

A Closer Look at Determinants of Job Burnout Through the Lens of Seasoned Teachers

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Abstract: This study examined the factors contributing to job burnout among seasoned teachers by examining their personal experiences and coping strategies. Through the narratives of nine (9) purposively selected senior high school teachers from the South District of Tagum City Division, several recurring themes emerged. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using a thematic approach. The major causes of burnout identified included excessive workload and administrative demands and lack of recognition and career growth. In response to these pressures, teachers adopted coping mechanisms such as practicing self-care, seeking support from colleagues, and setting clear boundaries between work and personal life. However, the success of these strategies varied depending on each teacher's individual resilience and life context, indicating a need for more personalized support systems. The study offers practical recommendations, including reducing administrative load, improving pathways for career development, and enhancing peer support initiatives. These findings call for broader institutional reforms and the development of structured well-being programs. Ultimately, this research provides valuable insights for school leaders and policymakers aiming to address teacher burnout and promote long-term sustainability in education, not just in Tagum City Division, but in other contexts as well. The study stresses that tackling burnout effectively requires a combination of policy-level change and grassroots support tailored to the real-world experiences of educators.

Keywords: *A Closer Look, Determinants of Job Burnout, Lens of Seasoned Teachers.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Teacher burnout has become a growing concern within the education sector, particularly among veteran educators who often bear the brunt of rising expectations, limited resources, and ever-expanding responsibilities. This phenomenon doesn't just affect teachers' personal well-being, it also undermines their professional effectiveness. Many educators experiencing burnout report emotional fatigue, declining job satisfaction, and a growing sense of disconnection from their roles. Gaining deeper insight into what causes burnout, especially from the perspectives of seasoned teachers, is essential for developing effective strategies and policies that prioritize their well-being and help maintain a high standard of education.

Around the world, burnout among educators has reached alarming levels. Miller (2022) highlights that every year, thousands of teachers globally are driven to leave the profession due to burnout. The condition, often referred to as teacher burnout syndrome, stems from prolonged exposure to work-related stress. Contributing factors can include overwhelming

workloads, unsupportive or toxic environments, challenging student behavior, restricted professional autonomy, and constant scrutiny from school administrations.

In Finland, a recent report by the Trade Union of Education revealed that nearly one-third of teachers experience significant levels of stress related to their work (Länsikallio et al., 2018). In the United States, Flenniken (2024) points out that burnout is a critical issue within the education system, influencing not only teacher health and turnover rates but also student performance. Similarly, in Kenya, Hungi et al. (2023) found that many teachers face persistent challenges such as inadequate pay and limited opportunities for career advancement. Common outcomes of burnout include emotional exhaustion, reduced feelings of personal accomplishment, a sense of detachment from students, job dissatisfaction, and an overwhelming perception of workload.

Moreover, in Bhutan, Dorji (2024) found that teacher stress stems from a combination of factors such as overwhelming workloads, administrative responsibilities

beyond teaching, and the complexities of school leadership. Interestingly, the study revealed a paradox: while supportive leadership is generally seen as beneficial, it can also become a source of stress depending on how it is perceived and experienced by teacher.

At the national level, Jomuad et al. (2024), in their research in Ozamiz City, described the teaching profession as both fulfilling and demanding. Long working hours and heavy responsibilities often make teachers vulnerable to burnout. Without adequate support systems, educators risk neglecting their own physical and mental health. Tarraya (2023) also addressed a common misconception—that teachers, being public servants with stable jobs and regular pay, should be willing to make personal sacrifices in service of their students, schools, and communities. This mindset often normalizes excessive workloads and overtime, while disregarding the well-being of educators. The idea that “good teachers work tirelessly” continues to overshadow the need to care for the teachers themselves.

Tragically, the consequences of burnout in the teaching profession have, in some cases, been linked to loss of life. Mateo (2018), as cited by Ventayen and Ventayen (2021), reported that the Teachers’ Dignity Coalition (TDC) met with Department of Education officials to raise concerns over burdensome workloads. In one heartbreaking case, excessive paperwork was cited as a factor that contributed to a teacher’s decision to take her own life. More recently, in Pantukan, Davao de Oro, DepEd Region 11 launched an investigation into the reported death of a teacher, allegedly brought on by extreme stress after being publicly reprimanded by the school principal.

