

## A Study of Burnout among Primary School Teachers

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### Abstract

*This paper is aimed at investigating the burnout among primary school teachers of Solan district of Himachal Pradesh. A sample of 120 teachers, both male and female, was drawn from 40 government primary schools. Data were collected using a questionnaire. Mean, SD and t-test were employed for analysis of the data. The results revealed that female teachers are more prone to burnout than male teachers. It was observed that urban teachers show more burnout than rural teachers and highly qualified teachers have more burnout than that of their low qualified counterparts. The results of the study further explore that burnout exists more among low experienced teachers than their high experienced counterparts.*

### INTRODUCTION

The progress of a nation depends largely on education. Education is the apprenticeship of human life. It is a human process which involves the teacher and those taught. Teacher is at the centre of educative process and her/his commitment and devotion really counts a lot. The effective and efficient functioning of a school depends primarily on the quality and commitment of its human resources. Kothari Commission (1964-66) has remarked that “of all the different

factors which influence the quality of education and its contribution to national development, the quality and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant”. Though they occupy the highest pedestal as torch-bearers and real lamp-lighters, recently teachers were put to bitter ridicule and criticism as society perceived them as mercenary, irresponsible and undevoted. It is really a matter of great concern. Probably no professional group has been criticised as vehemently and as intensively as the profession of teaching.

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Lack of motivation and commitment to the profession is an area where a paucity of research prevails in our country. Recently teachers and their problems have been attracting a great deal of attention. Teacher efficiency, stress and burnout have become the topic of discussion and debate. Some teachers are committed who possess meaning in life and satisfaction in profession. Many complain of being under severe stress and heading towards teacher burnout. In fact, we should try to understand, why young and enthusiastic teachers turn into bored and aloof professionals in a few years of service? Why many of our teachers are apathetic and uninvolved and make no effort to improve their scholarship? While some others, placed in the same working milieu are enthusiastic, committed and show a constant desire to grow professionally. There is a group of teachers who are not committed to their work. They cannot boldly face the challenges of the environment; thus become frustrated and subsequently burn-out. Research in teacher burnout is of recent origin.

The topic of the burnout has been gaining interest since the mid 1970s. It is an increasing problem in today's society due to increased job tensions and job pressures and to get more work done in a shorter period of time. It has become an important area of study within numerous disciplines because of its theoretical and practical importance. It was Freuden Berger

(1974) who first created the term. Earlier it was called 'depression'. Freuden Berger (1974) described it as a condition that manifests itself symptomatically and behaviourally. The physical symptoms include exhaustion, fatigue, cold, headache, gastrointestinal disturbance and insomnia— symptoms include quickness to anger, crying suspiciousness, paranoia, feeling of omnipotence, over confidence, substance abuse, stubbornness, rigidity, cynicism, spending increasing hours of free time at work and withdrawal from work.

The burnout syndrome is a physiological and psychological reaction to prolonged exposure to chronic stress. According to Webster International Dictionary (1976) burnout means to fail, to wearout or become exhausted by reason of excessive demands on energy, strength or resources. It indicates that burnout is the state of emotional exhaustion related to overload. According to Freuden Berger (1974-75), burnout in its present sense denotes a state of physical, emotional and attitudinal depletion resulting from conditions of work. Edelwich and Brodsky defines burnout as a "progressive loss of idealism, energy, purpose and concern as a result of conditions of work".

Freuden Berger (1977) in his study revealed that high stress in occupation seems to be responsible for lower productivity at work. Aderson and

Iwanicki (1981) reported that when teachers' needs for self actualisation and self esteem were unfulfilled, there is a higher probability of burnout. Birmingham (1984) stated that the majority of teachers were not classified as symbolic examples of burnout, but 81 per cent of middle and junior high school teachers were dissatisfied with their job. Blanchard (1990) revealed that years of teaching experience was the only variable found to be a significant predictor of burnout. Stephen and Lorrane (1985) revealed that one third of the junior high and one tenth of the elementary teachers were experiencing high burnout.

Teacher's efficiency plays a pivotal role in the teaching-learning process. It, being the hub of the whole programme, needs close observation and critical analysis.

Flanders and Simson (1969) have defined that teacher effectiveness is an area of research which is concerned with relationship between characteristics of teacher, teaching acts and their effects on the educational outcomes of classroom teaching. Mastery of the subject matter, proper professional training, love for profession and children, a basic knowledge of psychology, good conduct, honesty, politeness and sincerity, optimistic outlook, patriotism and sense of humour are requisite qualities of an efficient and effective teacher.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- (i) To study the intensity of burnout among the primary school teachers.
- (ii) To find out the cause of burnout in teachers of primary schools.
- (iii) To reveal the variations in the extent of burnout in all three aspects of burnout, that is emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and lack of personal accomplishment.
- (iv) To know the impact of burnout in teachers in relation to their sex, locality, educational qualifications and experiences.

### **Hypothesis**

- (i) There exists no significant difference in the impact of burnout on teaching efficiency.
- (ii) There exists no significant difference in the burnout of male and female primary school teachers.
- (iii) There exists no significant difference in the burnout of rural and urban teachers.
- (iv) Burnout in teachers does not vary with their educational qualifications.
- (v) There exists no significant difference between high and low experienced teachers.

### **Method and Procedure**

The present study was conducted on the primary school teachers selected from 40 schools of rural and urban areas of Solan district in Himachal Pradesh. The sample consisting of 120

teachers, 60 male and 60 female teachers, working in primary schools was selected randomly. Mean, SD and t-value were used for analysis and interpretation of the data.

