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Job Burnout Level and Influencing Factors of Teachers from Universities in Shandong Province, China

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Abstract

Aim: This study explored job burnout levels and influencing factors of teachers from Universities in Shandong Province, China.

Methodology: Anchored on quantitative research design, this study randomly selected teachers from ten (10) universities in Shandong Province, China, to participate in the questionnaire survey. Participants were asked to finish two questionnaires: Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBI-ES) and Teacher Stress Inventory(TSI).

Results: The results show that teachers' job burnout level is moderate. Work-related Factors, professional distress Factors, Professional Investment Factors, and Time Management Factors are all the influencing factors in moderate.

Conclusion: The job burnout level of teachers is moderate in Universities in Shandong Province, China, and the influencing factors of teachers from Universities are also moderate.

Keywords: job burnout, stress, influence factors, teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Every year, thousands of teachers leave the field of education, stressed and disillusioned due to teacher burnout (Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Burnout and attrition are not limited to veteran teachers; new teachers also succumb to them. New teacher attrition rates increase every year (O'Brennan, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2017). In fact, 40 to 50% of new teachers leave the profession after five years (Amos, 2014). Some teachers quit within the first few years of entering the field of education, while others quit only after many years of practice; teacher burnout may play a role in attrition.

Many scholars have given different definitions of burnout. What has been recognized in the academic community is that Freudenberger originated the term burnout (Hoffarth, 2017). He defined burnout as a 'work-related stress response that can be observed among human service professionals such as social workers, healthcare workers, or teachers".

Other researchers have provided definitions of the Universities are the main educational positions for talent training and scientific research. With the deepening reform of China's higher education system, there are increasing new requirements and goals for university teachers. University teachers should constantly update and enrich their knowledge reserves and improve their education and teaching ability; At the same time, it also has to undertake many scientific research tasks to achieve a steady stream of scientific research output (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Hammond, 2016). Therefore, unlike other social workers outside the school, university teachers' relatively free and flexible working hours are seemingly tolerant. Consequently, it is difficult to measure their working hours with the conventional 8-hour system.

According to the survey report on China's job burnout index released by China Human Resources Development Network in 2020, "70% of Chinese people have job burnout, and more than 10% are severe". Among the 15 industries

surveyed, teachers ranked third in job burnout, second only to civil servants and logistics practitioners (Li Xiaotong, 2020). The problem of teachers' job burnout is so common and severe that its negative impact is far-reaching.

This study hopes to explore Chinese teachers' job burnout level and influencing factors to help teachers' physical and mental health and career development and help students grow up. Uzun (2018). believed that the reason for teachers' job burnout was completing daily teaching tasks and guiding students and a lot of paperwork. He further studied teachers' job burnout and found that it was related to their education and teaching age.

After empirical investigation, Hoffarth (2017) found that both individuals and organizations affected teachers' job burnout. Personal factors include teachers' personality, experience, and working years; Organizational factors include classroom order control, negative emotion management, management inaction, public pressure, low treatment, etc. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) discovered that teachers' job burnout was a negative stress response that teachers can not correctly deal with professional stress. If this negative reaction can not be correctly guided, long-term pressure will make teachers feel exhausted physically and mentally; and there will be reduced job satisfaction, loss of work enthusiasm, emotional indifference, and alienation.

Xu (2019) believed that role conflict and role ambiguity would lead to tremendous pressure on teachers in their work. Liu, Cao, Zhang, and Wu (2020). suggested that school leadership factors should be paid attention to in the problem of teachers' job burnout. The authoritative style of school leaders, inconsistent expectations for teachers, bad evaluation of teachers, and so on will make teachers feel frustrated that they are eager to get the support of their superiors but can not meet their needs, thus losing their trust in leaders and causing job burnout. Lei, Li, Li, Castaño, Yang, and Zou (2021) found that organizational support can effectively offset the negative impact of job burnout. Lambert, Qureshi, Frank, Klahm, and Smith also believed that excellent interpersonal relationships positively impact job burnout. At the same time, encouragement from superiors will enable teachers to obtain more identity, enhance confidence and be more effective in alleviating job burnout.

