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BURNOUT AMONG SPECIAL EDUCATORS



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Abstract: According to the well-known definition of burnout given by Maslach, 1976; Maslach and Jackson, 1981 burned out people suffer from emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Burnout is a variable that continues to sustain international research interest. The most widely adopted tool measuring the burnout syndrome is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). (The Cronbach Alpha for the sub scale are 0.90, 0.79 and 0.71 for the sub scales of EE, DP and PA respectively) Maslach Burnout Inventory, a 22 items inventory grouped under 3 dimensions namely Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment were engaged for data collection. The purpose of the study was to find out the burnout among special educators. Survey research method has been used. The sample, consisting 75 special educators from different part of Coimbatore, Tirupur and Erode District of Tamilnadu, was selected by using purposive sampling method. The detailed statistical analysis, 't' test, One Way Anova and Psthoc Tuckey were carried out. This paper analyses the burnout (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment) with respect to gender, age, experience, qualification, specialization and socio economic status. The findings of the present study reveals that there were no significant differences in the levels of burnout as a whole and its components i.e. Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment with respect to gender, age, experience, qualification, specialization and socio economic status. There was only significant difference in personal accomplishment, component of burnout with respect socio economic status found.

Key words: Burnout, Special education and Special Educators,

INTRODUCTION:

Burnout is a psychological term for the experience of long term exhaustion and diminished interest. Research indicates that general practitioners have the highest proportion of burnout cases study in Psychological Reports, no less than 40% of these experienced high levels of burnout). The well-studied measurement of burnout in the literature is the Maslach burnout Inventory. Maslach and her colleague Jackson first identified the construct "burnout" in the 1970s, and developed a measure that weighs the effects of emotional exhaustion and reduced the sense of personal accomplishment. This indicator has become the standard tool for measuring burnout in research on the syndrome. Maslach burnout Inventory uses a three dimensional description of exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy. Some researchers and practitioners have argued for an "exhaustion only" model that sees symptoms as the hallmark of burnout.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The field of education is a very crucial platform for the cultivation of a wholesome and healthy society. The attitude of teachers has a great influence on the students, parents and colleagues that they work with and also the institution where they work. Moreover, in the field of special education, teachers require greater stress tolerance and a strong positive attitude in order to work with children with disabilities. They must be able to inspire the children to

develop a positive attitude too. In short, the attitudes of the teachers influence the performance of the students. Wisniewski and Gargiulo (1997) [1] showed that an alarming rate of four out of every ten special educators leave the special education field before their fifth year of teaching. It is therefore important to know if professional stress could lead to a change in the attitude of special educators towards working in the field of disability management and whether it decreases their commitment levels or vice versa. If so, then appropriate stress management strategies must be planned to avoid loss of man power from the field of disability management and to improve the quality of services. Therefore a need was felt to study the burnout, that is, whether the stress affects the special educators and vice versa.

OBJECTIVES

The present study have been conducted with following objectives: to find out the difference in levels of overall burnout among special educators with reference to Gender, Age, Experience, Qualification, Specialization and Socio Economic Status, to find out the difference in levels of burnout (Emotional Exhaustion) among special educators with reference to Gender, Age, Experience, Qualification, Specialization and Socio Economic Status, To find out the difference in levels of burnout (Depersonalization) among special educators with reference to Gender, Age, Experience,

Qualification, Specialization and Socio Economic Status and to find out the difference in levels of burnout (Personal Accomplishment) among special educators with reference to Gender, Age, Experience, Qualification, Specialization and Socio Economic Status.

According to the well-known definition of burnout (Maslach, 1976; Maslach and Jackson, 1981) [2], burned out people suffer from emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Emotional Exhaustion refers to feelings of being emotionally overextended and having depleted one's emotional resources. Depersonalization refers to a negative, callous and detached attitude towards the people one works with, i.e. patients, clients or students. Reduced Personal Accomplishment refers to someone's negative self evaluation in relation to their job performance (Schaufeli et al., 1995) [3]. Many studies on burnout stress a behavioral aspect of the syndrome while many others stress a mental aspect.

