



EMOTIONAL BURNOUT AMONG TEACHERS

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Abstract: Emotional burnout syndrome (EBS) is a growing occupational health and social problem in the teaching profession. This article explores the historical background, theoretical models, epidemiological patterns, and social implications of burnout among teachers. International studies indicate that 40–60% of teachers experience symptoms of emotional exhaustion, while nearly one third show depersonalization and reduced professional accomplishment. The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified burnout due to increased workload and the shift to online teaching.

The findings reveal that professional overload, constant emotional labor, insufficient recognition, and lack of institutional support are major risk factors. Burnout leads to negative outcomes at the individual level, such as psychosomatic disorders and depression, as well as at the professional and societal levels, including reduced teaching quality, teacher attrition, and loss of trust in education.

The article emphasizes the urgent need for comprehensive preventive measures. Prioritizing teacher well-being through institutional support, governmental reforms, and international best practices is essential for sustaining education quality and national development.

Keywords: emotional burnout; teachers; occupational stress; professional exhaustion; education system; depersonalization; emotional exhaustion; reduced personal accomplishment; teacher health; psychosomatic consequences; mental health; workload; educational reforms; stress management; teacher well-being.

Introduction

The teaching profession is among the most socially significant yet psychologically demanding occupations. Teachers shape not only the academic knowledge of students but also their values, social behavior, and future prospects. Their work is conducted in an environment of constant interaction with children, adolescents, parents, colleagues, and school administrations. The increasing pace of life, the introduction of new educational standards, the expansion of digital learning platforms, and the growing demands of society have significantly heightened stress levels in this profession [1].

As a result, emotional burnout syndrome (EBS) has become one of the key challenges in contemporary pedagogy. Burnout is not limited to an individual psychological issue but represents a systemic problem with implications for education quality, public health, and social development. It leads to professional dissatisfaction, turnover, and health problems among teachers, thereby affecting students, schools, and society at large [2].

Historical development and theoretical foundations



The concept of burnout was first introduced by H. Freudenberger in 1974, who observed emotional exhaustion among staff at crisis centers, noting loss of motivation, negative attitudes toward clients, and chronic fatigue [3]. Later, R. Schwab (1982) extended this concept to other professions, including teachers, social workers, and medical personnel [4].

Christina Maslach and her colleagues made a fundamental contribution by developing a three-dimensional model consisting of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Their Maslach Burnout Inventory remains the most widely used diagnostic tool for burnout worldwide [5]. Pines and Aronson proposed a one-dimensional view focusing on exhaustion as the core of burnout. Dierendonck and Schaufeli offered a two-factor model, emphasizing emotional exhaustion and depersonalization [6].

The World Health Organization included burnout in ICD-11 (2019), classifying it as an “occupational phenomenon” rather than a medical condition, highlighting its specific connection to professional activity [7]. This recognition underscores its global significance as an occupational health problem.

Epidemiological aspects of teacher burnout

Research across continents confirms that teachers are particularly vulnerable to burnout. In Europe, systematic reviews show that between 40% and 60% of teachers experience moderate to severe burnout, with emotional exhaustion as the leading component [8]. In Scandinavian countries, surveys reveal lower levels of depersonalization compared to Southern Europe, possibly due to stronger social support systems [9]. In the United States, Ingersoll found that nearly half of teachers leave the profession within the first five years, and burnout is a major reason for attrition [10]. A 2022 National Education Association survey reported that 55% of American teachers were considering leaving earlier than planned due to pandemic-related stress. In Asia, Chinese studies demonstrate burnout prevalence ranging from 35% to 65%, strongly associated with parental expectations, exam pressure, and long working hours [11]. Research from South Korea shows similar trends, linking burnout to hierarchical school cultures and excessive extracurricular demands [12].

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the crisis. Pressley (2021) reported that over 65% of teachers experienced high levels of burnout during the pandemic due to the shift to online education, blurred work-life boundaries, and increased administrative load [13]. International comparisons revealed that teachers in countries with less-developed digital infrastructures reported higher stress and burnout [14]. In post-Soviet countries, including Russia, Babanov identified professional overload and insufficient institutional support as key causes of burnout [15]. Ovchinnikov emphasized that without timely prevention, burnout becomes chronic and negatively impacts both psychological and physical health [16]. In Uzbekistan, small-scale studies indicate that around 55% of teachers suffer from chronic fatigue and emotional exhaustion, with about 30% demonstrating clinically significant burnout symptoms.

Causes and risk factors

Burnout among teachers is multifactorial. Professional factors include excessive workload, high responsibility for student outcomes, administrative bureaucracy, and continuous interpersonal demands. Personal factors include low stress resilience, perfectionism, and lack of coping skills [17]. Institutional factors involve poor leadership, limited opportunities for career advancement, and insufficient social recognition of the teaching profession. Teachers are also



subject to the “emotional labor” of constantly regulating their emotions while interacting with students and parents. Prolonged emotional labor without adequate recovery leads to emotional exhaustion.

