

Burnout, Psychological Distress and Job Satisfaction among Secondary School Teachers in Enugu, South East Nigeria

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Abstract

Teachers in all levels of education are very crucial in the educational development of any society and their satisfaction will basically affect the quality of services they render to the educational sector. However, the teaching profession is associated with a lot of stress arising from work overload and poor remuneration. This can lead to high prevalence of burnout, psychological distress and low level of job satisfaction among teachers.

This study assessed the prevalence of burnout, psychological distress and job satisfaction among teachers in secondary schools in Enugu, south east Nigeria.

The Maslach burnout inventory, the General health questionnaire (GHQ-12) and the Generic job satisfaction scale were used to assess 432 teachers working in secondary schools in Enugu south east Nigeria for prevalence of burnout, psychological distress and level of job satisfaction.

The prevalence of burnout was 40% for emotional exhaustion, 39.4% for depersonalization and 36.8% for reduced personal accomplishment. 32.9% had psychological distress while 39.6% had low level of job satisfaction.

There was high prevalence of burnout, psychological distress and low level of job satisfaction among the teachers.

Keywords Job satisfaction; Burnout; Psychological distress; Teachers

Introduction

Burnout is a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion resulting from prolonged stress which usually occurs among workers. Freudenberg [1] first identified burnout from his observations of extreme psychological strain often experienced by workers in the human services professions like teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers and police officers. Maslach and Jackson [2] conceptualized burnout as having three components as follows: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. According to them, emotional exhaustion is the central quality of burnout and the most obvious manifestation of this syndrome. It is the feeling of fatigue and of being drained by one's work. Depersonalization is the negative attitude towards and a dehumanizing treatment of one's clients in the work place while reduced personal accomplishment is characterized by a tendency to negatively appraise one's behavior and performance in one's work [2]. Other researchers like Embriaco et al. [3] observed that burnout is associated with certain clinical symptoms which include tiredness, headache, eating problems, insomnia, irritability, emotional instability and rigidity in relationship with other people.

Job satisfaction has to do with the positive orientation of an individual towards his or her work [4]. Variables like pay [5], promotion, working conditions, leadership, social relationships and

the job itself were said to influence the level of job satisfaction an individual derives from his or her work. It has been observed that teachers whether in primary, secondary or tertiary schools are very important in the educational development of any society. Their satisfaction will affect the quality of service they render to this sector [6]. It can predict teacher retention, determine the commitment of the teacher to the job and also lead to teacher effectiveness [7]. On the other hand, job dissatisfaction can result in job stress and this will affect their psychological wellbeing and result in high intention to quit. Iwanicki [8] argued that many teachers tend to leave the profession because of the stress and burnout they encountered on the job. Teacher burnout tends to relate to physical, emotional and attitudinal exhaustion which usually begin with a feeling of uneasiness and then increases as the joy of teaching gradually decrease. Furthermore, teacher stress and burnout as it relates to job satisfaction have been observed to have a link between the perception teachers have about their career which tend to emerge following their psychological needs and personality [9].

Some studies in Nigeria observed high levels of burnout [10] and low level of job satisfaction [6] among teachers in Nigeria. The burnout was noted to be from excessive demands placed on teachers in developing countries. Teachers are forced into a hectic and busy schedule which has made them to experience high level of stress, unhappiness and job dissatisfaction. Ofili et al. [6] however, identified poor salary as the major cause of job dissatisfaction.

Despite observed presence of burnout among teachers, there is paucity of literature of burnout among this group of workers in the south eastern part of Nigeria. The purpose of the present study is therefore to find out the level of job satisfaction, the presence of burnout and psychological distress among teachers in secondary schools in Enugu metropolis in south eastern Nigeria. Findings will assist government and other school owners on ways of reducing burnout and psychological distress, as well as increasing the level of job satisfaction among teachers as this will help to raise the motivation of teachers, reduce attrition rate and intention to quit, as reported in previous studies outside the study area. It will also help to improve the quality of education in the state in particular and Nigeria in general.

Materials and Methods

The study hypotheses were: (1) there is high burnout and job dissatisfaction among teachers in Enugu metropolis (2) Burnout and job dissatisfaction are associated with age, marital status, level of education and number of years worked as a teacher.

Subjects: Subjects for the study are male and female teachers teaching in secondary schools in Enugu metropolis in Enugu state, south east Nigeria. The choice of schools reflects the type of secondary schools within the metropolis. These are public, mission and private secondary schools. From the two local government councils that made up the metropolis, three each of public, mission and private secondary schools were selected using simple random sampling procedure, making a total of 9 secondary schools per local government and 18 secondary schools from the two local governments. Then from each school 24 teachers were again selected using the same sampling procedure. Therefore a total of 432 teachers were sampled. This number was arrived at using the formula for minimum sample size for a prevalence study [11]. This number therefore forms the population of the study. Inclusion criteria are teachers who had worked for a minimum of one year in the school, teachers who are full time workers, those who are not sick as at the time of the study and those who consented to participate. Exclusion criteria were teachers who were sick as at the time of study and those who declined consent to participate. Ethical permit was obtained from University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ethics Committee.

