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Burnout: the magnitude and gender differences among physical education teachers in upper primary (Up) and secondary (Hs) schools of kerala state, India

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Abstract

The present study examined the magnitude of burnout prevalent among physical education teachers working in Kerala state. The study also investigated whether there were any gender differences exists among domains of burnout. The sample in this study comprised 256 physical education teachers working in secondary schools in Kerala state. Based on the gender, the population consists of 137 (53.51%) male teachers and 119 (46.48%) female teachers. Participants were 137 male and 119 female ages ranged between 20 to 56 years. The study used a questionnaire “The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI)” as the research instrument. This 19-item inventory measures three sub-dimensions of burnout: personal, work-related and student-related. The results show that of physical education teachers in Kerala having low level of burnout in all dimensions of burnout. An independent-samples t-test on burnout dimensions of physical education teachers indicated that scores were significantly higher for male than female.

Keywords: Burnout, CBI, Copenhagen Burnout Inventory, physical education teachers, Kerala

Introduction

Job burnout developed as an important concept in the 1970s, and it captured something very critical about people’s experience with work. The concept of burnout was introduced in the psychosocial literature in the middle of the 1970s by Freudenberger (1974) [2] and Maslach (1976) [6]. Freudenberger and Maslach “invented” the concept independently after having studied the same kind of reactions among volunteers who worked with social problems among underprivileged citizens. While burnout started as a non-theoretical “grass-root” concept it soon became a metaphor for a number of important psychosocial problems among persons who do “people work” (Kristensen *et al.*, 2005) [3]. In recent years, the issue of burnout has received considerable research attention. The problems with excessive workloads and job stress have become major public health concerns in India. A plethora of studies on burnout have consistently documented that this phenomenon results in significant consequences, both at work and in family life (Hellestoy *et al.*, 2000).

Burnout has been associated with low feelings of job satisfaction for those suffer it, low self-esteem, job turnover and excessive absenteeism. From the many definitions suggested for understanding the burnout phenomenon, Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, (2001) [7], approach seems to be accepted by the majority of the researchers. These authors conceptualized burnout as “... a tridimensional syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism (depersonalization), and reduced efficacy (reduced personal accomplishment)”. There is another allegorical meaning of burnout: somebody could only burnout if he or she was “burning” before. Thus, commitment, interest and interest in someone’s job are a necessary precursor of burnout.

Today the thought of burnout is not only well-known in psychosocial research (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993) [6] but also an extremely established and popular metaphor among human service workers in a large number of countries. When the Danish longitudinal study PUMA (Danish acronym for Project on Burnout, Motivation and Job Satisfaction) was initiated in 1997 the driving force behind the study was the union representing the human service workers. This union had noticed a sharp increase in long-term sickness leave and early retirement among the members, and wanted an

Independent and scientific study performed by researchers from NIOH (National Institute of Occupational Health, Copenhagen). PUMA was established as a longitudinal intervention study over 5 years, and the aim was to study the prevalence and distribution of burnout, the causes and consequences of burnout, and possible interventions to reduce burnout if necessary. The findings indicate that reducing burnout is likely to decrease sickness absence. (Borritz *et al.*, 2006)^[1].

So far, the large number of studies on burnout in the international literature have employed by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) developed by Maslach *et al.*, in the early 1980s has been the most widely used (Maslach & Johnson, 1986; Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003). Maslach defined 'burnout' as a syndrome of 'emotional exhaustion,' 'depersonalization,' and 'reduced personal accomplishment,' and the three scales of MBI were designed to measure the three dimensions accordingly. The original form of MBI was designed for professionals in human services sectors, and a recent modification, the MBI-General Survey (MBI-GS), expanded the usage to all employment sectors.

It is believable that such a measure is more appropriate to professionals than, say, factory workers who take jobs primarily to keep within means. Furthermore, the interrelationship of the three MBI subscales is not clear—some studies indicated 'emotional exhaustion' was not correlated with depersonalization or reduced personal accomplishment (Winwood *et al.*, 2003). It appears to us that a more recent development—the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) (Kristensen, T. S., Borritz, M., Villadsen, E., & Christensen, K. B., 2005)^[3] - measures the status of burnout measuring personal burnout, work-related burnout, and client-related burnout, in a more straightforward way for use in different domains. In the CBI the core of burnout is fatigue and exhaustion. This is in accordance with the historical development of the burnout concept, and also with a recent definition by one of the leading researchers in the field, Schaufeli. In 2001^[7], Schaufeli and Greenglass defined burnout as "a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that results from long-term involvement in work situations that are emotionally demanding" (Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001, p. 501)^[7].