Consequences of teacher burnout

Burnout has far-reaching implications. At the individual level, it causes psychosomatic symptoms such as insomnia, headaches, cardiovascular disturbances, depression, and lowered immunity [18]. Teachers experiencing burnout report reduced job satisfaction and a decline in overall quality of life. At the professional level, burnout reduces teaching quality, undermines motivation to innovate, and deteriorates classroom relationships. Teachers often resort to authoritarian methods or emotional withdrawal, which negatively affects student outcomes.

At the institutional level, burnout leads to absenteeism, turnover, and difficulties in retaining skilled teachers. Schools with high rates of teacher burnout show reduced academic performance and lower levels of student engagement [19]. At the societal level, teacher burnout undermines the prestige of the profession, contributes to workforce instability, and threatens the sustainability of educational systems. Given that education is a cornerstone of national development, burnout among teachers has direct economic and social consequences [20].

Prevention and intervention strategies

Burnout is preventable if systemic and individual measures are implemented. At the individual level, stress management training, mindfulness, and regular psychological counseling help teachers cope with demands. At the institutional level, supportive leadership, reduction of bureaucratic burdens, and balanced workload distribution are crucial [21]. International practices show positive outcomes. Scandinavian countries have implemented teacher well-being programs that include workload monitoring, mental health services, and peer-support systems, which reduced burnout rates significantly [22]. In Finland, reforms focusing on teacher autonomy and trust have contributed to lower stress and higher job satisfaction. In countries like Japan and South Korea, where long working hours are cultural norms, recent policies have sought to limit after-school duties and introduce counseling programs to support teachers’ well-being [23].

At the governmental level, raising salaries, recognizing teachers’ contributions, and integrating mental health support into national education policies are critical. WHO and UNESCO recommend that teacher well-being be considered a priority in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4: quality education [24].

Conclusion

Emotional burnout among teachers should be recognized as one of the most urgent occupational health and social problems of the twenty-first century. The analysis of historical perspectives, epidemiological data, theoretical models, and international research evidence clearly demonstrates that burnout is not an isolated personal issue but a systemic phenomenon with far-reaching consequences. Teachers, being at the forefront of educational processes, face continuous psychological and emotional stress, which over time develops into emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a sense of diminished professional accomplishment.

The prevalence of burnout among teachers is alarmingly high. In many countries, between forty and sixty percent of teachers report symptoms of emotional exhaustion, while almost one third show clinical signs of depersonalization and reduced motivation [7; 8]. In the United States, burnout is one of the leading causes of teacher attrition, with nearly half of



teachers leaving the profession within the first five years [10]. The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified the crisis, revealing the vulnerability of educators worldwide to rapidly changing working conditions, blurred work-life boundaries, and inadequate institutional support [13; 14].

The consequences of teacher burnout extend beyond the individual level. For the teacher, burnout results in deteriorating mental and physical health, reduced life satisfaction, and professional stagnation [12; 18]. For the educational system, burnout manifests in lower teaching quality, reduced innovation, tense relations between teachers and students, and a decline in institutional effectiveness [19]. At the societal level, teacher burnout undermines the prestige of the profession, contributes to workforce shortages, and threatens the sustainability of national educational systems. Since education is a fundamental driver of cultural, social, and economic development, unresolved burnout among teachers ultimately affects the intellectual capital of nations [20].

Addressing teacher burnout requires comprehensive strategies. On an individual level, teachers need access to training in stress management, self-regulation, and psychological resilience. At the institutional level, schools must ensure supportive leadership, fair workload distribution, and opportunities for professional growth [21; 22]. At the governmental level, raising teacher salaries, improving working conditions, and integrating mental health services into national education policies are essential steps. International experience, particularly from Scandinavian countries, has demonstrated that systematic well-being programs for teachers can significantly reduce burnout levels and enhance job satisfaction [9; 22].

Furthermore, preventive measures should be proactive rather than reactive. Monitoring of teachers' emotional states, early detection of burnout symptoms, and timely interventions must be incorporated into school management practices. National education strategies must place teacher well-being on par with student performance indicators, as the quality of education depends directly on the psychological and emotional state of educators. In line with the recommendations of WHO and UNESCO, ensuring teacher well-being should be regarded as a prerequisite for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, which focuses on inclusive and quality education for all [24].

In conclusion, emotional burnout among teachers is not only a challenge of occupational psychology but also a matter of social stability, cultural continuity, and national development. Tackling this problem requires the integration of scientific knowledge, practical interventions, and political will. Protecting the mental health and professional longevity of teachers is a strategic investment in the future of society. Without comprehensive measures to address burnout, educational reforms risk failure, and the potential of future generations will be undermined. Therefore, preventing and managing teacher burnout must become a priority for educators, policymakers, and society as a whole.

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