It is, however, a serious problem that so far, teacher burnout studies have lacked a firm theoretical basis and that proof of causal relationships between environmental stressors and individual health consequences is almost entirely lacking. Guglielmi and Tatrow (1998) [4] posit that burnout research lacks a theoretical framework that unifies and guides empirical research in this area. To meet one of their most essential objections, we drew from self-efficacy theory when composing our questionnaire on teacher competence in order to measure domain specific teacher classroom behavior, because in some studies self efficacy theory has appeared to be a promising conceptual framework for studying teacher burnout (Brouwers and Tomic, 2000 [5]; Evers et al., 2002) [6]. Guglielmi and Tatrow's (1998) [4] second objection too many burnout studies concerns how valid data are collected about the phenomenon. Generally speaking, self-report questionnaires and self-reported information to medical doctors and/or psychologists provide the proof that someone suffers from burnout to a certain degree. Because of the many negative consequences accompanying burnout, it is important to improve the assessment of its incidence.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is often the only instrument used as a questionnaire to assess self-reported teacher burnout. However, such an instrument may be adapted to enable the clients to report perceived symptoms of burnout among their human service workers. In the educational domain, Tatar and Yahav (1999) [7] were the first to apply a shortened version of the MBI in this way; they had students fill out the items on this instrument to report perceived symptoms of burnout among their teachers. The most widely accepted conceptualization of burnout was found in the work of Maslach and Jackson [2]. They defined burnout as three-dimensional syndrome consisting of emotional exhaustion, low personal accomplishment, and depersonalization. Particularly, professionals working in human services e.g. teachers, physicians, social workers and nurses are vulnerable to burnout. Specifically, emotional exhaustion refers to the feelings of being emotionally drained by intense contact with other people; depersonalization refers to the negative attitude or callous

responses toward people; and reduced personal accomplishment refers to decline in one's sense of competence and of successful achievement in working with people. In recent years, teacher's burnout has increasingly received recognition as a widespread problem and the term has come to be used in conjunction with teachers far more often than any other occupational group. Farber [8] estimated that 30 to 35% of American teachers are dissatisfied strongly with their profession and 5 to 20% truly are burned out. Research findings suggest that, burnout and dissatisfaction with job are linked, but they are not identical constructs. In a literature review, Kyriacou [9] pointed out the major sources of stress for teachers; poor pupil motivation in school performance, undisciplined behavior of pupils, poor career opportunities; low income and shortage of teaching equipment, poor facilities and large classes; time pressures and short deadlines; low societal recognition of profession; conflicts with colleagues and supervisors; rapid changes in curricular demands and adaptation of scholastic programs to changes in a rapidly changing society.

Burnout is a major problem in education and teaching in particular has been identified as a stressful situation. Burnout in the teaching profession is described as being similar to burnout at work in general. In a number of studies concerning teacher burnout, the latter is identified as resulting from ongoing stress (Talmor, Reiter, & Feigin, 2005) [10]. The symptoms are mainly headaches, migraines, hypertension, nervous stomach, loss of appetite, weight loss and bowel difficulties (Alkhrisha, 2002) [11]. Most teachers begin their careers excited and genuinely care for their students. However, over time they can lose that feeling. Teaching can be an incredibly fulfilling occupation but at the same time can be very stressful. Teachers interact with students, parents, and co-workers which can lead to stress. Teacher stress is defined by Kyriacou (2001) [9] as "the experience by a teacher of unpleasant emotions, such as tension, frustration, anxiety, anger, and depression, resulting from aspects of work as a teacher." Teacher stress may be perceived as the imbalance between demands at school and the resources teachers have for coping with them (Esteve, 2000 [12]; Troman & Woods, 2001) [13]. Anxiety and frustration, impaired performance, and ruptured interpersonal relationships at work and home can be symptoms of teacher stress (Kyriacou, 2001) [9].

Researchers (Farber, 1982 [8]; LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991 [14]; Troman and Woods, 2001) [13] note that teachers who experience stress over long periods of time may experience what is known as burnout. Research reveals that burned out human service professionals, including teachers have had and perhaps are still having a hard time. Although the fit between them and their job has been disrupted (Galloway et al., 1986 [15]; Smith and Bourke, 1992) [16], they continue their work, and by doing so, may well harm their own health and the wellbeing of their clients. Students need mentally and physically fit adults who can guide them as they find their way in our world. Burned out teachers suffer from irritability (Huberman, 1993) [17], and they are found to be responsible for student apathy (Jenkins and Calhoun, 1991) [18]. Teachers are known to continue working in spite of burnout symptoms (Dworkin, 1985 [19];

or reduced classroom management skills (Blase, 1982 [20]; Smith and Bourke, 1992) [16]. As burned out teachers negatively affect themselves, their students, and the educational system (Hughes, 2001) [21], it is necessary to develop and promote the use of instruments to accurately measure teacher burnout. As a complement to teachers' reports on their own health, their students could give valid information about them, thus helping to discover burnout among teachers at an earlier stage and making timely preventive or restorative intervention strategies possible. Teachers play such a valuable role in helping our children grow up that any opportunity to promote their physical and mental health should be seized.

