

The Phenomenon of Teachers' Burnout: Its Implication for Job Satisfaction

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Abstract. Teachers play an indispensable role in the lives of children; however, in recent years, the demands of teaching have increased significantly. This study aims to determine the feelings of burnout among secondary public-school teachers in the District of Aloran, Division of Misamis Occidental. It examines the elements contributing to teacher burnout, its impact on job satisfaction, and the coping mechanisms teachers use to mitigate it. Informant teachers, who participated in one-on-one interviews, were employed during the 2023–2024 academic year and were identified as experiencing burnout based on the results of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. A transcendental phenomenological approach and a qualitative study design were employed. The findings reveal that concerns about academics, administration, and workload demands significantly contribute to teacher burnout, affecting their well-being and hindering their professional growth. To manage burnout, teachers utilize coping strategies such as seeking social support and engaging in self-care practices. The study proposes program interventions, including upgrading and continuing current programs that support and enhance teacher well-being, along with offering competitive compensation and benefits. These findings suggest that a holistic approach addressing equity and inclusion, enhancing teacher professional development, and promoting cooperation among stakeholders will transform the school system, providing high-quality, relevant, and inclusive education.

Keywords: Burnout; Coping strategies; Job satisfaction; Program interventions; Transcendental phenomenology.

1.0 Introduction

Education, a cornerstone of societal growth and individual development, heavily depends on teachers' performance, dedication, and well-being. However, a significant challenge that threatens the effectiveness of these teachers is the phenomenon of teacher burnout. This burnout is a global issue pervasive within the education sector, impacting the teachers' well-being and overall job satisfaction (Agyapong et al., 2022). Broadly described, teachers' burnout incorporates physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion from continuous exposure to work-related stress (Madigan et al., 2023). Feelings of depersonalization often characterize it as reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion.

Job satisfaction, a multifaceted concept, refers to the contentment or fulfilment employees derive from their work. Freudenberger (1974), as cited in Fontes (2020), observed that teachers at a mental health clinic lose interest and commitment. This posits that burnout, if left unchecked, could lead to a significant decrease in the quality of education.

Burnout, a severe outcome of chronic occupational stress, has been linked to various job withdrawal behaviours, including absenteeism, intention to quit, and turnover, particularly in high-stress professions like teaching. Teachers often work in high-stress environments, which can impact their physical and mental health and lead to

burnout, affecting their performance and potentially impeding students' academic progress. It is said that teachers at all levels are susceptible to burnout due to different factors (Shaheen & Mahmood, 2015). This burnout may tend to show up as disengagement and demotivation (Hussein et al., 2021) and decreased personal success and emotional exhaustion (Xie et al., 2022). This is evident as Freudenberg (1974), as cited in Fontes (2020), observed that teachers at a mental health clinic lose interest and commitment, which clearly posits that burnout if left unchecked, could potentially lead to a significant decrease in the quality of education. Hence, it becomes indispensable to address burnout proactively, implementing strategies to manage occupational stress and promote job satisfaction, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness and productivity of the educational ecosystem.

The recently conducted survey by the Movement for Safe, Equitable, Quality, and Relevant Education (Nicholls, 2021) revealed a general dissatisfaction among public school teachers with the Department of Education's response to their needs. This sentiment is mirrored in Labastida's (2021) findings, which highlighted the exhaustion experienced by teachers due to their immense workloads. This exhaustion is also evident among teachers in Misamis Occidental, as highlighted by the study conducted by Jala & Macalisang (2024), which concluded that public school teachers in the region encounter various challenges in conducting in-person classes, such as excessive workload, work-related difficulties, and behavioural problems among students, and issues with students' literacy skill development. It revealed that teachers in Misamis Occidental had exceeded the prescribed optimum weekly workload, which signifies that compound ancillary functions of teachers are one of the struggles experienced by schools in the province (Embang & Ceballos, 2022). Due to these pressures, public school teachers experienced emotional exhaustion and low self-efficacy, which ultimately led to burnout and the primary hindrance to their professional development (Villarejo et al., 2022) which was said are already prevalent emotions experienced by teachers in the Philippines, particularly to those who are new to the profession (Jomoad et al., 2023). In the current teaching environment, it has been observed that these difficulties are not isolated incidents but rather pervasive issues. These issues significantly contribute to teacher burnout and job dissatisfaction, underscoring the urgency for effective strategies and interventions to mitigate these challenges and improve the overall teaching and learning environment.

