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Izzul Ilham Jamaludin, You Huay Woon

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Burnout among School Teachers

Izzul Ilham Jamaludin, You Huay Woon

Pusat GENIUS@Pintar Negara, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM Bangi,
Selangor, Malaysia.

Abstract

Burnout describes the physical and emotional exhaustion resulting from stress generated by a person's job and the negative attitude towards the people he or she works with. The phenomenon of burnout among teachers is worthwhile to study as it creates negative effects on teachers, students and the teaching profession as a whole. This study investigates the levels of burnout among teachers by measuring their scores on reduced personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization elements. The study aims to discover the most and the least burnout symptoms experienced by the teachers. Out of 46 teachers, 31 of them were randomly selected as sample subjects and data was collected through questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from the Dutch Educators Survey (MBI- NL-ES) to assess the burnout level among the teachers. The findings indicated that the teachers were facing a moderate level of burnout. The symptoms most experienced by the teachers was reduced personal accomplishment, followed by emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. In addition, there is association between gender and burnout symptoms. These findings contribute important information to understand burnout among teachers that will inform appropriate measures to overcome the situation.

Keywords: Burnout, Depersonalization, Emotional Exhaustion, Reduced Personal Accomplishment.

Introduction

Teaching has been considered as one of the more stressful occupations. The responsibilities of a teacher has been increasing from year to year. Apart from the main responsibilities in the classroom, teachers need to deal with non-teaching tasks, for instance, recording students' progress in co-curricular activities. In addition, teachers need to meet the expectations of their schools' management and parents of their students. Furthermore, the use of technology in education to complete management and administrative tasks, causes additional stress to teachers who have been in service for more than 20 years (Rahim, 2012). As a result, the burden of stress and conflicting roles faced by a teacher is compounded and can lead to burnout if left to continue without positive action to address the condition (Subon and Sigie, 2016; Yatin, Kanan, Kamarudin, & Zainuddin, (2018).

The burnout concept was first introduced by Freudenberger as 'wearing down and depleting energy involving the feelings of failure and exhaustion' (Freudenberger, 1974). Burnout has been divided into three categories namely, reduced personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Maslach and Pines, 1984). Personal accomplishment is the feeling of successful achievement and is negatively related to burnout. Emotional exhaustion indicates the feelings of over exhaustion resulting from daily conflict in work. Depersonalization refers to the feeling of impersonal response towards people. Since then, numerous studies have been conducted in this area - see Kokkinos (2007), Mukundan and Ahour (2011); Chlapoutaki & Dinas (2014), Rosenberg and Pace (2006), to name a few. In addition, a few researchers, see Subon and Sigie (2016), Jamaludin and Ghazali (2013), Mukundan and Khandehroo (2010); Anghelache, Barbu, Anghel, & Marinescu (2018) have studied stress among teachers in Malaysia. Therefore, it is essential to determine the burnout symptoms of teachers. The burnout symptoms are measured by using their scores on reduced personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. In addition, this study aims to find out whether there is association between burnout symptoms and gender. In this study, the following research questions will be answered:

- a) Do the educators experience any burnout symptoms?
- b) Which category do the educators experience the most and the least burnout symptoms?
- c) Does the educator's gender have any association with burnout symptoms?

This paper is organized into several sections as follows: Section 2 describes the methodology implemented in this study. The results and discussion are elaborated in Section 3. Finally, some concluding remarks are given in Section 4.

Methodology

In this study, 31 out of the 46 respondents were selected as the sample size. The selected respondents comprised 12 males and 19 females. The school name is kept anonymous. A survey design using questionnaire was implemented to collect data. The questionnaire was adapted from the Dutch Educators Survey (MBI-NL-ES) (Horn & Schaufeli, 1998) mainly to assess the three categories of burnout symptoms, i.e. reduced personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The questionnaire consists of 22 items across three burnout symptoms, i.e. reduced personal accomplishment (7 items), emotional exhaustion (8 items) and depersonalization (7 items). It is rated according to the Likert scale which is 0 as Never, 1 as Seldom (few times a year or less), 2 as Now and Then (few times a month or less), 3 as Regular (few times a month), 4 as Often (once a week), 5 as Very Often (few times a week) and 6 as Always (everyday). The questionnaire is divided into 2 sections: Section A for the demographic of the respondents, and, Section B for the burnout assessment. The respondents were given one day to complete the questionnaire, allowing them to complete the questionnaire within the convenience of their schedule and without rushing. The Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were utilized to answer the research questions 'a' and 'b'. Inferential statistics namely directional measures were implemented to answer the research question 'c'. The results obtained was presented using tables and figures.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics such as minimum, maximum, and percentiles for each burnout symptoms. The results show that the teachers experienced a moderate level of burnout symptoms. From 31 participants, about 56% were showing symptoms of reduced personal accomplishment, followed by about 39% and 36% facing symptoms of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, respectively. This answers the first research question that the educators have a moderate level of burnout. Among the three categories, the educators demonstrated the most symptoms of reduced personal accomplishment. This indicates that the educators have negative attitudes towards their commitments and responsibilities. Moreover, a high level of reduced personal accomplishment symptoms may be due to the negative relationship among the teachers and administrative staff, which could lead to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. In light of this, school managements can organize professional development programs that involve all staff. This will alleviate the stress and prevent burnout among the educators.