SPECIAL EDUCATORS- WORKLOAD AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In the special school set-up, the job of the special educators mainly involves teaching and training. This includes identifying the specific impairment in the child, assessment, development of appropriate individualized education programme and teaching learning material, procuring support from multidisciplinary professionals, providing least restrictive environment for organization of appropriate curricular and co-curricular activities. In short, the special educator must assist the student in fulfilling the personal, academic and social needs of children with disabilities. However, in an inclusive set-up the general teacher is expected to cater to the needs of both children with and without disabilities. Children with disabilities may require adaptations in the classroom arrangement, curriculum and instructional strategies which the regular teacher may not be competent enough to do. This includes regular visits to the inclusive schools, identification of new cases of children with disabilities, teaching those concepts to children with disabilities that the general educator is unable to do effectively, teaching in resource room and giving home-based training for children with severe and profound disabilities. The special educators teach the general educators how to teach effectively those concepts that the general educators are having difficulty in conveying to children with disabilities. They provide innovative ideas regarding preparation of relevant teaching learning material. Additionally they are required to provide regular training for general educators, Anganwadi teachers and parents in handling children with disabilities, inform school authorities regarding dates of medical camps and participate in medical camps and surveys. Special educators have to collect the bio data list from all the schools and facilitate the procurement of assistive devices, maintenance grant (specific to children with mental retardation) and scholarship forms for children with disabilities. They are supposed to escort the children with disabilities and their families to the Government hospital in case surgical treatment is required. It is also the responsibility of the special educators to maintain case record, assessment record, stock inventory and medical camp profiles. Although all these duties seem feasible, yet, most special educators working under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan face problems like low salary, lack of co-operation of general educators in following guidance, difficulty in travelling to remote schools due to lack of transportation,

lack of co-operation of parents in following instructions and sending their children to the resource room. All these factors may lead to stress among special educators if the above mentioned roles and responsibilities are implemented without adequate planning.

METHOD

Design:

The present study is a descriptive research study. The primary purpose of descriptive research is to provide an accurate description or picture of the status or characteristics of a situation or phenomenon. Survey method of data collection is commonly used in descriptive research. Therefore survey method has been used for collecting the data.

Participants:

The samples for the present study were special educators dealing children with special educational needs i.e. Hearing Impairment, Visual Impairment and Mental Retardation. The size of the sample consisted of 75 special educators.

Tools:

Data collection involved the use of the latest version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach et al., 1996). The MBI consists of 22 items distributed across the 3 dimensions of Maslach's (1978, 1981, 1986) theoretical framework discussed above; (a) emotional exhaustion (EE; nine items), (b) depersonalization (DP; five items), and (c) the feeling of personal accomplishment (PA; eight items). The frequency of burnout symptoms is rated on a five point likert scale ranging from 'never' to 'always'. This scale has been primarily used in the assessment of burnout amongst various professions across many countries, and has yielded satisfactory convergent validity.

Procedure:

The MBI was administered to special educators. Each participant received the MBI and voluntarily completed it. The participants were explained the aims and objectives of the present study. The administration of the MBI was scheduled as per the subject's convenience. After completion of the MBI subjects were thanked for their cooperation by the investigator. The collected data was analyzed by applying One Way ANOVA, Paired Sample t-test and Posthoc Tuckey test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table: 1 Means and SD on Burnout with respect to Gender

Burnout Scores						
		N	Mean	SD	t-value	
Gender	Male	32	65.47	7.91	73	0.64
	Female	43	66.65	7.84		

Results related to burnout with respect to gender have been presented in Table 1. The result of Paired sample t-test indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of levels of burnout among the special educators with respect to gender. It may be because of having same levels of burnout among the selected samples. The calculated t-value was (t=0.64) which is found to be not significant.

Table: 2 Summary of One Way ANOVA for Burnout with respect to Age, Experience, Qualification, Specialization and Socio Economic Status.

