

Fall 12-10-2021

Extinguishing The Fuse of Teacher Burnout

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Extinguishing The Fuse of Teacher Burnout

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November 30, 2021

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Abstract

In the 1970's, Herbert Freudenberger, defined teacher burnout as being a state of exhaustion or displeasure brought on by professional relationships that failed to generate predictable rewards. Teacher burnout is defined by three themes, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment.

Some indications of teacher burnout consist of sleeping and fatigue issues, constantly neglecting or having difficulties with focusing, weight and appetite concerns, and depression and anxiety (Tapp, 2021). In 2021, an evaluation was given to teachers highlighting how they are feeling and if they feel like leaving or are planning to leave the education world. They found that teacher's rate of leaving within the first five years, increased to forty-one and three hundredth percent (Campbell, 2020). On top of teacher burnout in the past, Covid-19 has played an even bigger role by making a larger impact on teacher's mental state as well as kids (Lizana et al., 2021).

Research reveals there is a dire need to be mentally and physically stable in order to set our students up for success. When a teacher is mentally and physically exhausted and are not working to better themselves, it will rub off on students and create a negative environment for all.

Review of Literature

Background Information:

Teacher burnout was first introduced into the literature world in the early 1970's by Herbert Freudenberger (Poghosyan et al., 2009). He identified burnout as a state of exhaustion or displeasure brought on by professional relationships that failed to generate predictable rewards. Later, he defined burnout consisting of three major factors: a) emotional exhaustion, b) depersonalization, and c) devalued feeling of personal accomplishment (Poghosyan et al., 2009). In 1981, Jackson and Maslach founded the Maslach Burnout Inventory or MBI, that will capture three dimensions, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Poghosyan et al., 2009).

What is Teacher Burnout

Teacher burnout is defined as when a person's physical/emotional power or motivation is exhausted due to lingering strain and exasperation (Thakur, 2018). This is caused by the interaction of physiological and environmental factors. Some signs of teacher burnout include sleeping and fatigue issues, consistently forgetting or having troubles with focusing, weight and appetite issues, and depression and anxiety (Tapp, 2021). Among these signs, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment play into the burnout of teachers (Tapp, 2021). Burnout in teachers has occurred from unsuccessful coping strategies that they have used to try and relieve themselves from work-related strain (Thakur, 2018) regarding the three main sources, which is defined as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment.

Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is defined as stress that has accumulated over periods of time that is caused by negative or challenging events in our lives. With teachers, emotional exhaustion can be present and can be slowly building up over time (Thakur, 2018). Teachers may be emotionally exhausted from multiple events, work overload, unmanaged work stress, time management concerns, lack of appropriate coping strategies, pressure of parents, co-workers, and more. In the study done by Thakur (2008), teachers with an extra workload tend to burnout faster versus teachers who have a moderate workload. The more work a teacher has, the more emotionally exhausted they are. He states that seventy nine percent of teachers lead to burnout due to emotional exhaustion after completing the study on workload and teacher burnout rates.

Depersonalization

Depersonalization is defined as feeling disconnected from their own work or feeling like an observer of their own life (Benita et al., 2018). This can consist of separation from their own mind, body, or other people, including children (Tomic et al., 2004). Teachers separate from co-workers, parents, children, and more when they are feeling depersonalization. This means that as a teacher we lack the importance of relationship building with children and other teachers that we work with and even ourselves at times (Benita et al., 2018). This is said to be caused by a traumatic event in your life or a chemical imbalance in the brain (Benita et al., 2018). In the long run, depersonalization of teachers can have a large effect on individuals in the classroom and develop negative attitudes towards them (Tomic et al., 2004).

The Lack of Personal Accomplishment

Personal accomplishment is defined as providing an individual with a sense of pride or achievement and feeling of accomplishing something. A study done by Längle, Orgler and Kundi, examined that the younger the teacher is, the more they feel personally accomplished. The researchers provided an existence scale that measures three different parts to personal accomplishment, self-distance, self-transcendence, and freedom. With this scale, they discovered that the higher score, the more feeling of personal accomplishment someone had (Tomic et al., 2004).

Measurement Used

The survey most used was the Maslach Burnout Inventory or MBI. The MBI was used to determine the rate of teacher burnout rates in the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Tomic et al., 2004). The BMI was also used in another study that I reviewed but instead geared the questions for students to rate their teachers on. Another scale that was used in research besides the MBI, was the existence scale which focused on self-distance, self-transcendence, freedom, and responsibility (Tomic et al., 2004). This questionnaire is based on Frankl's anthropological theory that focuses on the four-level process model to help take a look at someone's meaning of life.

Prevalence of Teacher Burnout

Teachers leaving their careers are anywhere between 19 percent to 30 percent within the first five years of their teaching careers (School of Education, 2019). Back in 2018, it was reported

that 29 percent of teachers left for personal reasons (health or relocation), 16 percent were involuntarily let go and 84 percent voluntarily left (School of Education, 2019). Often times, teachers do not leave for only one reason, many times it is a bunch of events that lead to burnout, and they end up leaving.

