Teacher Burnout and Supporting Intervention Strategies

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Introduction

In today's world, the role of teachers is no longer limited to merely delivering lectures. Rather, the demands on the teacher's role are ever-increasing. This has resulted in teacher burnout, which is a growing concern for educational organizations all over the world. Teacher burnout negatively impacts the occupational health of employees, thereby affecting their physical, social, and mental welfare. Additionally, the educational outcomes of teachers who suffer burnout are also diminished (Iancu et al., 2018).

Administrators need to understand the factors that lead to burnout, owing to its wide-ranging consequences. A significant contributing factor towards burnout is poor job satisfaction (Domitrovich et al., 2016). Burnout also affects teachers' performance through increased absenteeism, unsatisfactory performance, poor classroom instruction, ineffective teaching, and diminished engagement. Research has also highlighted the physical ramifications of burnout in the form of depressive disorder, anxiety, hypertension, and cardiac diseases (Roeser et al., 2013; Wolf et al., 2015).

The dire consequences of burnout make it an important issue for educational practitioners, and various interventions have been developed to reduce its prevalence. The survey presented in this study highlights the various aspects of the job that may contribute towards creating stress and, ultimately, burnout. The survey questions measure the quality of relationships that teachers have with the school principal and other administrators. It also identifies teacher autonomy and workload as factors important to job satisfaction and aims to measure teachers' perceptions regarding these. This survey is important as it provides an insight into the teachers' perceptions about the various aspects of their job. It can help the administrators identify the stressors and plan interventions to help teachers cope effectively, thereby reducing the incidence of burnout.

Literature Review

Teacher burnout can be considered a grave concern that educational administrators have to deal with. Research indicates that approximately 40 per cent of teachers quit this profession in the initial

five years of their careers. The foremost reason for an early departure from this profession is stress and burnout (Herman et al., 2020). Excessive and prolonged stress at the workplace often results in burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). Occupational burnout can be categorised as severe emotional fatigue and exhaustion, which results from a lack of resources to handle high-pressure events. It is also identified through a detached and cynical attitude towards one's job. It is accompanied by feelings of inefficacy and a self-perception of being professionally inadequate (Iancu et al., 2018). These three components of teacher burnout cannot be simultaneously addressed through a single intervention. Therefore, an analysis of each component must be carried out before administering any corrective strategies (Maricuţoiu et al., 2016).

Research has identified various "teaching-specific stressors" that are directly related to teacher burnout (Iancu et al., 2018). These teaching-related stress factors range from a classroom size exceeding thirty students to the pressure of day-to-day decision-making (Roeser et al., 2012). One of the major teaching-specific stressors is classroom management. It is one of the most vital jobs that a teacher performs and is a skill that few have mastered. Classroom management constitutes the emotional environment of the class where the twofold teacher-student relationship develops. The conflicts that arise within the class among students or between the teacher and the pupils can contribute to poor job satisfaction (Unterbrink et al., 2012). Moreover, conflicts with colleagues and parents may also lead to burnout. An imbalance between teaching demands, such as student behavioural concerns or administrative expectations, and insufficient resources also causes teacher burnout (McCarthy et al., 2016).

To gain expertise regarding the different job specifications, teachers require constant training and support; however, teachers often face a lack of support from line managers. Research data from teacher self-reports indicate that burnout occurs as a result of increased workload, which often leads to insufficient time for engaging in collaborative activities with colleagues. Similarly, non-cooperative supervisors and students with problematic behaviour are important job stressors (Roeser et al., 2013). The field of education is being revolutionized each day with the introduction of modern teaching approaches. In countries with an established education system, such changes are often systematically introduced. However, in low-income countries, such reforms often pose a challenge for the teachers in the form of increased workload (Wolf et al., 2015).

Rewards and recognition are useful tools that administrators can use to motivate teachers and reduce stress. However, often, the compensation packages offered to teachers are unsuited to the demands of this profession. Such low and inconsistent remuneration, along with an ineffective recognition system, result in under-appreciated and burnt-out staff. Other factors that contribute towards teacher burnout are a perceived lack of autonomy, non-existent professional development opportunities, and a lack of voice in important decisions (Iancu et al., 2018).

