

Factors of Job Burnout among Female Teachers: A Study on Female Secondary School Teachers in a District of Johor

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Abstract

It is always a belief that a nation's development starts from a good education. Teachers are an important aspect of the education system, supplementing knowledge, and skills to young minds. It is believed that children would be the shaper of the country's future. This put pressure on this profession; the need to provides the best education to children, thus leading them to stress and burnout. Juggling between students' potential, parents' expectations, school administration and personal life lead to job burnout among teachers. As teachers play major role in reshaping future generation, it is important to recognise and acknowledge factors that lead to stress and burnout, thus identifying factors that might prohibits the burnout. This study aims to explore different influencing factors on the work demands of a teacher among female teachers as it holds 70% of the educator population in Malaysia. Using a correlational study, this paper explores influencing factors to teachers' job burnout from three different aspects: students, environment, and the job itself. 242 female teachers at secondary schools in a district in Malaysia; Muar were included as the respondent. Students' behaviour, work environment, and work overload are hypothesized to be positively correlated with female teachers' job burnout. Pearson Correlation and Multiple Regression were used to test all three hypotheses, where all hypotheses are accepted. The result showed that there is significant relationship between work overload ($p < 0.01$, $r = .407$), negative work environment ($p < 0.01$, $r = .423$) and students' misbehaviour ($p < 0.01$, $r = .569$) towards female teachers' job burnout. This study also showed that the variance of job burnout among female teacher can be explained by the independent variables tested by 46%. This study is thought to contribute to the topic of burnout in the education context, therefore can add understanding of teachers' well-being and contributes to a healthier workforce. The extension of this study could be done to identify factors that can be taken by the government, schools and individual in order to reduce stress among female teachers.

Keywords: Female Teachers, Job Burnout, Student's Misbehaviour, Working Environment, High Workload

Introduction

Burnout has been a popular concept to describe the agony of job stress. Much has been written about burnout (Maslach et al., 2009) and there is a continuing drive to assume the factor causing it. Burnout can affect individuals in different ways and can be experienced by all working classes, especially for those whose work demands constant human interactions. Human service professionals, such as doctors, nurses, social services, including teachers reveal to have had and perhaps are still having a hard time. This happens because although the fit between them and their job has been disrupted, they continue their work, and by doing so, may well harm their health and the wellbeing of their clients (Evers et al., 2004). Prior research showed that teachers could experience stress that affected them negatively, physically, or emotionally (Burić et al., 2016). The relational nature of classrooms means that teachers are vulnerable to emotionally draining and discouraging experiences (Maslach and Leiter, 1999). Educators experiencing stress from emotional experiences may also experience physical stress at the same time. In Malaysia, female holds 70% of the population of secondary school teachers (116,439 from a total of 163,543 teachers) (Global Database Malaysia, 2016). Although teaching, learning, and providing guidance might not be solely emotional practices, they are always irretrievably emotional in character making emotions and emotional labour integral components of the teaching profession (Hargreaves, 2001).

Literature Review

a) Job burnout

Burnout is defined as a psychological syndrome that involved a prolonged response to a stressor at the workplace (Maslach, 2003). Although the concept of burnout has long been discussed for approximately 30 years i.e. the earliest job burnout writing by Freudenberger (1975) and developed by Maslach and Pines (1977), the topic still among the highlights among the scholars as the implication is varying on several organisational contexts such as performance (i.e. unprofessional doctors (Zhang et al., 2020), well-being such as happiness (Schaufeli et al., 2009) and physical consequences(i.e. health issues) (Ahola et al., 2013). For example, a current study conducted by Bakker and de Vries (2021) expanded the burnout model by searching for alternative resources i.e. leadership and personal resources to reduce the occurrence of burnout among employees. This shows the great effort should be invested in overcoming burnout and it should involve many parties not only employees themselves but also employers as well. In general, individuals who experience burnout is when they reach the maximum level where they can cope with the work stress. In the other words, burnout can be seen through several identified aspects through chronic exhaustion, cynicism and deter work efficacy.

In specific, exhaustion is when individual experience the draining of energetic resources, feel continuous tiredness that is severe and lead to a chronic state of fatigue. Meanwhile, cynicism is when a situation an individual tries to create a gap between them with their work and becoming passive that affect their work attitudes toward a colleague and other peoples related to works. The third criterion is inefficacy, which refers to a feeling where an individual perceives they are not as competent as usual and loses confidence in being successful at work (Bakker and de Vries, 2021). Reviewing from the characteristics of job burnout, we can expect

the great impact of burnout if not been mitigate earlier as those employees experiencing burnout psychologically stopping themselves in making them productive and competent. Even worst, burnout issues are the most common problems faced by employees in service sectors (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001).