Liu, Cao, Zhang, and Wu (2020) explored the effects of work-to-family conflict on job burnout and job outcomes in the construction industry, focusing on the moderating effects of affective commitment. Lei, Li, Li, Castaño, Yang, and Zou (2021) investigated the boundary conditions in the teaching process - to study the impact of conflict on university teachers and job burnout. Based on the demand resources, Xu (2019) investigated the relationship between the teacher role conflict and job burnout (including emotional exhaustion and job burnout) and tested the deconstruction of personality and the reduction of personal achievements of Chinese university teachers through the regulation of perceived organizational support (POS) and political skills.

To sum up, scholars' research on job burnout started early, mainly from the perspective of psychology, sociology, and management, and the research results are rich. In addition, Chinese scholars have done much empirical research from different dimensions based on western research results and combined with the actual situation. However, most research on teachers' job burnout in China and abroad is in the broad age group.

Topics throughout the literature often associate stress with burnout. Job burnout is not only a manifestation of stress but also a unique job-related stress response, which is embodied in helping the job and people's working environment (Klein, 2021). Although stress and burnout have similar attributes, they can not replace each other because stress may lead to burnout; However, burnout does not lead to stress. Stress alone does not cause burnout; unmitigated stress causes burnout. Unmitigated stress is a stressful situation in which a person feels that there is "no way out" (Bazmi, Alipour, Mohamad, Kheradmand, Salehpour, Khodakarim, & Soori, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This study obtains the research data through a questionnaire survey. The data analysis compares the teachers with pedagogical backgrounds (education teachers) and teachers with non-pedagogical backgrounds (non-education teachers). This study employed a random sampling method to find teachers' job burnout levels and influencing factors. The data were gathered from (ten) 10 universities in Shandong Province, China, as the research locale.

This study employed the following instruments:

1. The first questionnaire is Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBI-ES. According to MBI-ES, the average score evaluates the degree of job burnout. The average score (X<1) means no job burnout, the average score (1<X<3) means mild job burnout, the average score(3<X<4)means moderate job burnout, and an average score(X>4) means high job burnout.
2. The second questionnaire is the Teacher Stress Inventory(TSI). The TSI assesses occupational stress in teachers. Accordingly, the lowest score has a verbal description of "No strength/ Not noticeable / not applicable," and the highest score is described as" Major Strength / extremely Noticeable." The validity and reliability of the two questionnaires have been confirmed in various populations.

The data collected were entered into the SPSS Program and analyzed for data analysis. Descriptive statistics consisted of frequency and percentages for nominal (categorical/dichotomous) data and means/standard deviations for continuous (interval/ratio) data. Furthermore, t-tests and ANOVA were also applied.

RESULTS

Profile of the respondents

A total of three hundred and thirty-three respondents, 92 education teachers, and 241 non-educational teachers participated in the study. Among the education, about fifty percent are male, mostly married. The majority are between 35 to 45 years of age. The majority have been teaching for more than 20 years and assumed the title in various capacities, and many served as a lecturer. On the other hand, among the non-education teacher graduates, the majority are female, mostly married, and likewise, fall in the 25-45 age bracket. However, the majority have less than 20 years of teaching experience and assumed positions as a lecturer.

The profile as a test factor has no significant difference (p> .05) in job burnout levels regarding age, marital status, and teaching years. While in terms of sex and pedagogical background, it has a significant difference (p< .05) in job burnout levels. It means that men's job burnout level is higher than women's and non-education teachers' is higher than education teachers.'

Job burnout level in three domains

Table 1: Level of job burnout among education and non-education teachers

Domains	Education teachers			Non-education teachers		
	Mean	SD	Int	Mean	SD	Int
Emotional Exhaustion(EE)	**2.48**	**.65**	**Mi**	**2.54**	**.59**	**Mo**
De-Personalization(DP)	3.16	.884	Mo	3.10	.86	Mo
Personal sense of Achievements(PA)	3.52	.63	H	3.50	.48	Mo

Legend: Always/ Very High job burnout(VH) = 4.51-5.00; Often/High job burnout(H)= 3.51-4.50; Sometimes/moderate job burnout(Mo)=2.51-3.50 ; Rarely/Mild job burnout(Mi)=1.51-2.50; Never/No job burnout(NJ)=1.0-1.50

As shown in Table 1, Education teachers have obtained a 2.48 mean value with a corresponding .65 standard deviation, indicating a unanimous assessment of the job burnout caused by emotional exhaustion as Mild as it rarely occurs. The burnout level of non-education teachers (x=2.54, sd.= .59) is moderate. The results on the assessment of de-personalization, where both the education teachers (x=3.16, sd.= .884) and the non-education teachers (x=3.10, sd.= .86) have obtained, manifest moderate burnout levels. In terms of Personal sense of Achievement, the data(x=3.52, sd.= .63) of education teachers indicates a high level, while (x=3.50, sd.= .48) of non-education indicates a moderate level.