Another key feature of the CBI is that it differentiates between domains of burnout. Three forms of burnout are defined according to the life domain from which it may arise, and three sub-scales were constructed accordingly: (1) personal or generic burnout, measuring the degree of physical and psychological exhaustion experienced by the person, regardless of occupational status; (2) work-related burnout, measuring the degree of physical and psychological exhaustion which is perceived by the person as related to work; and (3) client related burnout—measuring the degree of physical and psychological exhaustion which is perceived by the person as related to work with clients (Kristensen *et al.*, 2005)^[3].

By cause of the nature of physical education, physical education teachers have also experienced increased job demands and lack of resources, such as lack of support, lack of participation in decision making and increased work overload. The nature of physical education has been characterized by marginalization (Doutis & Ward, 1999; Sparks, Templin, & Schempp, 1990), low status (Lindholm, 1997), role conflict and ambiguity (Lawson, 1989; Smith & Leng, 2003) and special class structure. These working

conditions and issues are factors influencing teacher attrition (Macdonald, 1995; Smith & Leng, 2003).

To understand about the basic concerns of physical education teachers, a critical look at Kerala scenario is a primary requisite. Physical education is a non-examinable (not graded) subject in Kerala primary and secondary schools. Non-examinable subject usually takes second place in schools. Though art education, health and physical education are identified to be crucial in the development of a learner, the curriculum has not been designed to include these so as to assist the comprehensive development of the child's personality. It is only by organizing sports meets that make the students engage in any sporting event of their interest. Talented students are not given sufficient consideration or opportunity. Proper nutrition is not provided. The learners are not provided with any information on hygienic and healthy lifestyle.

Currently in Kerala, the Physical Education teachers though working at the High School level are only allowed to draw the salary of an Upper Primary School teacher. Perhaps, they do not get the recognition which they duly deserve at their own institution to which they are attached. To the extent necessary, the same qualifications (including the duration of the courses) as prescribed for subject teachers may also be extended to Physical Education teachers as well for the purpose of appointment. In other words, it is again pertinent to note that Physical Education teachers cannot be treated as Drill Masters of yore any longer. Another area where the Government intervention is immediately required is on the measly honorarium now being paid to those High School teachers who have been asked to serve at the Higher Secondary section. They are currently being paid only as little as Rs. 50 per month at present.

The recent changes in the educational policy severely affected the existence of physical education teachers in the Kerala state. A physical education teacher appointed in high school getting only the salary of a primary school teacher and will be in charge of all the students in high schools and higher secondary schools. A Physical education teachers will be appointed if the number of students in the upper primary schools is more than 500 but if the number of students more than 5000 also no other PE teachers will be appointed. At the same time in the core subject's teacher students' ratio is fixed as 30:1. There are no opportunities for promotions for a physical education teacher even if he/she had post graduate or doctoral degree. Another anomaly is event in fixing of qualifications. An ex-military soldier with in-service training, students after vocational plus two in physical education, trainees with class X with two year certificate course, those with BPE/BPEd/MPE/MPed all will be considered at par for the appointments as the post of physical education teachers in the Kerala state. Davis (1981) reported that detachment of PE teachers from the general teaching staff is one of four factors explaining 70% of their dissatisfaction from work. Other researchers suggested that colleagues' support may prevent PE teachers' burnout. The present study examined the magnitude of burnout prevalent among physical education teachers working in Kerala state. The study also investigated whether there were any gender differences exists among domains of burnout.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Participants

The sample in this study comprised 256 physical education teachers working in secondary schools in Kerala state. Based

on the gender, the population consists of 137 (53.51%) male teachers and 119 (46.48%) female teachers. Participants were 137 male and 119 female ages ranged between 20 to 56 years. Age wise details of the teacher participants were presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Age Group	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
20-29 years	4	2.9	24	20.2
30-39 years	55	40.1	43	36.1
40-49 years	59	43.1	32	26.9
50-56 years	19	13.9	20	16.8
Total	137	100.0	119	100.0