Service employees comprised of numerous professions that are exposed to job burnout the most. Several professions that been highlighted are those employees in helping professions such as teachers (Evers et al., 2004; Kokkinos, 2007), nurses (Greenglass et al., 2001), doctors (Collin et al., 2019; Schaufeli et al., 2009) and police officers (Burke, 1994). Globally, although ample study on burnout has been dedicated specifically to these professions, however, we cannot ignore the fact that several factors such as cultural differences (Schaufeli, 2003; Schaufeli, 2017), possibly lead to inconclusive findings among those job burnout. Some factors are more dominant in certain professions but not in others.

b) Work overload and job burnout

Research so far discovered several causes of job burnout. The most common aspect that commonly relates to job burnout is job demands (Demerouti et al., 2001). A variety of job demands has been highlighted to contribute to job burnout. For example, work overload, work pressure, role ambiguity and many more are general and some are very specific designated according to the professions (Alarcon, 2011). Another school of thought focused more on demographics factors as the causes of burnout such as age, gender, marital status, experience (Bakker et al., 2002; Haque and Aslam, 2011). For example, a study conducted among teachers in Kamrup in rural Australia, discovered age and place of work affect burnout (Goswami, 2013). Even though demographic profiles do have an influence on burnout, yet scholars suggest study should focus on aspects that we can improve such as work characteristics such as job demands (Crawford et al., 2010; Schaufeli and Peeters, 2000)

Focusing on the job demands in regards to job burnout, work overload is one of the job demands that dominantly highlighted especially in helping professionals such as teachers (Yu et al., 2015; Żołnierczyk-Zreda, 2005). Work overload is described as excessive work roles demands (Zhang and Zhu, 2007, p. 489). In detail, teachers are exposed to being overwork and underappreciated, besides the main task for teaching, teachers also responsible to teach an average of four classes a day, with working hours approximately 48 hours a week (Zhang and Zhu, 2007). For example in a study on Finland teachers, Hakanen et al. (2006) discovered work overload together with student misbehaviour affect teacher health through burnout. Although the teaching profession is known as a profession that requires a lot of commitment, in this present study we incorporate gender aspects as less likely to be found job burnout study that focuses on female teachers only except Noor and Zainuddin (2011) study. Hence, we formulate the below hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: Work overload has a significant effect towards female teachers' job burnout

c) Negative work environment and job burnout

Scholars state that organizational factors in the work context may be a cause of chronic stress that leads to job burnout (Cherniss, 1980 and Schaufeli and Enzmann, 1993). If a work environment is unable to meet individuals' needs, this can reduce their energy and enthusiasm, thus leading to negative consequences such as high absenteeism, poor job

performance, mental diseases, anxiety, and job-related injuries (Freudenberger, 1980; Clarke et al., 2003; Glasberg et al., 2007).

The causes of burnout are more linked with the psychosocial work environment (work overload, lack of job control, low job social support, lack of autonomy, time pressure, much direct patient contact, etc.), rather than with personal factors (Schaufeli, 1999; Stansfeld et al., 1999; Ramírez et al., 1995, 1996; Visser et al., 2003; Sibbald et al., 2003; Greenglass et al., 1998; Imai et al., 2004).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines burnout as an occupational phenomenon, noting its inherent relationship to the workplace, and describes it as feeling emotionally exhausted, cynical, and ineffective in relation to one's work, colleagues, and clients (World Health Organization (W.H.O.), 2019; Maslach and Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 1986). Unlike stress, the WHO recommends that burnout not be adapted for a personal context, but remain reserved as a phenomenon associated with work (World Health Organization (W.H.O.), 2019). Burnout has been shown to be the consequence of a poorly designed work environment regardless of occupation, indicating that burnout is less about the type of work, but rather how the work is designed, distributed, and managed (Maslach et al., 2001). According to Maslach et al (2009) the response to chronic stress at both the personal level and in terms of working relations triggers burnout syndrome, which is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment.

Burnout has been examined in a variety of human service professions including education and healthcare. According to Rugulies (2019), the psychosocial work environment is key research held for understanding how the interrelations of societal structures, environmental exposures, and psychological and psychophysiological processes affect the health and illness of workers, which has potential impacts in terms of wellbeing and discomfort (e.g., job satisfaction, stress, burnout) (Appelbaum et al., 2019).

In the healthcare industry, in order to provide safe, high-quality care, nurses need the resources and support to do so, otherwise, they become overextended, resulting in burnout. While there have been prior calls to transform work environments to improve the delivery and safety of patient care (Donaldson et al, 2000 and Institute of Medicine (IOM), 2001), recent efforts by the National Academy of Medicine (National Academies of and Medicine (NAM), 2019) and other researchers highlight the natural synergy between clinician wellbeing and better patient outcomes. Amelia et al (2021) suggest that hospital administrators have to simultaneously alleviate nurse burnout and improve patient outcomes could achieve by improving their work environments. Thus, a negative work environment has a significant impact towards job burnout.