3. Stress factors in four domains

Table 2: Stress manifested among education and non-education teachers in terms of *Stress Factors*

Domains	Education			Non-Education		
	Mean	SD	Int	Mean	SD	Int
Work-Related Factors	3.19	.941	MeS	3.30	.839	MeS
Professional Distress	**3.16**	**.884**	MeS	**3.10**	**.866**	MeS
Professional Investment	2.51	.965	MeS	2.48	.803	MiS
Time Management	2.95	.800	MeS	3.05	.652	MeS

Legend :1-1.50 No strength(NS)/ not noticeable ; 1.51-2.50 = Mild Strength(MiS)/ Barely noticeable; 2.51-3.50 =Medium Strength (MeS/Moderately Noticeable; 3.51-4.50 = Great Strength(GS)/Very noticeable; 4.51-5.00 = Major Strength(MaS) / Extremely noticeable

As shown in Table 2, the composite mean value of 3.19 and corresponding standard deviation of .941 of the respondents' assessment of their stress concerning work-related factors is of Medium Strength and, therefore, moderately noticeable. Likewise, the evaluation of work-related factors among non-education teachers yielded a composite mean value of 3.30 with a corresponding standard deviation value of .890 interpreted Medium Strength, which is homogenous to the group.

The data(x=3.16, sd.= .884) concerning professional distress factors among the education group shows Medium Strength and, therefore, moderately noticeable. Likewise, the assessment of professional distress factors 3.10 with a corresponding standard deviation value of .866 interpreted Medium Strength, which is homogenous to the non-education teachers' group.

The composite mean values resulting from the assessment among education teachers have resulted with x=2.51 and a corresponding standard deviation of .965, indicating that teachers have Medium Strength of stress in these factors regarding professional investment. The composite mean of 2.48 and a standard deviation of .803 that is taken to mean Mild Strength among non-education teachers.

When considering time management, both the education teachers (x=2.95, sd.= .800) and non-education teachers (x= 3.05, sd.= .652) share their assessment of time management as a stress factor with Medium Strength.

DISCUSSION

The finding of teachers' burnout level is similar to that found by Xu, L (2019), who found out that emotional exhaustion is mild and is correlated with their role as a researcher. The education teachers may have repeatedly experienced this aspect in the past, but now they have adjusted to the prevailing situation. However, it can be seen in the assessment of the item, "At work, I can effectively deal with the problems brought to me by students and colleagues," with the obtained x=3.72, which cannot be easily avoided as colleagues can be the stressors in the school and also how emotional exhaustion can be wearisome among the non-education teachers. True enough, the mean value of 2.54 and corresponding standard deviation of .59 suggest rather serious attention as it could be very trying for those who have experienced it. Like their counterpart, they have a high level of emotional exhaustion with their universities, who seem to have unloaded the burden of a problem they only accept.

Xu (2019) and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) analyzed how teachers' perception of job needs and work resources in the school environment is related to teachers' happiness, engagement, and motivation to leave the teaching profession. Teachers' well-being, in turn, indicates higher engagement and lower turnover motivation. The principal factor analysis shows that time pressure is the strongest predictor of teachers' well-being. Albulescu, Tuşer, and Sulea (2018) believed that teachers' job burnout was a problem related to the educational environment. Teaching, as it entails demanding physical, mental, emotional, and social exertion, can lead to moderate burnout. Realizing that the course could require focus, only the persons themselves can limit its toll on oneself. Perhaps, teachers must rely on their preservation to shield themselves from extensive effects. The result implies that regardless of their preparation, both groups have manifested coping skills to adjust to the career path demands they took. It is no wonder that both groups have lasted this long in Teaching, despite the rigors of the daily dose of stressors.