Data collection and instruments: Data for the study was collected by the researchers between the months of March and April 2013. Following informed consent, each participant was given a self administered questionnaire that was made up of four parts. Part one contains basic demographic information like age, gender, marital status, level of education and religious affiliation. Part two is the Maslach burnout inventory (MBI) [12] which is a 22 item questionnaire that relates to the three dimensions of burnout: Emotional exhaustion (EE, 9 items), Depersonalization (DP, 5 items) and Reduced personal accomplishment (PA, 8 items). The scale is scored by calculating subscale means. Both the convergent and discriminant validity of the MBI have been established [12,13] and MBI is regarded as the most viable instrument for the assessment of burnout [14]. It has been used in several countries including Nigeria [15,16].

The third part consists of the Generic job satisfaction scale [17]. This is a 10-item instrument that has been used to measure job satisfaction in a wide range of occupational groups including teachers. It is a likert type scale with responses ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The least obtainable response is 10, while the highest obtainable response is 50. The Cronbach alpha for the 10 items of the scale is 0.77. Scores ranging from 42-50 indicates very high job satisfaction, 39-41, indicates high job satisfaction, 32-38 means average job satisfaction, 27-31 indicates low job satisfaction, while 10-26 indicates very low satisfaction. For ease of analysis, we grouped job satisfaction into three: high, medium and low. Thus scores ranging from 39-50, indicates high job satisfaction, scores ranging from 31-38 indicates medium job satisfaction, while scores ranging from 10-30 indicates low job satisfaction.

The fourth part of the instrument was the General health questionnaire, (GHQ-12) [18]. The GHQ-12 is an instrument used to screen for psychiatric morbidity. Although it does not yield a diagnosis, positive responses are indicative of psychological distress. Each item is rated 0 or 1 on the basis of the frequency with which the subject had experienced the symptoms in the recent past, yielding a maximum score of 12. The GHQ-12 has also been used for studies in Nigeria [19].

Data analysis: Data for the study was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 16). Socio-demographic variables, frequencies of level of job satisfaction and presence of psychological distress were presented as tables. Mean age of respondents was obtained using t-test. Chi square was used to compare the presence of various forms of burnout as well as the socio-demographic variables and burnout. The effects of socio-demographic variables on psychological distress were also obtained using Chi square. Levels of Job satisfaction, burnout and psychological distress were also compared using Chi square. Binary logistic regressions of variables were done to obtain predictive values for burnout.

Results

A total of 432 teachers were studied for burnout, psychological distress and job satisfaction. 33.8% of them were males while 66.7% were females. Their age range was 26-48 years with a mean of 35.9 ± 5.12 years. About 50.2% were more than 35 years of age, 63.2% were married as against 36.8% who were single. Also 26.4% had national certificate of education (NCE) while 73.6% had either a degree or higher national diploma (HND); 73.4% had worked for more than five years as teachers. Majority of them (93.8) were Christians while 6.3% practiced other religions. Their years of service ranged from 2-18 years with a mean of 8.39 ± 3.72 years (Table 1).

With regards to job satisfaction it was discovered that 27.1% indicated high level of job satisfaction, 33.3% indicated medium satisfaction whereas 39.6% indicated low satisfaction (Table 1). Furthermore 32.9% scored positive in the GHQ-12 indicating the presence of psychological distress (Table 1). Also 40% of the teachers were emotionally exhausted, 39.4% showed depersonalization while 36.8% manifested reduced personal accomplishment in the Maslach burnout inventory. This was significant ($p \leq 0.01$) (Table 1).

Socio-demographic Variable	Frequency (N = 432)	Percent
Age (years)		
≤ 35	215	49.8
> 35	217	50.2
Gender		
Male	146	33.8
Female	286	66.2
Marital Status		
Single	159	36.8
Married	273	63.2
Educational Level		
National Certificate of Education (NCE)	114	26.4
Degree/Higher National Diploma (HND)	318	73.6
Religion		
Christianity	405	93.8
Others	27	6.3
Years of Service		
≤ 5	115	26.6
> 5	317	73.4
Prevalence of burnout, psychological distress and job satisfaction		
Burnout	Present	
Emotional Exhaustion	173	40.0
Depersonalization	170	39.4
Reduced Personal Accomplishment	273	63.2
$\chi^2= 63.79, df= 1, p< 0.001$		
Psychological distress (GHQ-12)	142	32.9
Job Satisfaction		
Low	171	40.0
Medium	144	39.4
High	117	63.2