Although some stressful factors (e.g., managing relationships with students, parents, and colleagues) are more inherent to the job of teaching, others can be addressed through employee-centered policies and procedures. While isolated stressful incidents do not have a long-term impact on teacher

performance, prolonged exposure to teaching-specific stressors may lead to chronic stress, which, in turn, can cause occupational burnout. To avoid the undesirable professional and personal outcomes of burnout, various interventions can be utilized (Embse et al., 2019). These interventions are majorly categorized into three main types, namely, “knowledge-based intervention (KBI)”, “cognitive-behavioural intervention (CBI)”, and “behavioural intervention (BI)”. More recently, “mindfulness-based interventions (MBI)” have developed as a popular approach to decrease burnout (Eastwood, 2021; Embse et al., 2019).

The KBIs generally focus on providing teachers with informational training, e.g., strategies to deal with students who suffer from a learning disorder. However, these interventions are not aimed at reducing the physiological symptoms of stress. In contrast, the CBI and the MBI are based on relation techniques that help alleviate emotional exhaustion (Maricuţoiu et al., 2016). Mindfulness approaches are based on meditation, journaling, and other relaxation activities that help individuals reach a state of consciousness by focusing on the current moment (Sun et al., 2019). Mindfulness has positive health-related outcomes. It reduces burnout, improves attentiveness, and helps in employee retention (Sharp Donahoo et al., 2018). These interventions must be administered to help teachers regulate their emotions effectively and reduce the negative consequences of burnout.

Research Methodology

Research methodology is based on an orderly approach, and it constitutes a set of tools and procedures that the researcher can employ for data collection and analysis (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Quantitative research studies carry out their investigation through various models such as correlational studies, survey studies, structural equation models, and factor analytical studies. Quantitative studies employ questionnaires as tools for data collection. These quantitative questionnaires are based on closed-ended statements and scales. It employs statistical analysis to manipulate data (Reid, 2006).

For this study, a survey questionnaire was designed to gather participant responses. The questionnaire is designed using a five-point Likert scale to measure how strongly the participants are in agreement or disagreement with each statement. The five points of the Likert scale stand for “strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree”. The questionnaire also focuses on demographic data in the form of gender and age. The 12 items of the survey questionnaire are embedded in the literature review and are based on factors that establish the construct of teacher burnout.

Validity and Reliability

Irrespective of the research model being followed, the most important step of research is to establish the validity of the data collection instrument, as an invalid tool would produce worthless results.

Research is deemed valid when it correctly measures what it intends to measure and presents an accurate explanation of the phenomenon under study (DeVellis, 2016). The validity of data can be improved through careful sampling, the use of an appropriate instrument, and the suitability of statistical measures (Creswell, 2012). A second psychometric measure that establishes the adequacy of the instrument is termed reliability, which is the dependability or consistency of an instrument to measure the construct under research (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Reliability can be improved by adopting a more objective data collection technique.

Ethical Considerations

The process of research must adhere to ethical norms at every step, and the norms of individuals and organizations must be taken into consideration. Research ethics were taken into account for this study by extending requests for data collection. The anonymity of respondents is maintained, and the data was used solely to interpret the results of this study.

Sampling

While the suitability of the research method and instrumentation are important, the appropriateness of the sampling strategy is also a defining feature of successful research. Sampling enables the researcher to outline the population. Since there are numerous challenges to collecting data from the entire population, researchers often select a subdivision known as a sample. This sample is considered representative of the entire population (Cohen et al., 2007). For this research, a sample of 13 respondents was selected through convenient sampling. Both male and female respondents were included in the sample.

Data Collection

For data collection, organizations and individuals were approached to gain consent for participation in this research. Google Forms were utilized to digitally collect data. A total of 13 responses were received. All responses were suitable for analysis.

Results

The data gathered were analyzed to interpret the results. The descriptive and statistical analysis of data is presented in this section.

Descriptive Analysis of Demographic Distribution

The first section presents the distribution of respondents based on demographic information.

Table 1.1

Distribution of respondents by gender

Gender	*f*	%
male	6	46.2
female	7	53.8
Total	13	100.0

Table 1.1 shows the frequency of gender distribution of the sample. Out of 13 respondents, 6 (46.2%) were male and 7 (53.8%) were female.