Hypothesis 2: Work environment has a significant effect towards female teachers' job burnout

d) Students misbehaviour and job burnout

One of the factors related most strongly to teacher burnout is misbehaviour among students. (Burke et al., 1996; Friedman, 1995). Student misbehaviour defined as behaviours that disrupt the teaching-learning process or interfere with the orderly operation of the classroom (Finn et al., 2008; Houghton et al., 1988; Thompson, 2009). Examples of misbehaviour include skipping or being late to class, disrupting instruction (e.g., speaking out of turn, swearing,

getting out of the seat without permission), verbal abuse or disrespect toward teachers, noncompliance (i.e., failure to follow directions), off-task behaviour, bullying, harassment, and gang activity (Bru et al., 2002; Fernet et al., 2012; Finn et al., 2008; Robers et al., 2012).

Student misbehaviour has been associated with reduced instructional time, job dissatisfaction, stress, lack of efficacy, and burnout (Friedman, 1995; Little, 2005; Little and Hudson, 1998; Miller et al., 2000; Poulou and Norwich, 2000). A more recent study by McCormick and Barnett (2011) reported student misbehaviour as the most salient stressor related to teacher burnout.

With specific regard to teachers' work, it is important to note that emotional requests are strongly involved in the teaching profession and educational issues leading to consider caring-for-others the main part of their job (Johnson et al., 2005; Morse et al., 2012; and Schaufeli et al., 2008). With this regard, teacher-students' relationships are significantly related to burnout risk. Students' misbehaviour, indeed, was considered the main stressful event affecting teachers' well-being. According to several authors, teachers' negative emotional experience occurring when students misbehave was strongly related to teachers' burnout (Chang, 2013; Chang, 2009; Tsouloupas et al., 2010). Consistently, some studies showed that the stronger the negative emotions, the more intense the burnout symptoms reported by the teachers (Chiacchio et al., 2006; Curchod-Ruedi, 2010).

The relationship between student misbehaviour and teacher burnout is dynamic and is influenced by the teacher's appraisal of the behaviour, perceived self-efficacy and methods employed to control the behaviour, and the resulting impact on the behaviour, relationship, and classroom climate. Teachers' management of the misbehaviour not only affects the behaviour itself (Bru et al., 2002), but also the classroom environment (Avtgis and Rancer, 2008) and the relationship between the students and the teacher (Marzano et al., 2003).

In previous research, several models have been proposed to explain the complex relationship between student misbehaviour and teacher burnout. Chang (2009) argues that the habitual pattern in teachers' appraisals of the misbehaviour can cause (a) anger when perceived as caused by the student with a high control potential, (b) guilt and shame when perceived as caused by the teacher with high control potential, (c) frustration when viewed as caused by circumstances with low control potential, or anxiety when encountering new and uncertain situations. These repeated experiences of feeling guilt, frustration, anxiety, and anger in response to student misbehaviour led to emotional exhaustion and other aspects of burnout.

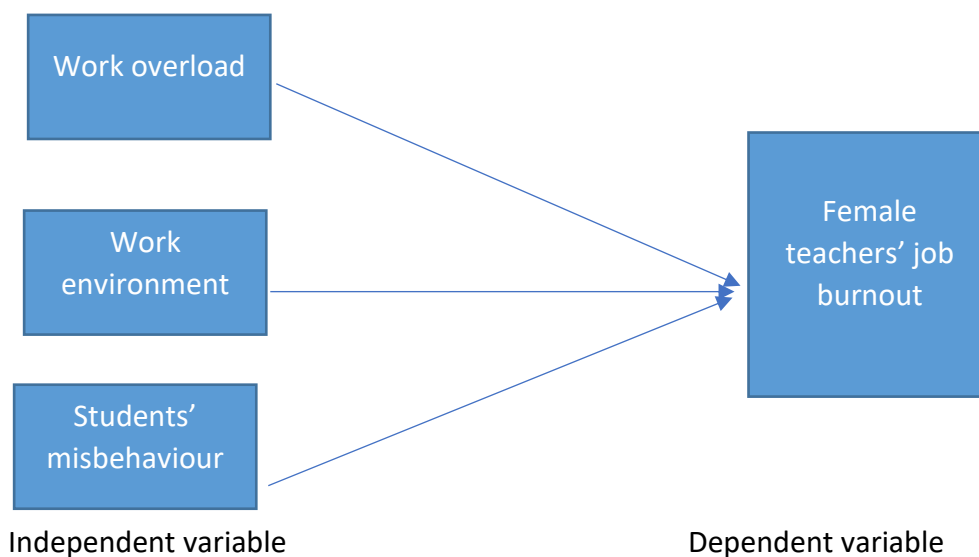
Another model, proposed by Fernet et al (2012), uses self-determination theory to articulate how misbehaviour impedes teachers' intrinsic motivation by reducing their autonomous motivation and sense of self-efficacy, which leads to emotional exhaustion and higher levels of burnout. According to Tatiana (2021), lecturers with a higher ability of regulation of emotions are better equipped to deal with the intense emotion-laden demands of their work (e.g., student misbehaviour: interruptions, rule violations and also relationships with leaders) that may increase tension, resistance, exhaustion and decrease job satisfaction.