In 2021, an assessment was given to teachers based on how they are feeling and if they feel like leaving or are going to leave (School of Education, 2019). The teacher's rate of leaving within the first five years has risen to 41 and 300 percent (Campbell, 2020). This has increased by at least 11 percent in the last three years, and it will continue to reach without certain interventions in place. Each year, about five hundred thousand teachers leave the teaching profession (School of Education, 2019).

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Teacher Burnout Rates

Before covid-19, teachers were experiencing a low quality of life that was altered by mental and physical health due to several stress factors correlated with work overload. In the last year, teachers have been struggling to make sure that their students are getting the best education possible through many different formats (Lizana et al., 2021). Working through a pandemic has altered our way of life regarding social distance and mask wearing when in public to lower the catch of the virus. This created a rise in both mental and physical health issues, especially in the teaching world (Lizana et al., 2021). This pandemic caused schools all over the world to shut down and required schools to learn/teach virtually.

Techno-stress is a new kind of stress that has been introduced by the pandemic and has made a large impact on teacher's mental state as well as kids (Lizana et al., 2021). This may be

due to the short amount of time that we had to prepare and support children's learning. When given a survey to teachers prior to the pandemic and during the pandemic, teachers lowest scores fell under the social functioning, mental health, and mental component summary (Lizana et al., 2021).

Work surveys have also increased as the pandemic has become more of a day-to-day event in our lives. On recent research done, they found that burnout rates, since the pandemic, has reached over half of teachers in 2021, which has increase from pre-covid 19 surveys. This has also made it harder to leave work at school and home life at home, considering many are working from home.

Along with teachers own stresses, there are all the students stresses whether that may be parents losing jobs, evictions, lack of food/fluids, parental stress, trauma at home, loss of family members, and more. This brings on many stresses to teachers and fear for their students who may be experiencing theses traumas in their lives.

Interventions to Prevent Burnouts

Different interventions to try, include; yoga, taking time for hobbies, and to work with a counselor (Game, 2020). This is not an overnight cure, but instead it is a long going process that we need to address as soon as you start to see signs of burnout. When you teach, you are working with multiple people within your district. Talking with our colleagues is a great way to relieve stress as no one else knows what you are going through as much as your colleagues that you see every day and often, may feel the same way or have at some point in their teaching careers. Some other ways to cope with this stress is indulge in personal time, recognize what you do well, leave schoolwork at school, and make yourself a priority, health comes first (Game, 2020).

Another intervention may include; take a personal day when you need to focus on yourself, make time to grade, plan, and more when you are at school (Tapp, 2021). This will help you leave school problems at school and keep home life, separate. Sleep is also an important factor, as a teacher we are constantly thinking about what students are going through or what we will be going to teach for the rest of the week but setting a sleeping schedule and doing a mindful activity (yoga, meditate, wordsearch) before bed, may help you sleep more sound.

Gaps in Research

Research on burnout teacher rates provide an understanding how burnout happens and inspired me to work on ways that I can decrease burnout for myself. However, it is lacking possible solutions to decreasing emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, while trying to increase personal accomplishment. I think it is important to find strategies to overcome this feeling of burnout and work overload in teachers. We are doing well at monitoring this challenging event and even working to find the deeper meaning of teacher burnouts, but I feel that it is important to not only find the reason behind it but look at how we can further our research to find a solution. Another topic that is missed would be if we could clearly define burnout and truly measure it on a scale if all teachers think differently and all teachers have different beliefs. Does having different beliefs or styles of teaching affect this rate of teachers burning out? That would be something else to consider.

Future Considerations/Conclusion

Teachers lack the importance of self-care and strategies to prevent burnout in teachers. I feel that with personal development days, there should be time spent in the day to provide strategies that will help individuals cope with their workload and find solutions to decrease these issues.

There is a lot of discussion about collaboration and how it impacts teachers and students, but it does not focus on what successful collaboration is and ideas to successful collaboration. As a teacher myself, I find that expectations of what collaboration is, may be unclear and not shared with anyone about how to be successful with collaborating. Our present and future is collaboration, and it is essential to be taught the necessary skills to effectively collaborate with colleagues, improving not only the success of teachers but the success of teachers as well.

With many different events happening in our lives and as society continues to change, will teacher burnout rates continue to rise? With the covid-19 pandemic being a major event in our lives, will this continue to associate with the issue of burnout rates, and will it continue to increase due to the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization that the covid-19 pandemic has brought on all of us. This research could be further examined with the covid-19 pandemic and how it has affected teachers who have had to leave the teaching world or for teachers who had their first year of teaching during this pandemic. Further research is needed to determine how to reduce the physical and psychological impacts of Covid-19.

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