Table 1. Burnout symptoms among educators

	Reduced Personal Accomplishment	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization
N	31	31	31
Minimum (%)	24.3	2.5	4.3
Maximum (%)	55.7	38.8	35.7
Sum	121.86	56.38	48.29
Percentiles 100	5.5714	3.875	3.5714

Figure 1 displays the frequency, average and standard deviation frequency for the reduced personal accomplishment among 31 participants. Majority of the educators rated 4 (often) for reduced personal accomplishment symptoms as the mean was equal to 3.93 (SD = 0.796). This reveals that educators were often affected by their personal accomplishment in related to the burnout. This result is similar with Table 1, where around 56% of the 31 participants have reduced personal accomplishment symptoms.

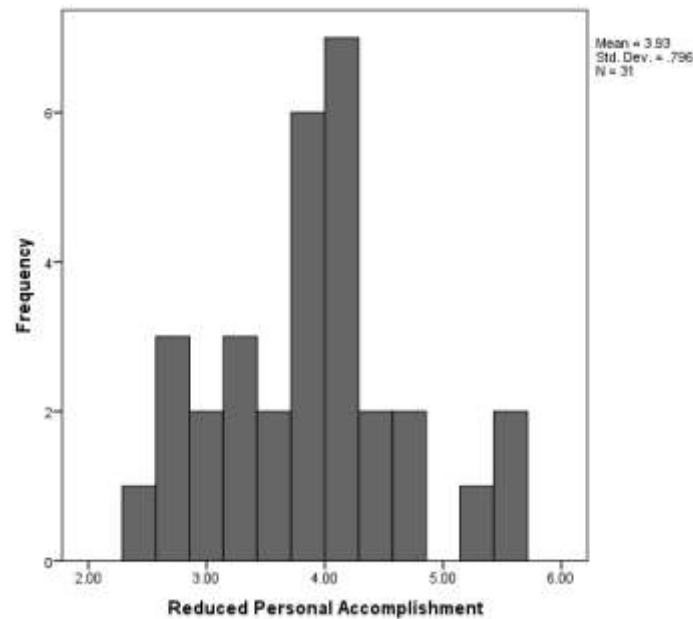


Fig. 1 Reduced personal accomplishment among 31 respondents

Figure 2 shows that majority of the participants rated their emotional exhaustion as 2 (now and then), with an average of 1.82 (SD = 0.921). This indicates that the participants were having a moderate symptom for emotional exhaustion of burnout.

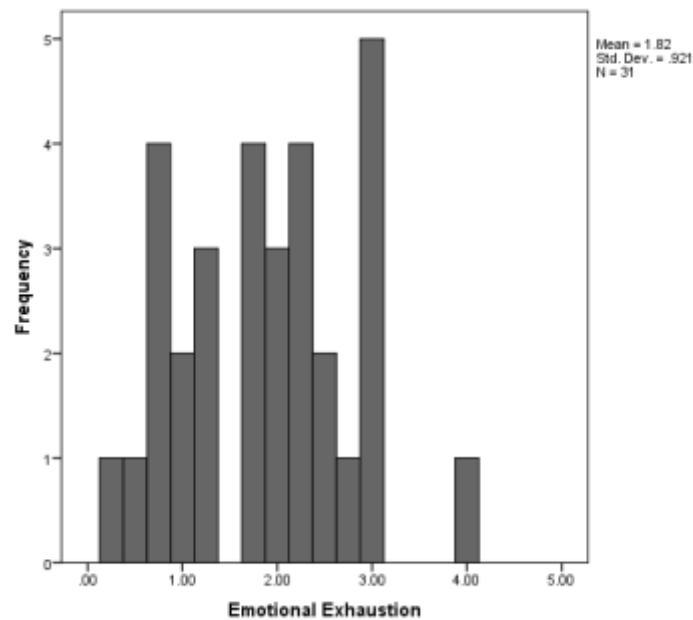


Fig. 2 Emotional exhaustion among 31 respondents

The least burnout symptoms experienced by the educators was depersonalization, with a percentage of around 36% (see Table 1) and an average of 1.56 (SD = 0.868). It is an average rating, where majority of the participants rated as 1 (seldom) and 2 (now and then). This shows that the educators are responsive to their students and the people they work with.