Table 1.2

Distribution of respondents based on age

Age	*f*	*%*
20-30	3	23.1
31-40	4	30.8
41-50	4	30.8
51-60	2	15.4
Total	13	100.0

Table 1.2 shows the frequency distribution of the sample based on age. Out of 13 respondents, 3 (23.1%) were aged 20-30 years, 4 (30.8%) were between 31-40 years, 4 (30.8%) were between 41-50 years, and 2 (15.4%) were aged 51-60 years.

Descriptive Analysis of Burnout Scale

This section presents the descriptive analysis of the items of the Teacher Burnout Scale.

Figure 1: As a teacher, the professional relationship I have with the school principal / SLT stresses me out.

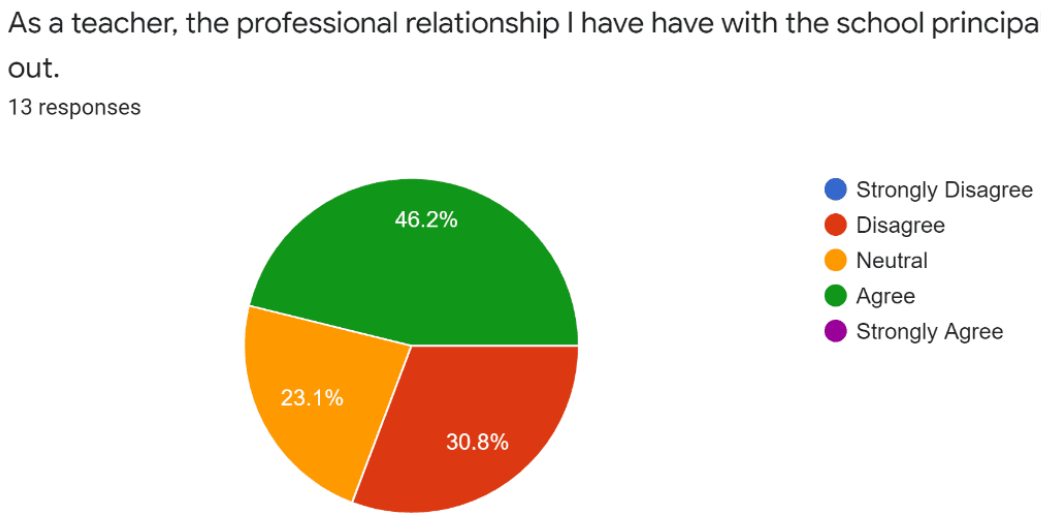

Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution of the sample based on the degree of agreement. Out of 13 respondents, 46.2% of teachers agree that they are stressed out by the professional relationship they have with the school principal/SLT. 23.1% of respondents remained neutral, while 30.8% disagreed with the statement.

Figure 2: My professional relationship with the school administration team stresses me out.

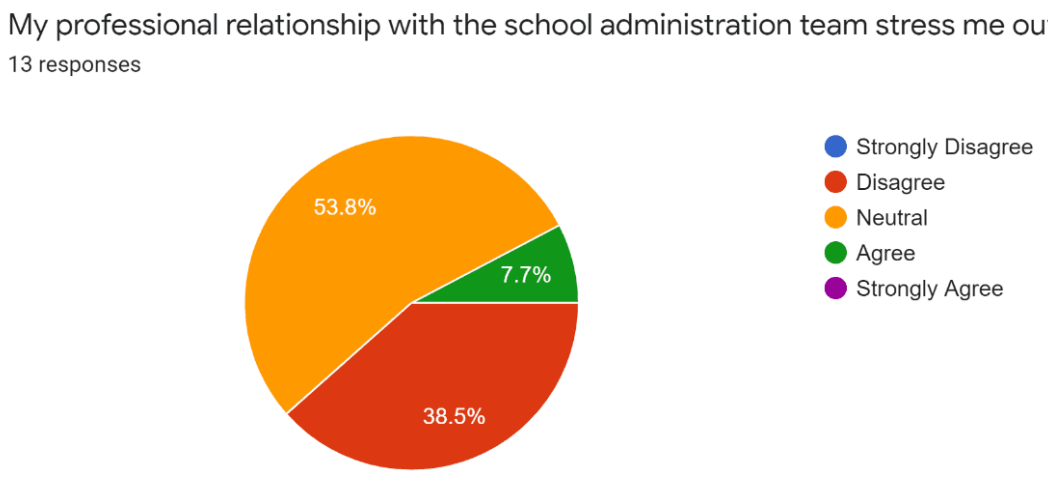

Figure 2 shows the frequency distribution of the sample based on the degree of agreement. Out of 13 respondents, 7.7% of teachers agree that they are stressed out by the professional relationship they have with the school administration team. 53.8% of respondents remained neutral, while 38.5% disagreed with the statement.