In response to these pressing concerns, this study aimed to explore the phenomenon of teacher burnout and its potential effects on job satisfaction. The findings will contribute to targeted strategies and interventions to improve teacher well-being and retention. The insights will inform the development of policies and programs to enhance education quality and the health of secondary school teachers, creating a healthier learning environment.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized the qualitative research method, precisely the transcendental-phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is the study of conscious knowledge related to the expression of what an individual has perceived, sensed, and known as a result of their experience (Moustakas, 1994). In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher is given the ability to comprehend the significance of the meanings that the participants attach to their experiences of an identifiable occurrence (Moustakas, 1994). Using this, the researcher describes the burnout experiences among secondary public school teachers in the Aloran district, a division of Misamis Occidental, including its implications for job satisfaction. This makes it possible to provide solutions to address the issue.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in the District of Aloran, Division of Misamis Occidental. These schools comprised Aloran Trade High School, Taguanao Integrated School, Mitazan Integrated School, Caputol Integrated School, Conant Integrated School, and Ozamis Integrated School. These schools were chosen for this study's setting due to their unique characteristics that align with the research objectives. Given the schools' diverse teachers and broad educational offerings, these represent an environment where teachers may face varying degrees of stress and challenges, making it an ideal context for studying teacher burnout.

2.3 Research Participants

The study involved six (6) participants who have agreed to become part of the study, belong to the secondary teachers at Aloran District, and have demonstrated signs of burnout based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

They were employed, served as regular/full-time teachers for at least three years, and had no administrative pending cases. The sample size was determined using the recommendations of Creswell (1998), which indicated five (5) to twenty-five (25) individuals for a phenomenological study, and Morse (1990), which suggested at least six (6).

2.4 Research Instrument

The researcher played an essential role as the primary instrument in conducting the study. In addition, an interview guide was utilized. This guide was structured into four essential parts: introduction, opening questions, core questions, and concluding questions. Before the interview process, the Maslach Burnout Inventory was administered to all secondary public school teachers in the Aloran district. This inventory, consisting of 22 questions, measures three key dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The results of this inventory aided in identifying the study's informants. The interview guide underwent a process of validation and reliability checking to ensure their efficacy in collecting accurate and meaningful data. This process involved face validity checks, which assess whether the instruments appear effective in measuring what they are intended to measure, and reliability tests, which examine the consistency of the instruments. Experts assigned were graduates of the Doctor of Philosophy concentrating in Psychology, Guidance and Counseling Education. In addition, one validator was involved in the study who currently finished PhD program in Research and Evaluation to ensure the credibility and the quality of the findings obtained from the study.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

This study used specific steps which involved (1) forwarding the letter of recommendation signed by the administrative director and the school dean of the graduate studies of Southern Capital Colleges to the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS), (2) signing approval from the SDS was forwarded to the school's principal, guidance counsellor, and teachers who served as informants of the data gathering, (3) signing of informed consent among participants, (4) in-depth interview employing the dual method of data recording which were note taking and voice recording, and (5) doing thematic analysis which includes coding, categorization, and interpretation of the fundamental meanings of the phenomenon.

2.6 Analysis of Data

Coding, categorization, and interpretation of the fundamental meanings of the phenomenon were the researcher's methods of data analysis. From the informants' responses, the researcher identified the critical statements and created core meanings. In order to better understand the description of the participants' lived experiences, the researcher clustered all of the core meanings and created cluster themes. The researcher developed emergent themes that illustrated the answers to the study's sub-questions following extensive reading and analysis. Additionally, the six-phase thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2013) was applied to the qualitative data analysis of this study.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

This research study followed ethical guidelines such as giving informed consent among the participants stating the study's goals, benefits, and drawbacks. Meanwhile, the security and anonymity of the participants were guaranteed. Furthermore, the assurance of the research's validity and reliability was emphasized through thorough literature reviews, fieldwork observations, proper documentation, and passing the quality, authenticity, accuracy, and integrity requirements.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The transcripts of the teachers' interview responses were examined, analyzed, and assigned codes or labels for interpretation. The formation of the themes was the outcome of interpreting the teachers' answers to each question and formulating meanings. Figure 1 was presented to show the resulting themes of the study.

