson, 2005; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2014). The direct contact of teachers with students, colleagues, and other staff becomes cynical, resentful and negative. This presents a sufficient outlook for lowered performance. On contrary; a perfect teacher is preferred on the one who is a victim of burnout. However, emotional drain in energy results in low productivity (Polatcan, Cansoy and Kılınç 2020; Nineza, Hagutin, & Chua, 2023). Sufferer behaves resentfully toward clients; similarly, the silent or less participation from students becomes observable. When this draining emotional condition affects the teachers, it adds to their low profile, the problem of attrition or retention etc. Emerge whereas in the case of students, low achievement scores and passiveness in class becomes evident. In general, the effects of burnout are disadvantageous to all stakeholders involved in teaching and learning activities in schools.

The prevalence of burnout has been studied among teachers having special nature of teaching job such as working with children of special needs (Zabel&Zabel, 1982; Crane & Iwanicki, 1986), working as new or

helper teachers (Stremmel et al., 1993), headteachers and deputy teachers. Additionally, comparisons on the nature of stress faced by teachers across different national settings as well as the effects of organizational climates (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2014) have also gained research attention.

### **Burnout Management**

Specific attention to adopting control channels by teachers has been paid to the research findings. A bi-fold technique is relevant to management or coping with burnout that includes, at first, a positive strategy of becoming responsive to the stressors (an action involving working more hard, meeting deadlines, and lowering expectations from students to keep them motivated to learning) this would employ a first-hand approach that likely results in coping with burnout. The other coping strategy is keeping one aside with the experience of burnout by accepting the occasional or routine prevalence of stress sources at schools. This effort will involve mental and physical coping strategies. The mental perspective calls upon ignoring permanent stressors by viewing them in discernment, whereas physical coping suggests engaging in exercises, games after school, or use of alcohol for relaxation.

A range of strategies have been reported in discussions of different survey studies that teachers adopt to address burnout (Cunningham, 1983; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Friedman, 2000; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2016; Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki, 2019; Hanju, & Shiquan, 2024). Prioritizing tasks, flexibility, balance, and building social connections are among the few strategies. The most often used way out to burnout is discussion with colleagues or some friend or family members (Blazer, 2010). Unluckily, this type of social support is not favorable in many national and international schools. The use of music (Cheek, Bradley, Parr, & Lan, 2003) and poetry (Leggo, 2005) can be sought to take help for burnout. Studies addressing the alleviation of burnout also seem to emphasize the need to participate in stress handling courses, attending seminars, or conferences etc. (Blazer, 2010). In general, an emphasis on enriching teachers with professionally developed characteristics appears more workable than enabling them to practice management at psychological or physical levels. As such, professional development skills enable teachers not only to know the precursors of stress at schools but also provide them

with an attitude of overcoming burnout (Polatcan, Cansoy and Kılınc 2020)

Lastly, it is worthy of noticing that a large emphasis is placed on how teachers learn to overcome burnout at individual levels; however the contribution of schools in minimizing stress and providing teachers with an enabling environment as an effective organization has also remained a prime research concern. School controls can exercise healthy work environments, provide material and social support and provide certain channels that break monotony and make teachers comfortable with school working conditions (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2014; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2020).

Some changes can be advocated in the administrative systems of schools to help alleviate burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2014; Shaheen & Mahmood, 2020; Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki, 2019). Improving school culture, providing social and moral support, reducing workload and class size, providing rewards and incentives, and increasing teacher's opportunities for training and professional development are some school-level initiatives (Pressley, 2021). These modifications will clarify the teachers' roles and their ultimate performances.

### **Results and Discussion**

Burnout destroys the physical and mental health of service-providing professionals, such as teachers. It damages teachers' performance, ruins teacher-student interaction, and causes a lack of quality of education. Based on the precise analysis of previously published researches, it was found that most burnout studies report descriptive or correlation analysis by employing different research methods. The nature of teaching profession is taxing, which makes teachers more prone to burnout. The three dimensions of burnout include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a lack of personal accomplishment as reported in published literature (Madigan et al., 2023; Hurley, 2021; Hanju, & Shiquan, 2024). The personal factors of teachers' burnout include age, gender, interest in teaching and health. Organizational factors were mostly reported as salary, working hours, size of class, strength of students, and workplace factors. The effects accumulate damages on schools and

students (Polatcan, Cansoy and Kılınç 2020; Nineza, Hagutin, & Chua, 2023).

The measurement of burnout has been reported in local and national contexts. Among all measuring tools for burnout, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) has been reported to be the most frequently used instrument (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2018) for burnout studies. Varied trends and managing strategies on individual and school levels have also been reported (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2020; Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki, 2019; Hanju, & Shiquan, 2024). The way teachers use talk therapy, discussions with colleagues, and breaks or rest are personal strategies. Informational sessions, workshops, seminars, and improvements at school and administrative levels are organizational coping strategies (Blazer, 2010; Polatcan, Cansoy and Kılınç 2020; Pressley, 2021).

Previous research has mostly focused on the causes, effects, measurement, and prevention of burnout. A more comprehensive view needs to be drawn based on the array of previously conducted research results. A precise collection of research findings may be helpful in making future research in form of studying burnout across international contexts. Such comparative studies across diverse cultures may be helpful in determining uniform mitigating techniques of burnout.

### **Limitations and Strengths**

Summarizing the findings of previous research is helpful in diverse ways. The current study follows an approach to report teacher burnout with its present state using the evidence from old and current published research articles. Burnout is a growing problem. The research is lacking on application grounds. Published literature supports its theory, ramifications, and influencing factors rather than suggesting application strategies. Another important aspect of teacher burnout is that it has lasting effects on the education system; longitudinal studies that track burnout over long periods are required. This study included articles that did not cover burnout by employing longitudinal methods. Likewise, with the occurrence of social change, many new factors have emerged, such as the new situation caused by COVID-19 being addressed in burnout literature. Certain factors need to be included in research tools on teacher burnout that are socially

and environmentally unique so that comparative research can be conducted in the future.

### **Conclusions**

By passing time, research has produced an inherited body of clear results on the phenomenon of teachers' burnout. The utility of certain understandable findings from varied researches calls upon how schools can use this information for improvement. This leads to devising channels for reducing burnout at the individual and school levels. Several guidelines can be developed to lower burnout rates in schools (Rezai, 2024; Hanju, & Shiquan, 2024). These include a sense of self-care among employees, encouraging flexible work arrangements, and building social connections. Moreover, it needs to be agreed upon that the unaddressed questions regarding nature and causes of teachers' burnout must also be seen precisely (Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki, 2019; Hurley, 2021; Pressley, 2021; Hanju, & Shiquan, 2024). Of specific concern is the association between stress factors and the experience of burnout, in which the increment or decrement of factors causes varied circumstances and tendencies of burnout among teachers. Such perspectives need to be further addressed not only for their own sake and right, but also in, the way of providing improvement channels in performance and ability of teachers and schools too. The type of future studies can be suggested considering this literature, namely, how teachers can improve themselves individually as well as how well organizations can become supportive in not becoming stress producing environments. An array of guidelines, recommendations, and materials can be developed to make schools a stress free environment where teachers can be well equipped with coping strategies.

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