Despite growing awareness of teacher burnout as a serious issue in education, efforts to address its root causes often remain insufficient. Flenniken (2024) noted that while there is a strong theoretical understanding of how to deal with burnout, the real challenge lies in translating these ideas into practical action. Schools are yet to take bold steps toward creating an environment where teaching is not only a respected profession but also an attractive one to stay in, or even return to after leaving.

In our own school context, burnout is a reality many teachers confront, particularly those who have been in the profession for years. Veteran teachers often carry the weight of heightened expectations and demanding responsibilities. Although they may no longer have the same energy as when they first entered the field, they are still expected to keep up with ever-changing curricula, integrate new forms of technology, adjust to shifting job demands, handle classroom discipline, and serve as mentors to newer colleagues. Despite these challenges, many veteran educators continue to serve with dedication, relying on personal strategies they’ve developed over time to manage stress and avoid burnout.

This study seeks to explore the underlying causes of job burnout in education, focusing on the lived experiences of veteran teachers. Confronting burnout is not just important, it’s urgent. It has a direct impact on both teacher well-being and the quality of education students receive. Through this investigation, the study aims to generate meaningful insights that can shape future policies and interventions designed to support teachers and help sustain a healthy and thriving teaching profession.

II. METHOD

This research used a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore how seasoned or veteran teachers experience job burnout. The goal was to understand their personal perspectives and the meanings they attach to this issue, capturing the core of what burnout truly feels like for them. Phenomenology provided a way to bring forward genuine, first-hand accounts of how burnout affects their lives, along with how they make sense of those experiences. As noted by Flood (2010), and referenced in Tomaszewski et al. (2020), this approach highlights the importance of lived experience and acknowledges the diverse and complex ways individuals perceive and process their realities. To investigate the factors contributing to burnout and the strategies teachers use to cope, the study relied on in-depth interviews as its main method for gathering data.

This study followed strict ethical guidelines, beginning with the approval of the RMC Review Ethics Committee (REC) to ensure that all research procedures respected the rights and dignity of the participants. A total of nine (9) seasoned or veteran senior high school teachers from the South District of Tagum City Division participated in the study. To capture a wide range of perspectives, only teachers with at least fifteen years of experience in public education were selected. The participants came from three schools of different sizes, such as small, medium, and large, to reflect diverse teaching environments. Purposive sampling was used to identify individuals who could offer meaningful and relevant insights into the issue of job burnout among veteran educators.

In this study, in-depth interviews served as the primary method for data collection. These interviews created space for meaningful conversations with seasoned or veteran teachers, giving them the opportunity to share their personal experiences in detail. Alongside interviews, classroom observations were also used to gain deeper insights into how these experienced educators navigated their daily routines and professional responsibilities. As the researcher, I played a key role in ensuring the credibility and depth of the findings. I personally recorded the participants’ accounts using audio and video tools to capture their responses accurately. I was also responsible for transcribing the interviews and conducting a thorough analysis of the transcripts to draw meaningful conclusions.

The data collected in this study went through a careful and thorough analysis, where transcripts were closely reviewed to identify key themes and ideas related to teacher burnout. This process involved recognizing common patterns in how participants described their sources of stress, emotional reactions, and the coping strategies they used. To strengthen the trustworthiness and depth of the findings, environmental triangulation was employed by gathering data from veteran teachers working in various school settings across the Tagum City Division. Differences in school culture, student demographics, and administrative expectations helped provide a more comprehensive picture of how burnout is experienced in different educational environments.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part presents the findings of the study, focusing on the insights of seasoned teachers about the key factors contributing to job burnout and the ways they cope with it. It provides a detailed analysis of the qualitative data, describing the steps taken to identify and organize the emerging themes from the in-depth interviews with the participants. Based on the teachers' perspectives, the following themes emerged as the main contributors to job burnout:

➤ *Excessive Workload and Administrative Demands.*

Based on the accounts of the participants, it became clear that one of the major contributors to job burnout among teachers is the overwhelming workload combined with numerous administrative responsibilities. Many of the teachers expressed frustration over the constant pressure to complete paperwork, prepare compliance reports, and handle non-instructional tasks such as urgent submissions to the Department of Education and other ancillary duties. These demands often took time away from their actual teaching responsibilities, leading to stress and fatigue. Jomud et al. (2021) also affirmed that teachers are particularly vulnerable to burnout due to extended teaching hours and heavy workloads. Their study indicated that burnout affects several aspects of a teacher's professional life, including job satisfaction, perceived support from school leadership, stress management, and attitudes toward students.

➤ *Lack of Recognition and Career Growth.*

Another theme that emerged from the data was the lack of recognition and limited opportunities for career advancement, both of which were seen as major sources of burnout among experienced teachers. Participants shared feelings of being undervalued despite their years of service and commitment. Floricica et al. (2022) emphasized that while many teachers enter the profession full of passion and enthusiasm, motivated to inspire and connect with students, over time, unmet expectations and professional stagnation can lead to feelings of fear, insecurity, and anxiety.

These emotional struggles gradually replace the initial excitement for teaching, contributing to emotional exhaustion and disengagement from the profession.

Meanwhile, this study also examined how seasoned teachers cope with job burnout and identified several strategies they use to maintain their well-being. Drawing from their years of experience in the profession, these teachers have developed practical and resilient ways to handle the pressures of their work. Their coping methods offer meaningful insights into how educators can sustain their mental and emotional health in demanding school environments.

The following themes emerged regarding the strategies used by seasoned teachers to effectively manage burnout.

➤ *Keeping Physically and Mentally Healthy.*

One of the key findings of the study is that seasoned teachers place a strong emphasis on maintaining both their physical and mental health as a way to cope with burnout. Participants shared that they actively practice self-care, making time for regular exercise, proper nutrition, and adequate rest to combat the physical toll of their workload, such as fatigue and recurring headaches. These holistic health practices are central to their well-being. Mahindru et al. (2023) support this, noting that physical exercise has proven benefits for mental health across a range of conditions. In addition to physical care, the teachers also pointed to the importance of emotional rejuvenation. They cited engaging in leisure activities, setting boundaries between work and personal life, and taking time to unwind as essential to preserving their mental well-being. Similarly, Takiguchi et al. (2023) affirmed that leisure activities play a significant role in promoting mental health and reducing stress.

➤ *Strengthen Interpersonal Connections.*

This study found that strong interpersonal relationships act as a crucial buffer against teacher burnout. Participants frequently highlighted the importance of collegial support, describing how their professional relationships provided both emotional relief and practical assistance in managing work-related stress. Teachers shared that they often turned to their peers not only to vent frustrations but also to seek advice, share strategies, and navigate difficult situations together. Emotional coping techniques included breathing exercises, physical activity, seeking advice from colleagues, venting emotions, and practicing time management to balance family and work responsibilities. These findings align with Suttles (2024), who noted that such strategies are effective in managing stress. Likewise, Leow and Leow (2022) emphasized that social support plays a central role in maintaining mental health and emotional resilience.

Beyond identifying the experiences and coping strategies, this study also offered practical recommendations based on the participants' experiences. To ease teacher burnout, it is recommended that administrative burdens be reduced, career advancement opportunities be re-evaluated, and peer support systems be strengthened. Streamlining requirements, such as eliminating redundant reports, extending deadlines, and digitizing submission processes, can help reduce daily stress and allow teachers to focus more on instruction. Moreover, revising promotion systems to focus on merit and competencies, rather than favoritism, ensures that all teachers have fair opportunities for career growth. Lastly, creating formal peer support structures, like professional learning communities (PLCs) or mentoring programs for new teachers, can transform informal support into a lasting culture of collaboration. Such systems promote shared learning, emotional support, and collective problem-solving, helping to ease the individual burdens teachers face.

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