It can be believed that even if they have different preparation for teaching the job demands, they could be vulnerable to stress and eventually burnout. Both groups have a high propensity to deal with a calm response to emotional problems. Perhaps, being teachers, they must have coped with stressors to remain unaffected by being relaxed, calm, and collected. Both groups must have mastered blocking any form of hindrances that mar doing an excellent job of Teaching. These are evident in their high-level responses to the statements, "When I get along with students and colleagues, I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere "(x=3.76 for education teachers and x= 3.71 for the non-education teachers). In the item, "I feel happy after working closely with others." Where the education teachers(x=3.92) and the non-education teachers(x= 3.93) both with High Level of burnout must have trying experience to endure just for the sake of sense of fulfillment , accountability to their students.

In terms of Work-related Factors, the low standard deviation score suggests that this is a common occurrence among the education groups. This may indicate that work-related stress is bearable and may be assumed to be taken lightly as it does not interrupt their daily routine. However, it is noted that the item "I have too much work to do" (x=3.67) means excellent extent, too great to ignore. Among non-education teachers, the low standard deviation suggests that a great majority of the non-education are all into it. Perhaps, these days, the non-education teachers who are not used to doing other stuff except Teaching may feel the burden of extra load. While the mean value is slightly higher than the education group, the effect is the same, which means that both groups have manifested the stress, but less evident.

In terms of professional distress factors, the low standard deviation score suggests that this is homogenous among the education groups. This may indicate that the professional distress factors are taken lightly, and sound and these quirky situations come with the job. According to Cleveland Clinic, download 2021, it is natural and normal to be

stressed sometimes. A stress response might help your body work harder and stay awake longer. In terms of professional investment factors, the data means stress is moderately noticeable; perhaps teachers may have other priorities to attend. Most likely, the teacher must have realized that things about their situation are beyond their control. The item, "I lack control over decisions made about classroom/ school matters." (x=2.14), is a feeling of surrender or giving up on something beyond their reach that any attempt would render useless. However, the non-education teachers take things lightly, and they do not put so much investing their talents and effort into items that are out of bounds. The composite mean of 2.48 and a standard deviation of .803 are taken to mean Mild Strength; in other words, investing so much time on the aspect that will not declare one a winner is indeed an exercise in futility. Thus, it can be said that such a factor is barely noticeable since they feel calm about things that are beyond their control. Therefore, it implies that non-education teachers seemed "cool" and relaxed about professional investment compared to the education teachers.

In terms of time management factors, it can be said that time management is moderately noticeable to those affected by it. It is worthy to note that both groups mutually share their assessment of the items, including, in particular, their assessment of the item , "I feel uncomfortable wasting time.", with mean values (x=3.85) obtained by education teachers and (x=3.86) obtained by non-education teachers, both interpreted "Great Extent". It seems to indicate that teachers are obligated to make full use of their official time- Teaching.

Conclusions and Recommendations

At present, the job burnout level of Chinese teachers is moderate, and it has nothing to do with teachers' age, teaching years, and marital status. In terms of gender factors, male teachers show a higher level of burnout than female teachers. In terms of the influencing factors leading to teachers' job burnout, stress is considered the most direct cause. Work-related Factors, Professional Distress Factors, Professional Investment Factors, and Time Management Factors are all the medium strengths.

Higher education is an integral part of national education, and its educational goal is to cultivate high-quality talents for the country. To achieve the purpose of higher education, university teachers play an indispensable role. Teachers should complete their own teaching tasks and meet the corresponding scientific research requirements in their work. At the same time, the reform of the higher education system has made new provisions for the evaluation, employment, assessment, and promotion of teachers, which also makes teachers bear greater work stress, and job burnout as an extreme reaction when teachers can not effectively deal with work stress, also arises.

University teachers are not only the disseminators of academic knowledge but also the disseminators of knowledge in their families. Therefore, taking the current situation of teachers' job burnout seriously, finding out the influencing factors leading to teachers' job burnout, and taking all possible measures to help teachers relieve pressure and slow down job burnout will benefit students and teachers schools, and society.

There are many university teachers in China, and their career status deserves more attention from researchers. The researcher recommends that researchers expand the research area and increase the sample size to make the research results more representative. The researcher recommends that a measurement scale suitable for the actual situation of Chinese teachers should be made based on the existing international scale.

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