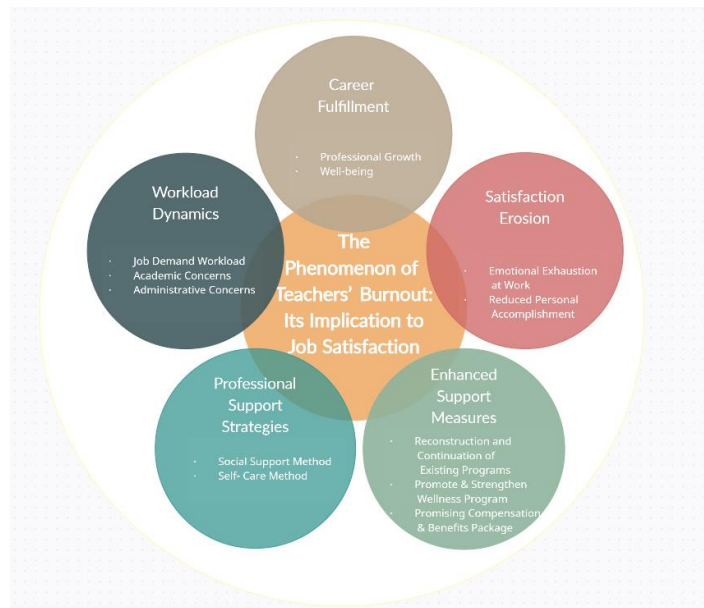


Figure 1. Resulting themes of the study

Theme 1: Workload Dynamics

Participants in the study revealed that the demands of their professions brought on burnout. Workloads increased, hours worked, and personal time decreased due to factors such as being assigned to teach many unexpected subjects or courses unrelated to their expertise. Burnout is largely caused by physical and mental tiredness, exacerbated by the pressure to perform well in all subjects, keep up with innovations, and maintain a work-life balance. This was evident when participants remarked the following:

"Making preparations because I teach both ESP and MAPEH to students in grades 7 through 10" SP1:PS2: SS4

"Doing workload extracurricular like being the sports coordinator" SP1:PS2: SS4

"It's when I must adjust to my new teaching load this school year. I feel very anxious about my load because I'm overthinking that I can't successfully deliver the lesson to my students. There is misalignment of teaching load" SP1:PS4: SS8

"I They assigned me a research subject, which surprised me because I had already prepared study materials for my prior subject, which is actually my area of expertise" SP1:PS6: SS13

These results were evident in the studies of Villarejo et al. (2022) and Xie et al. (2022), which stated that the demands of their jobs cause some burns experienced by the teachers. As a result of this increasing workload, burnout is thought to manifest as emotional tiredness, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal success (Agyapong et al., 2022). This was reflected in some issues on the administration's communication and leadership styles, which the study has found to affect teachers' well-being significantly. This was evident in participants stating they experienced humiliation and lack of support and guidance from the administration. This severe lack of administrative support and subpar administrative attitudes and behaviours greatly influenced burnout among teachers (Agyapong, 2022).

Furthermore, academic concerns were also seen as one of the causes of teachers' burnout which was clearly explained that teachers may experience emotional tiredness and a diminished sense of personal success, which can contribute to burnout if they make a significant effort to engage their students' but feel that their efforts are not being returned (Xie et al., 2022). This also includes students' behavioural issues and inadequate reading skill development, as evident in Jala's (2023) study.

Theme 2: Satisfaction Erosion

This study revealed that burnout has adversely affected teacher job satisfaction, evident in emotional exhaustion at work, with feelings of inefficiency, decreased socialization, low energy, no concentration, irritation, and impatience. This was evident when participants remarked the following:

"You may feel as though you are no longer productive because of psychological distress" SP2:PS1: SS15

"When one of your students misbehaves, you become quickly irritated and reprimands them" SP2:PS1: SS17

"My ability to concentrate is gone" SP2:PS1: SS16

"I don't like to engage with my other colleagues" SP2: PS5:SS25.

"I was disheartened with myself" SP2:PS6:SS27

"I really find it hard to wake up every morning thinking that I'm about to face my students with the reality that the subject matter I'm going to teach is not my specialized subject" SP2: PS4:SS23

"Since I wasn't able to prepare my lesson, I just let them copy" SP2:PS2:SS24

"All I wanted to do was sleep" SP2:PS6: SS27

Bravo et al. (2021) state that most public-school teachers frequently experience emotional tiredness. These resulted in a decline in teachers' motivation and general well-being (Kariou et al., 2021), engagement (Skaalvik et al.; S., 2020), feelings of irritation towards students (Frenzel, 2021), and discouragement towards self (Agyapong, 2022).

Moreover, the study found that burnout could impact decreased professional efficacy. This is related to teachers feeling unmotivated to do their tasks and even aiming for professional development. Teachers already hold a negative opinion of themselves, giving them the broader perception that they no longer perform valuable and significant jobs (Xie et al., 2022). These feelings have been evident in Maslach (1981) and Freudenberg's Theory of Burnout (1974), which they categorized as diminished professional success, disengagement from professional activities, cynicism, and disengagement from work.