2.2 Research Design

The causal comparative method or ex-post facto method of research seeks to establish a causal relationship between events and circumstances was used in this study. In other words, it finds out the cause of certain occurrences or non-occurrences. That means it does not control the variable factors, instead, makes observations under normal field conditions and discovers the causes of observed phenomena (Lord, Harold G. Ex Post Facto Studies as a Research Method. Special Report No. 7320, Jul 1973)

2.3 Instrumentation

The study used a questionnaire “The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI)” (Kristensen, T. S., Borritz, M., Villadsen, E., & Christensen, K. B., 2005)^[3] as the research instrument. The CBI was developed as part of the PUMA study investigating burnout among human service workers. However, although work stress has been linked to lower

levels of wellbeing, few studies have empirically examined the association between burnout and wellbeing (Burke and Mikkelsen 2006; Levesque *et al.* 2004). The present study addresses this gap by first examining the reliability and validity of a new burnout measure, and then examining the link between burnout and wellbeing among New Zealand secondary school teachers.

This 19-item inventory measures three sub-dimensions of burnout: personal (six items; e.g., “How often do you feel tired?”; “How often do you feel worn out?”), work-related (seven items; e.g., “Do you feel burnt out because of your work?”; “Do you feel worn out at the end of the working day?”), and student-related (six items; e.g., “Do you find it hard to work with students?”; “Are you tired of working with clients?”). All burnout items were shown together, but items from each sub-dimension intermixed. In this study, responses were made on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (always) to 5 (never/almost never). The scale labels were then re-coded to the original format labels of 100 (always), 75, 50, 25, and 0 (never/almost never), so that higher scores indicate more burnout. None of the participants was classified as a non-responder; that is, no participants responded to less than three items in the personal and student-related burnout scales, and to less than four items in the work related burnout scale (Kristensen *et al.* 2005)^[3].

Scoring: The highest possible score for each variable was 100 and lowest possible score was 0. The scoring range from 76 to 100 considered as very high level (Always), 51-75 moderate level (Often), 25-50 Low level (Sometimes) and less than 24-1: very low level (Seldom) and 0: nil Never, almost never.

3. Results of the study

Table 2: Magnitude of Burnout Variables

Scores	Personal Burnout %	Work Related Burnout %	Client Related Burnout %
0.0 Nil, Never	0.0	0.0	0.0
1 to 24 Very Low Level	76	25.4	97.3
25 to 50 Low Level	24	74.6	2.7
51 to 75 Moderate Level	0	0.0	0
76 to 100 Very High Level	0	0.0	0

Kristensen *et al.*, (2005)^[3] defined the personal burnout dimension “Personal burnout is the degree of physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion experienced by the person”. Thus, means make no attempt to distinguish between physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion. The scores clearly reveal that, 76% physical education teachers in Kerala having very low level of personal burnout and 24% of teachers felt low level personal burnout. None of teachers found in the category of moderate and very high level.

Kristensen *et al.*, (2005)^[3] defined the work-related burnout as “the degree of physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion that is perceived by the person as related to his/her work”. In this definition stress the fact that to focus on the person’s own attribution of symptoms to her/his work. Thus, not intending to assess causality in the scientific sense of the term. It is well known that people can attribute symptoms to their work without good “scientific” reason and vice versa. By comparing the scale for personal burnout with the scale for work-related burnout will be able to identify persons who are tired but who attribute the fatigue to non-work factors such as, e.g. health problems or family demands. The scores show that, 25.4% physical education teachers in Kerala having very

low level of work related burnout and 74.6% of teachers felt low level of work related burnout. The comparison with personal burnout show that, 50.6% of teachers felt the low level work related burnout attribute the fatigue only by work factors.

Kristensen *et al.*, (2005)^[3] defined the Client-related burnout is “the degree of physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion that is perceived by the person as related to his/her work with clients”. Again: people can attribute their fatigue to factors other than their work with clients. What are interested in here is the degree to which people see a connection between their fatigue and their “people work”. “Clients” is a broad concept covering terms such as “students” for the current study. The results show that, 97.3% of physical education teachers in Kerala having very low level of burnout from student related issues and 2.7% teachers felt the low level of burnout from student related issues.