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents and Prevalence of burnout, psychological distress and job satisfaction. Age Range=26–48 years; Mean=35.9; SD=5.12. Age group of 35 years was used since it is about the mean of the age of respondents. Years of Service: Range=2-18 years; Mean=8.39; SD=3.72

Emotional exhaustion was significantly higher in teachers who were more than 35 years of age ($p \leq 0.003$), those who were females ($p \leq 0.01$), those who were married ($p \leq 0.001$), those with national certificate of education ($p \leq 0.001$), as well as those who had served for more than five years as teachers ($p \leq 0.002$). For depersonalization, there was significant difference in the area of gender and marital status as noticed among females ($p \leq 0.03$) and married teachers ($p \leq 0.01$). That is females and married subjects showed significantly high levels of depersonalization in this study. Reduced personal accomplishment

was significantly noticed among the subjects who were less than 35 years of age ($p \leq 0.001$), those who were males ($p \leq 0.024$) and those who were single ($p \leq 0.001$) (Table 2). Psychological distress as measured by the GHQ-12, significantly occurred more among the subjects who were more than 35 years of age ($p \leq 0.009$), those who were females ($p \leq 0.001$) and those who were married ($p \leq 0.029$), but it was not significantly related to level of education, years of service and type of religion (Table 2).

Variable	Emotional Exhaustion N=432		Depersonalization N=432		Reduced Personal Accomplishment N=432		Psychological Distress measured using GHQ-12	
	Present N=173 (%)	χ^2 (P Value)	Present N=170 (%)	χ^2 (P Value)	Present N=273 (%)	χ^2 (P Value)	Present N=142 (%)	χ^2 (P Value)
Age (years)								
≤ 35	71 (33.0)	8.79 (<0.01)*	76 (35.3)	2.87 (0.09)	152 (71.0)	11.19 (<0.01)*	58 (40.8)	6.74 (0.01)*
> 35	102 (47.0)		94 (43.3)		121 (55.5)		84 (59.2)	
Gender								
Male	46 (31.5)	6.70 (0.01)*	47 (32.2)	4.74 (0.03)*	103 (70.5)	5.13 (0.02)*	33 (23.2)	10.54 (<0.01)*
Female	127 (44.4)		123 (43.0)		170 (59.4)		109 (76.8)	
Marital Status								
Single	47 (30.0)	11.52 (<0.01)*	50 (31.4)	6.59 (0.01)*	117 (73.6)	11.68 (<0.01)*	42 (29.6)	4.75 (0.03)*
Married	126 (46.2)		120 (44.0)		156 (57.1)		100 (70.4)	
Edu. Level								
NCE	61 (53.5)	11.69 (<0.01)*	45 (39.5)	<0.01 (0.98)	71 (62.3)	0.06 (0.81)	39 (27.5)	0.13 (0.72)
HND	112 (35.2)		125 (39.3)		202 (63.5)		103 (72.5)	
Religion								
Christianity	163 (40.2)		159 (39.3)		259 (64.0)	1.59 (0.21)	133 (93.7)	
Others	10 (37.0)		11 (40.7)		14 (51.9)		9 (6.3)	
		0.11 (0.74)		0.02 (0.88)				<0.01 (0.96)
Years of Service								
≤ 5	32 (27.8)	9.75 (<0.01)*	39 (33.9)	1.94 (0.16)	88 (76.5)	11.97 (<0.01)*	33 (23.2)	1.24 (0.27)
> 5	141 (44.5)		131 (41.3)		185 (58.4)		109 (76.8)	

Table 2: Socio-demographic variables and burnout measurements. *Significant, NCE - National Certificate of Education, HND - Degree/Higher National Diploma

The three levels of burnout that is emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment as well as psychological distress significantly affected the level of job satisfaction experienced by the subjects ($p \leq 0.001$). This shows that the more burnout and psychological distress the subjects experienced the less they were satisfied in their teaching jobs (Table 3). Table 3 also shows a binary logistic regression of the predictors of burnout and psychological distress. Statistical analysis

Level of Job Satisfaction	Emotional Exhaustion N=432	Depersonalization N=432	Reduce Personal Accomplishment N=432	Psychological Distress N=432
	Present N=173 (%)	Present N=170 (%)	Present N=273 (%)	Present N=290 (%)
Low	106 (61.3)	109 (64.1)	64 (23.4)	90 (31.0)
Medium	54 (31.2)	46 (27.1)	103 (37.7)	107 (36.9)
High	13 (7.5)	15 (8.8)	106 (38.9)	93 (32.1)
χ^2 (P value)	75.48 (<0.001)*	80.44 (<0.001)*	90.89 (<0.001)*	27.75 (<0.001)*
Coefficient of Regression (B)				
Age of respondent	-0.084	-0.041	0.037	0.107
Gender	-0.393	-0.388	0.362	0.700
Marital status	-0.093	-0.203	0.105	-0.216
Educational level	-0.766	0.058	-0.121	0.106
Religion	-0.116	0.070	0.546	-0.061
Year of service	0.032	0.051	0.059	-0.052
Constant	3.811	2.155	-2.175	-4.455

Table 3: Level of Job satisfaction, burnout and Psychological distress and Logistic Regression of variables contributing to Burnout and Psychological distress.