Burnout Score					
Variables	Age Group	N	Mean	SD	F (2,72)
Age	Below 30 years	31	65.77	8.38	.168
	31- 40 years	19	67.05	7.56	
	Above 41 years	25	65.92	7.62	
Experience	Up to 10 Years	25	68.60	4.98	2.207
	11-20 Years	33	64.30	9.88	
	Above 21 Years	17	66.12	5.96	
Qualification	Diploma	20	64.80	8.01	.401
	Bachelor	33	66.55	7.57	
	Master	22	66.77	8.29	
Specialization	Hearing Impairment	17	68.29	6.64	.926
	Visual Impairment	30	65.07	9.28	
	Mental Retardation	28	66.00	6.75	
Socio Economic Status	Lower	13	66.62	6.76	2.444
	Middle	46	64.78	8.49	
	High	16	69.69	5.58	

In order to find out whether there is a difference in the levels of burnout with respect to the demographic variables among the special educators, it was hypothesized that there will be no significant difference on burnout with respect to above mentioned demographic variables. To test this hypothesis, differences were explored by applying One-

way Analysis of Variance. Results related to burnout with respect to age, experience, qualification, specialization and socio economic status have been presented in Table 2. Analysis of variance for burnout indicates that the F- value were not found to be significant on any of the demographic variable Age (F=.168, NS), Experience (F=2.207, NS), Qualification (F=.401, NS), Specialization (F=.926, NS) and Socio Economic Status (F=2.444, NS). The results of this analysis interestingly revealed that there is no significant differences exist with respect to mentioned demographic variables among the selected samples all the variables are equal in terms of burnout.

Table: 3 Means and SD on Emotional Exhaustion with respect to Gender

Emotional Exhaustion Score						
		N	Mean	SD	t-value	
Gender	Male	32	27.41	5.16	73	0.315
	Female	43	27.74	4.12		

Results related to dimensions of burnout i.e. Emotional Exhaustion with respect to gender has been presented in Table 3. The result of Paired sample t-test indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Emotional Exhaustion among the special educators with respect to gender. It may be due to having same levels of Emotional Exhaustion among the selected samples. The calculated t-value was (t=0.315) which is found to be not significant.

Table: 4 Summary of One Way ANOVA for Emotional Exhaustion with respect to Age, Experience, Qualification, Specialization and Socio Economic Status.

Emotional Exhaustion Score					
Variables	Age Group	N	Mean	SD	F (2,72)
Age	Below 30 years	31	27.35	5.00	1.089
	31- 40 years	19	28.89	3.25	
	Above 41 years	25	26.92	4.82	
Experience	Up to 10 Years	25	28.88	3.19	1.558
	11-20 Years	33	27.12	5.76	
	Above 21 Years	17	26.65	3.26	
Qualification	Diploma	20	27.60	6.09	.340
	Bachelor	33	27.18	4.09	
	Master	22	28.23	3.70	
Specialization	Hearing Impairment	17	28.65	3.35	.617
	Visual Impairment	30	27.47	5.28	
	Mental Retardation	28	27.11	4.42	
Socio Economic Status	Lower	13	26.92	3.52	.463
	Middle	46	27.48	5.31	
	High	16	28.50	2.63	

Results related to dimensions of burnout i.e. Emotional Exhaustion with respect to age, experience, qualification, specialization and socio economic status has been presented in Table 4. Analysis of variance for Emotional Exhaustion indicates that the F- values were not found significant on any of the demographic variable such as Age (F=1.089, NS), Experience (F=1.558, NS), Qualification (F=.340, NS), Specialization (F=.617, NS) and Socio Economic Status (F=.463, NS). This indicates that there is no differences exist between the groups. All three groups are equal in terms of Emotional Exhaustion.

Table: 5 Means and SD on Depersonalization with respect to Gender

Depersonalization Score						
		N	Mean	SD	df	t-value
Gender	Male	32	17.22	2.96	73	0.89
	Female	43	17.91	3.55		

Results related to dimensions of burnout i.e. Depersonalization with respect to gender has been presented in Table 5. The result of Paired sample t-test indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Depersonalization among the special educators with respect to gender. It may be due to having same levels of Depersonalization among the selected samples. The calculated t-value was (t=0.89) found not significant.

Table: 6 Summary of One Way ANOVA for Depersonalization with respect to Age, Experience, Qualification, Specialization and Socio Economic Status.

Depersonalization Score					
Variables	Age Group	N	Mean	SD	F (2,72)
Age	Below 30 years	31	17.55	3.10	.019
	31- 40 years	19	17.74	3.53	
	Above 41 years	25	17.60	3.52	
Experience	Up to 10 Years	25	18.44	2.95	1.860
	11-20 Years	33	16.82	3.41	
	Above 21 Years	17	17.94	3.44	
Qualification	Diploma	20	17.55	2.78	.888
	Bachelor	33	18.12	3.71	
	Master	22	16.91	3.12	
Specialization	Hearing Impairment	17	18.12	3.26	.299
	Visual Impairment	30	17.33	3.92	
	Mental Retardation	28	17.61	2.63	
Socio Economic Status	Lower	13	18.54	3.71	1.952
	Middle	46	17.02	3.34	
	High	16	18.56	2.61	

Results related to dimensions of burnout i.e. Depersonalization with respect to age, experience, qualification, specialization and socio economic status has been presented in Table 6. Analysis of variance for Depersonalization indicates that the F- value were not found to be not significant on any of the demographic variable Age (F=.019, NS), Experience (F=1.860, NS), Qualification (F=.888, NS), Specialization (F=.299, NS) and Socio Economic Status (F=1.952, NS). This indicates that there is no differences exist between the groups. All three groups are equal in terms of Depersonalization.