Independent-samples t-tests were performed to find any differences exist between genders. An independent-samples t-test on personal burnout (PB) of physical education teachers indicated that scores were significantly higher for male ($M = 23.12$, $SD = 3.346$) than female ($M = 21.39$, $SD = 3.462$), $t(254) = 4.273$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.5$. The effect size for this

analysis ($d = 0.5$) was found to equals Cohen's (1988) convention for a medium effect ($d = \text{medium} \geq .50$). At the same time, the results of another independent-samples t-test on work burnout (WB) of physical education teachers also indicated that scores were significantly higher for male ($M = 28.08$, $SD = 3.664$) than female ($M = 25.78$, $SD = 3.125$), $t(254) = 5.136$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.65$. The effect size for this analysis ($d = 0.65$) was also found larger than for a medium effect ($d = \text{medium} \geq .50$). In the third dependent variable client burnout (CB) of physical education teachers also indicated that scores were significantly higher for male ($M = 20.70$, $SD = 2.602$) than female ($M = 19.43$, $SD = 2.0794$), $t(254) = 3.77$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.47$, but the effect size for this analysis ($d = .47$) was found having only small effect compare to other two variables ($d = \text{small} \geq .20$). The estimated means score with standard error graphically presented in Figure 1.

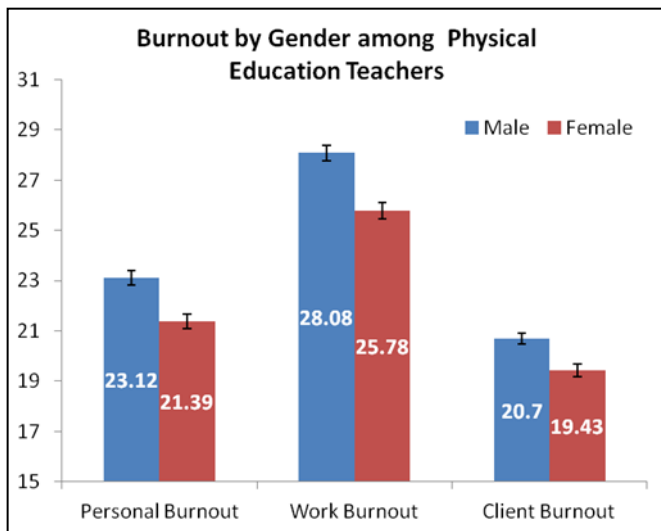


Fig 1: Burnout by gender among physical education teachers in Kerala

4. Discussion

The first purpose of this study was to examine the magnitude of burnout dimensions among physical education teachers working in Kerala state in India. For instance, currently, the economies of India and China are booming, and burnout now seems to attract attention in these countries as well. It has been suggested that globalization, privatization, and liberalization cause rapid changes in modern working life, such as increasing demands of learning new skills, the need to adopt new types of work, pressure of higher productivity and quality of work, time pressure and hectic jobs, which, in their turn, may produce burnout – particularly in rapidly developing countries like India (Kulkarni, 2006) [4]. The results of the study show that majority of physical education teachers felt very low level and low level of burnout dimensions, which means that physical education teachers working in Kerala state schools continue the privilege of state owned education system which may not adopted new types of work, pressure for higher productivity, time pressure and hectic jobs. Another reason may be the status of physical education teachers is considered low because all the teachers are working irrespective of upper primary / secondary getting the same upper primary school teacher's salary. It may lead to experience a deficit in motivation - a loss of drive and initiation that impacts a person's ability to complete everyday tasks or function well on a day-to-day basis.

In Kerala scenario, chances of rewards and promotions are very less and all the teachers with different qualifications are

getting the same primary scale salary. The teachers with post-graduation in physical education may continue in the job only because of non-availability of higher grade jobs according to their qualifications or for the job security. The marginalization of physical education teachers in the category of specialist teachers may also be another reason for lack of motivation which leads to low levels of burnout.

5. Conclusion

The results of the study clearly reveal that majority of physical education teachers in Kerala state having low levels burnout in selected personal, work-related and students-related dimensions. The result also shows that burnout dimension scores were significantly higher among male teachers than female.

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