**Tools**

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) constructed by Christiana and Susan, E. Jackson (1981) was selected to measure the burnout. The Maslach Burnout Inventory is designed to assess the three aspects of the burnout— emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and lack of personal accomplishment. In the MBI there are 22 items, 9 items in the emotional exhaustion subscale, 5 items in the depersonalisation and 8 items in the personal accomplishment.

For measuring burnout in MBI, there are 14 positive items and 8 negative items in the questionnaire.

**Analysis of Data**

Data collected through Maslach Burnout Inventory (1981) are presented in Tables 1 to 5 each followed by analysis and interpretation as follows:

**Table 1**

**t-value, showing significance of difference between mean burnout scores of male and female primary school teachers:**

Category	Number	Mean	SD	t-value
<b>Male</b>	60	39.5	7.85	2.12*
<b>Female</b>	60	42.00	7.69	P < 0.01

\*P < .05 level

The results of Table 1 indicates that the mean burnout score of male and female primary school teachers differs significantly (M1 = 39.5, M2 = 42, t = 2.12 and P < 0.01). The mean value closely exhibit that male primary school teachers are more dedicated and committed to their jobs as compare to female primary school teachers and differ significantly in this respect.

**Table 2**

**t-value showing significance of difference between mean burnout scores of rural and urban primary school teachers:**

Category	Number	Mean	SD	t-value
<b>Rural</b>	70	36.2	8.15	4.2*
<b>Urban</b>	50	42.3	7.60	P < 0.01

\*\* P < 0.01 level

The results of Table 2 indicate that the mean burnout scores of rural and urban primary schools teachers differ significantly (M1 = 36.2, M2 = 42.3, t = 4.2 and P < 0.01). The mean values clearly indicate that rural teachers are more punctual, disciplined and dedicated to their jobs than urban primary school teachers. The mean values of both groups show appreciative difference in term of burnout.

**Table 3**

**t-value showing significance of difference between mean burnout scores of teachers with reference to their educational qualifications:**

Category	Number	Mean	SD	t-value
<b>JBT Teacher (Metric, +2)</b>	80	37.2	8.28	3.09*
<b>Urban</b>	40	41.9	7.70	P < 0.01

\*\* P < 0.01 level

Table - 3 indicates that the mean burnout scores of JBT teachers (Matric, +2) and primary teachers with BA, B.Ed/MA. Qualifications differ significantly (M1 = 37.2, M2 = 41.9, t = 3.09 and P < 0.01).

Results revealed that educational qualification directly affects the burnout among teachers.

Teachers having higher qualifications feel more burnout than their counterparts with lower qualification.

It means highly qualified teachers have job dissatisfaction and feel under employed. It is also indicative of the fact that highly qualified teachers have to work under less qualified teachers at the primary level. This may result in burnout.

**Table 4**

**t-value showing significance of difference between mean burnout scores of teachers with varying teaching experience:**

Category	Number	Mean	SD	t-value
<b>Above 15 years</b>	50	36.4	8.2	2.77*
<b>Below 15 years</b>	70	40.5	7.75	P < 0.05

\* P < 0.05 level

Table 4 shows that the mean burnout scores of teachers with teaching experience of more than 15 years and less than 15 years differ significantly (M1 = 36.4, M2 = 40.5, t = 2.77 and P < 0.05). It indicates that teachers with less than 15 years experience have higher burnout than

teachers with more than 15 years experience.

**Table 5**

**Mean values of burnout aspects, i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and lack of personal accomplishment.**

S. No.	Name of the Aspect	No. of Items	Total Score	Mean Value
1	Emotional Exhaustion	9	2700	2.5
2	Deper sonalisation	5	1700	2.8
3	Lack of Personal Accomplishment	8	2300	24

N = 120

Table 5 gives a clear picture regarding burnout, component wise, i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and lack of personal accomplishment. These three components occupy 2 , 1 and 3 places in influencing causation of burnout. A high degree of burnout is reflected in high scores on the depersonalisation component.

**Conclusion and Discussion**

Female teachers seem to have more burnout than male teachers. Highly qualified teachers working in primary schools feel burnout because they aspire for higher post constantly. Higher qualified teachers are not willing to stay back in the present working condition. Yet the benefits for all the working teachers are almost same. Hence, they often curse their ill luck and feel pessimistic by being burn-out. Teacher with low experience feels more burnout than teacher with higher teaching experience. Family problems,

financial problems, settlement of their children and late entry in the profession might be the main reason for making them more burnt-out. The Deputy Director at District level in Primary Education, Centre Head Teachers (CHTs) and Head Teacher (HTs) should try to remove the various aspects of burnout in order to bring efficiency in teaching-learning process in the schools. Further lack of personal accomplishment also influences the burnout which adversely pulls down teacher efficiency in teaching learning-process.

### **Implication of the Study**

- (i) The studies indicate that female primary school teachers are more prone to burnout than male teachers. Problems of female teachers need to be addressed.

- (ii) Burnout phenomenon exists less among rural teachers than their urban counterparts. There is therefore a need to pay attention to teachers in urban areas.
- (iii) Highly qualified teachers with less teaching experience have more burnout. Highly qualified teachers should be paid higher as per their qualification.

Department of primary education should ensure to remove the aspect like depersonalisation and emotional exhaustion in order to bring efficiency in teaching-learning process. Further lack of personal accomplishment also influences the burnout which adversely affects the working efficiency of the teachers at the primary level. Teachers therefore should get constant motivation from higher officials.

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