Theme 3: Career Fulfillment

Having said that the study resulted having effects on teachers' professional growth, thus this explained teachers decline of interest in and participation in professional development activities. Teachers experiencing burnout struggled to find opportunities for growth and education. Additionally, burnout hindered their ability to learn new skills and information, making it challenging to focus, retain information, and engage in deep learning (Agyapong et al., 2022). Participants said:

"Weary of learning new things and of upgrading oneself" SP3:PS3: SS32

"no mastery of subject" SP3: PS6:SS38

"I intended to push myself further and accomplish something that would make me proud, but it's already too exhausting" SP3:PS6: SS39

"I don't get along with my coworkers" SP3:PS4: SS34

"I fake smiles" SP3:PS4: SS35

"My friendship with my coworker suffered as a result, and I would much rather be doing something else than chatting to or with them" SP3:PS5: SS37

"I feel bad about not being a more effective teacher" SP3:PS6: SS41.

Well-being may suffer significantly from teacher burnout. Because they find it impossible to separate themselves from the demands of their employment, teachers who suffer burnout may find it difficult to be empathetic and compassionate toward others. Their obsession with their jobs severely impacts their inability to unwind, uphold relationships, and take care of themselves – discontent results from burnout and a diminished sense of purpose and fulfilment in one's line of work. Additionally, burnout can affect a person's connections with friends, family, and coworkers, resulting in social disengagement and isolation. The absence of support further impacts their general well-being. This experience is undoubtedly what teachers in the Philippines are experiencing, which can be supported by the study of Richardson et al. (2023), which suggested a robust inverse association between teachers' psychological well-being- and burnout at work.

Theme 4: Burnout Coping Strategies

Teachers are an ideal representation of the various coping strategies people use to lessen burnout, according to Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (1984). Teachers used several coping strategies to lessen their feelings of burnout. Teachers' job satisfaction and risk of burnout can be significantly impacted by the coping mechanisms they use when faced with stress at work. According to the result, seeking social support is one of the most common coping strategies teachers have employed to alleviate feelings of burnout. To lessen teacher burnout, it is essential to ask friends, family, and coworkers for social support. It provides a safe environment for emotional expression, diverse viewpoints, and emotional support. Non-teaching friends and family give new perspectives, a vacation from work, and a valued confidant, while colleagues offer empathy, counsel, and workable solutions. Participants emphasized:

"sharing your burnout to your friends" P4:PS3: SS45

"I share my plans and resentments with my husband" SP4:PS4: SS48

"I talk to my colleagues about my situation and ask for pieces of advice" SP4:PS4: SS49

"I could really talk to my coworkers" SP4:PS5: SS52

"I drink water or coffee" SP4:PS1:SS42

"I make myself look good" SP4:PS1:SS42

"I visit beaches or travel to new places" SP4:PS2:SS43

"I do triangle breathing" SP4:PS3:SS44

"I do pray" SP4:PS4:SS47

"Listening to worship songs" SP4:PS6:SS54

"I love hugging babies" SP4:PS6:SS54

"I also pray" SP4:PS6:SS54

To avoid burnout, teachers should practice self-care by giving themselves emotional and physical support. This covers things like sipping water or coffee, eating a balanced diet, taking in the scenery, enjoying music, engaging in hobbies, practising mindfulness or meditation, and turning to spiritual practices for support. These techniques support teachers' ability to remain focused, handle stress, fall in love with teaching, decompress, express themselves, find joy, and foster personal development. Prayer and spiritual pursuits provide guidance and comfort, while mindfulness and meditation help people find inner peace and perseverance amid trying circumstances. Doing such, teachers achieve more personally and experience less burnout (Calumno et al., 2022).

4.0 Conclusion

Public school secondary teachers reveal a complex landscape characterized by multifaceted challenges and crucial support needs. Workload dynamics emerge as a primary concern, involving job demand, academic worries, and administrative burdens, all of which contribute to the strain on teachers' time and resources. Concurrently, satisfaction erosion is evident, marked by diminished personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion, underscoring the toll these demands take on teachers' morale and mental well-being. Despite these challenges, the theme of career fulfilment signifies the inherent drive for growth and well-being among educators, emphasizing the importance of nurturing their professional development and overall happiness. Furthermore, the identification of professional support strategies, including self-care and social support methods, underscores the significance of holistic support systems in bolstering teachers' resilience and mitigating burnout. In conclusion, addressing these themes holistically is paramount in creating a conducive environment that supports the flourishing of secondary public school teachers, ensuring their continued dedication to student success and overall well-being.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The authors confirm that they contributed equally to all aspects of this work. The researcher conducted the primary investigation and analysis, while the adviser provided guidance, mentorship, and critical feedback throughout the study. All authors have reviewed and approved the final version.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests about the publication of this paper.

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