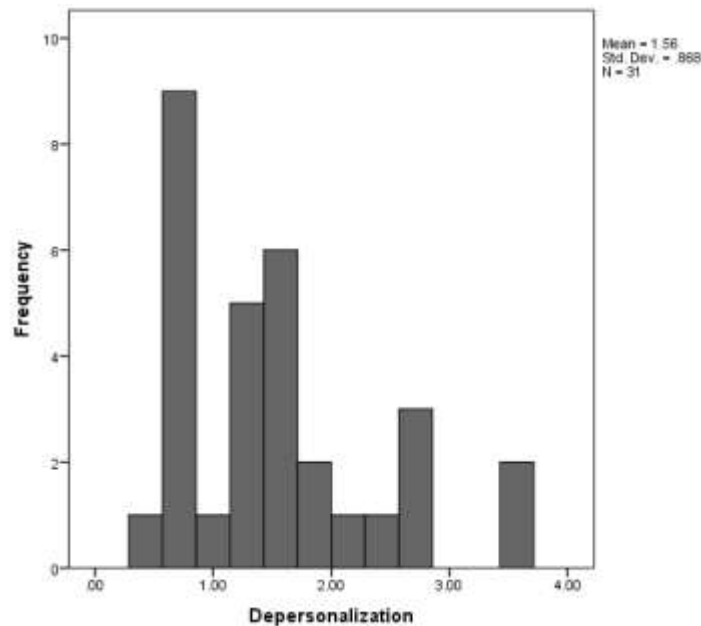


Fig. 3 Depersonalization among 31 respondents

To examine whether there is association between gender and educator burnout, the directional measures in eta statistics was implemented for data analysis as gender is a nominal variable. Table 2 gives the directional measures between the gender and burnout symptoms. We found that there is moderate strength association between gender and reduced personal accomplishment with eta value as 0.312. Moreover, eta squared statistics will tell us how much variation in a dependent variable is explained by independent variable. The eta squared statistics between gender and reduced personal accomplishment is 0.097, which indicates the effect size to be medium. The association between gender and emotional exhaustion was reported as 0.151, i.e. weak strength association. Similarly, the association between gender and depersonalization is weak strength, i.e. 0.068. The eta squared statistics for the association between gender, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are 0.023 and 0.005, respectively, which is reported as small effect size.

Table 2. Directional Measures burnout symptoms and gender

		Eta	Eta Squared
Nominal by Interval	Reduced Personal Accomplishment Dependent	0.312	0.097
	Emotional Exhaustion Dependent	0.151	0.023
	Depersonalization Dependent	0.068	0.005

From the results, the teachers face the most burnout symptoms for reduced personal accomplishment, followed by emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The results of this study portrayed that the symptoms showed by the participants were due to the self-accomplishment factors, such as difficulty in understanding the students' feelings, and ineffectively dealing with the problems of the students. This will lead to reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion. The cause may be due to the heavy responsibilities in teaching students, which require creative teaching strategies in delivering the syllabus. The less burnout symptoms experienced by the educators was depersonalization. Despite their heavy commitment, the teachers have a positive

response towards their students, which showed that the educators have a positive attitude towards others.

Conclusion

Teachers have a direct effect on their students' development. Hence, the burnout symptoms among the educators are worth to be elaborated. From this study, it is observed that the teachers were moderately affected by burnout symptoms, with the most burnout symptoms being the reduced personal accomplishment, followed with emotional exhaustion and the least burnout symptom was depersonalization. Despite a moderate level of burnout symptoms facing by the educators, suitable measures need to be taken by school managements to monitor and control the situation before it becomes serious. School managements can carry out professional development programs, for instances, seminars on motivation at least once a year and involved all staff in the workplace. This is crucial to enhance their teaching efficacy to develop excellent teaching careers. The findings from this study provide important information about the burnout symptoms, and the basis for positive measures to be taken to overcome this phenomenon. Further research can be conducted to include factors related to demographic characteristics such as education level to compare the relationship between education level and educator burnout.

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