Table: 7 Means and SD on Personal Accomplishment with respect to Gender

Personal Accomplishment Score						
		N	Mean	SD	df	t-value
Gender	Male	32	20.84	3.12	73	0.213
	Female	43	21.00	3.16		

Results related to dimensions of burnout i.e. Personal Accomplishment with respect to gender has been presented in Table 7. The result of Paired sample t-test indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Personal Accomplishment among the special educators with respect to gender. It may be due to having same levels of Personal Accomplishment among the selected samples. The calculated t-value was (t=0.213) which is found to be not significant.

Table: 8 Summary of One Way ANOVA for Personal Accomplishment with respect to Age, Experience, Qualification, Specialization and Socio Economic Status.

Personal Accomplishment Score					
Variables	Age Group	N	Mean	SD	F (2,72)
Age	Below 30 years	31	20.87	2.59	.533
	31- 40 years	19	20.42	3.58	
	Above 41 years	25	21.40	3.42	
Experience	Up to 10 Years	25	21.28	2.95	1.012
	11-20 Years	33	20.36	3.56	
	Above 21 Years	17	21.53	2.35	
Qualification	Diploma	20	19.65	2.89	2.502
	Bachelor	33	21.24	2.82	
	Master	22	21.64	3.54	
Specialization	Hearing Impairment	17	21.53	3.34	1.175
	Visual Impairment	30	20.27	2.97	
	Mental Retardation	28	21.29	3.14	
Socio Economic Status	Lower	13	21.15	2.79	3.612*
	Middle	46	20.28	2.89	
	High	16	22.63	3.54	

Results related to dimensions of burnout i.e. Personal Accomplishment with respect to age, experience, qualification, specialization and socio economic status has been presented in Table 8. Analysis of variance for Personal Accomplishment indicates that the F- value were not found to be not significant on any of the demographic variable other than the Socio Economic Status. The following demographic variables were not found significant Age ($F=.0533$, NS), Experience ($F=1.012$, NS), Qualification ($F=2.502$, NS) and Specialization ($F=1.175$, NS) whereas only Socio Economic Status ($F=3.612^*$) was found to be significant on personal accomplishment. This indicates that there is no significant difference on the demographic variables other than the socio economic status. The Mean scores and SD of special educators on personal accomplishment with reference to three different experience groups i.e. below 10 years, between 11-20 years and above 20 years were 7.18, 7.62 and 8.00 and SD were .85, .50 and .00 respectively. The F-ratio was found to be significant at 0.05 level of significance ($F=3.612$, $p<0.05$), indicating there is difference in mean scores of need with respect to different socio economic status groups of the subjects.

Table: 9 Posthoc Aalysis: Pair wise comparison of Mean scores for Personal Accomplishment with respect to Socio Economic Status

Personal Accomplishment (Socio Economic Status)			
Group	Group	Mean Difference	p- value
1	2	0.87	$p>0.05$
	3	1.48	$p<0.05$
2	3	2.35	$P<0.05$

To know which group significantly differs, Posthoc analysis (Table-9) was done. The results indicated that the differences in mean scores between Group1 and Group3, Group2 and Group3 was significant ($p<0.05$). These results reveal that the special educators belonging to middle class were significantly differed when compared to the other two classes i.e. lower and high.

CONCLUSION

The success of special education program depends a large extent on the special educators irrespective of placement options where they work such as special, integrated and inclusive education. The multiple roles to be played by the special educators in varied conditions exert lot of stress and strain on them. Research studies pertaining to the burnout helps to identify the hard spots of the system and facilitate for providing better conducive environment to overcome stressful situations of teachers. Teachers with adequate temperament will be able to fulfill the educational objectives and national goals. Hence, this study aimed at finding out the significant differences in the burnout and its components due to variations in their gender, age,

experience, qualification, specialization and socio economic status among special educators working in various schools setups of Coimbatore, Tirupur and Erode District of Tamilnadu. The present study emphasized much on the demographically variables of the special educators. However the researcher of the present study could not find any study related to the demographically variables of the selected samples.

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