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Hypothesis 3: Students misbehaviour has a significant effect towards female teachers' job burnout

Research Framework



Methodology

A designated questionnaire survey instrument was used to assess the determinants that influence female school teachers' burnout factor. The intended target population, in order to conduct the research, is female-secondary school teachers in Muar, Johor. There are 763 female-secondary school teachers in the district (from 20 secondary schools) and 254 samples are sufficient to become respondents (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). A total of 27 items were adapted from several sources (Table 1) and each variable obtained a sufficient Cronbach Alpha's value in their reliability test (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013).

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha value for variables

Variable	Cronbach Alpha value (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013)	No. of items
Job burnout (Maslach, Jackson & Schwab, 1986)	.827	6
Work overload (Houston et al., 2004)	.754	4
Work environment (Raja Tayeh, 2013)	.796	6
Students misbehaviour (Maslach, Jackson & Schwab, 1986)	.789	11

Findings

A total of 254 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and 242 completed questionnaires were returned (95.3% return rate). Table 2 shows the respondents for the study. The majority of the respondents are married (83.5%), Malay (64%) with 5 – 12 years of teaching experience (40.6%).

a) Respondents' profile

Table 2

Respondent profile

	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Status	Single	36	14.9
	Married	202	83.5
	Divorced	4	1.7
Race	Malay	156	64.5
	Chinese	76	31.6
	Indian	9	4.1
	Others	1	0.4
Year of service	1 – 4 years	16	6.6
	5 – 12 years	98	40.6
	13 – 20 years	53	21.9
	21 – 28 years	49	20.2
	More than 29 years	26	10.7

N = 242 respondents

b) Correlation analysis

The correlational analysis was used in this research to measure the relationship between the variables. The co-relational coefficients of the four variables are as follows:

Table 3

Correlation coefficient of work overload, work environment and student misbehaviour with job burnout

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Job burnout		.407	.423	.569
2. Work overload	.407		.077	.215
3. Negative work environment	.423	.077		.367
4. Students' misbehaviour	.569	.215	.367	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation test showed that all independent variables have a positive relationship with job burnout among female secondary teachers. The r value for work overload is 0.407 with p value = .000 at the level of $p < 0.01$ (Pallant, 2016). The r value for work environment is 0.423 with p value = .000 at the level of $p < 0.01$ (Pallant, 2016) and students' misbehaviour is 0.569 with p value = .000 at the level of $p < 0.01$ (Pallant, 2016).

Table 4

Regression analysis for work overload, negative work environment and students' misbehaviour

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.654	.211		3.104	.002
Work overload	.223	.036	.200	6.134	.000
Negative work environment	.245	.050	.248	4.859	.000
Students' misbehaviour	.314	.040	.414	7.933	.000

a. Dependent Variable: BURNOUT

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.680	.462	.455	.35277

Hypothesis 1, 2 and 3 predicted that job burnout is affected by work overload, negative work environment and students' misbehaviour. According to Table 4, multiple regression analysis was used to assess the association between three variables (work overload, negative work environment and students' misbehaviour) towards teachers' job burnout. The $R^2 = 0.46$ which means 46% of the variance of job burnout (dependent variable) can be explained by the independent variables (work overload, negative work environment and students' misbehaviour) while the remaining 54% can be explained by other variables. All independent variables are significant with job burnout where $\beta = 0.22$ (work overload), $\beta = 0.45$ (negative work environment) and $\beta = 0.31$ (students' misbehaviour) at the level of $p < 0.001$. Therefore, all hypotheses are supported.

Conclusion

The key finding in this study is all independent variables give an impact on job burnout. The result shows that all factors (work overload, negative work environment and students' misbehaviour) chosen in this study have a significant impact towards job burnout. This research shows that the most significant variable of the factor that contributes to burnout among female teachers is students' misbehaviour. This aligns with findings by Gold et al. (2010), Shin et al. (2013) and Manso-Pinto (2001) where they have linked the students' misconduct at school with a high level of internalization behaviours and teachers' stress. Ability to manage the behaviour of students is important to give better exposure to teachers in handling the students. Schools are to be expected to play parts in managing the behaviour of students, with the help of parents. Teachers also need to be able to manage their own time and stress to reduce the anxiety that they are feeling. Knowledge in time management also needed for the employees to be able to apply in their working environment thus minimizing their job burnout.

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