Descriptive statistics were calculated on the three scales. In order to determine which scale of the three versions was much more closely correlated to PTSD and SCL-90, Pearson's correlation was conducted to study the criterion validity. ROC curves analyses were used to examine the discrimination for PTSD/non-PTSD and positive/negative patients of SCL-90. SPSS software version 18.0 was performed for data analyses and $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed) was considered statistically significant.

Discussion

This study revealed the presence of burnout in the three dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment as well as signs of psychological distress and low levels of job satisfaction among the teachers studied. This finding was in line with previous reports which have indicated that burnout can affect work outcomes. For instance Evans and Huxley [20] have linked burnout to poor job satisfaction while Bayram et al. [21] reported that vigour and job satisfaction were negatively affected by burnout especially the emotional exhaustion component of burnout.

About 32.9% of the teachers had psychological distress. This was higher than that reported by Ofili among teachers in private secondary schools in Edo state Nigeria [6]. The high level of burnout, psychological distress and low job satisfaction noticed in this study may be as a result of stress associated with the teaching profession coupled with poor remuneration and the feeling by many teachers that their profession was not being given adequate attention by government and school owners. They may be of the view that the teaching job is a last resort for anybody who did not get another job under the present high level of unemployment in the country. Latham [22] had observed that many teachers had the feeling that their profession was not so much valued by society and that the teaching profession was so demanding and associated with a lot of stress. Other researchers had equally adduced reasons why teachers experienced high levels of stress in their job which can deplete their energy and predispose them to burnout, psychological distress and low job satisfaction [23]. The high level of stress and burnout experienced by teachers has been given as reasons why teachers quit their job [8].

Burnout in the area of emotional exhaustion was found to be significantly higher among teachers who were more than 35 years of age, females, those who were married, and those who served more than five years as well as those with national certificate of education (NCE). Maslach and Jackson [2] said that emotional exhaustion is the feeling of fatigue and being drained by one's work. For this group of teachers showing high levels of emotional exhaustion it may be that the negative impact of stress associated with their work is affecting them. For instance elderly teachers may feel tired quicker than the younger ones since teaching in Nigerian secondary schools requires that the teacher has to stand most of the time in front of the students and talking for a long time throughout the school period while teaching. For the female teachers, they often combine house chores with teaching and hence they may feel easily drained by the stressors in the teaching environment. The teachers may manifest some of the clinical symptoms of burnout like emotional instability, irritability, tiredness and headache as reported by Embriaco et al. [3]. Furthermore Adekola [15] observed that as emotional resources are depleted, workers especially female teachers feel they are no longer able to withstand the stress associated with the teaching job.

Married teachers experienced high levels of emotional exhaustion apparently due to the burden associated with working and family life which demands a lot of energy and resilience. Females and married teachers exhibited significantly higher levels of depersonalization in this study. This was contrary to earlier findings by Adekola [15] who reported no significant gender difference in the area of depersonalization among his subjects. Male teachers experienced higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment than the females. This corroborates the findings of Schaufeli and Enzmann [24] but was contrary to that of Adekola [15] who found that female teachers experienced higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment. Kalimo et al. [25] had posited that both sexes differ significantly in the ways they cope with stress. Burnout and psychological distress significantly affected the level of job satisfaction experienced by the teachers in this study. This was in line with Burke et al. [26] who observed that burnout is an important work place strain found to be associated with adverse psychological and physical health of workers and lowers the level of job performance: the more the burnout and psychological distress among the teachers, the lower the level of job satisfaction. Ofili [6] had argued that more dissatisfied teachers had more psychological morbidity than satisfied teachers. She further posited that job satisfaction acts as an antidote for one of the major problems of the teaching profession which is job stress.

Conclusion

This study had shown that secondary school teachers experienced high levels of burnout and psychological distress while doing their job. It also revealed that most of the teachers were not satisfied with their job and that the higher the burnout and psychological distress a teacher experiences the more dissatisfied he or she becomes.

Recommendation

There is need for government to improve the working conditions of teachers to help reduce the level of burnout and psychological distress. This will help to increase their level of job satisfaction. There is also need to introduce regular psychological services and public health education in the secondary school system in Nigeria.

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