Figure 3: The level of autonomy and power I have stresses me out.

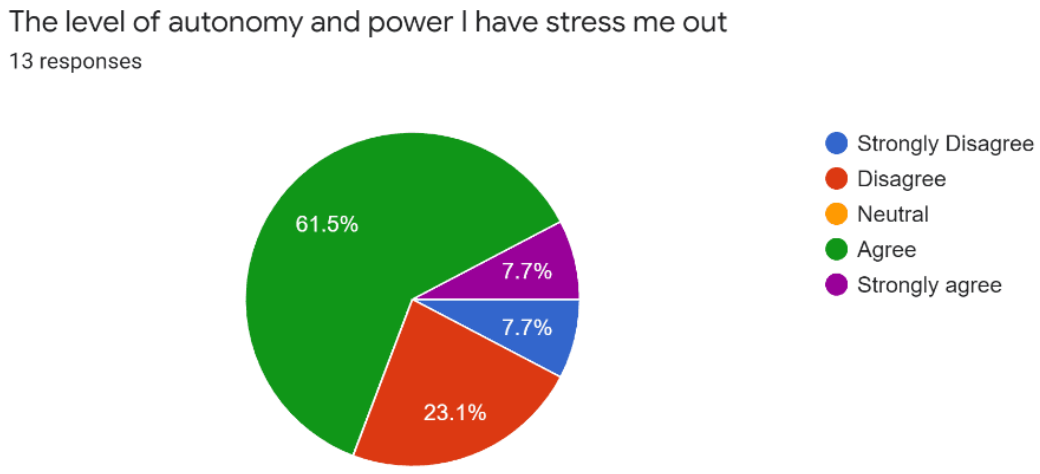

Figure 3 shows the frequency distribution of the sample based on the degree of agreement. Out of 13 respondents, 7.7% of teachers strongly agree, and 61.5% of teachers agree that they are stressed out by the level of autonomy and power that they have. On the other hand, 23.1% disagreed, and 7.7% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Figure 4: Formal lesson observation stresses me out.

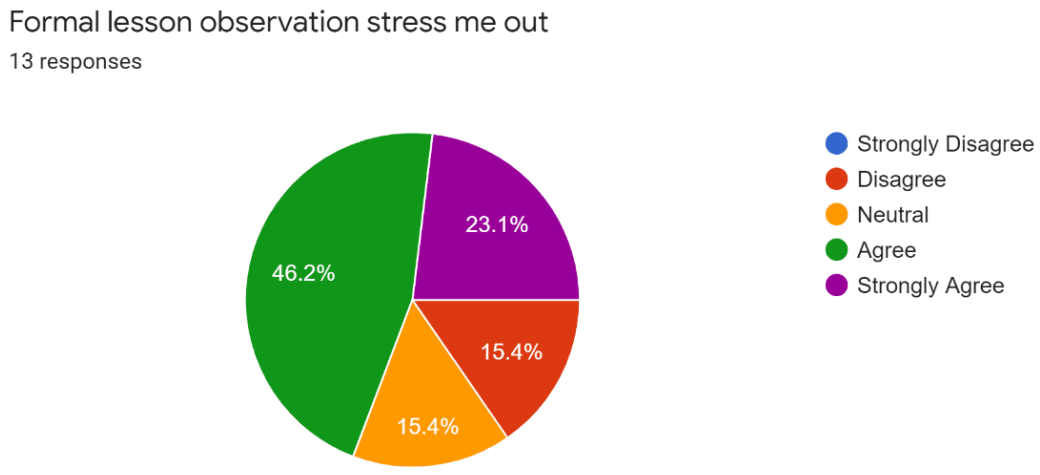

Figure 4 shows the frequency distribution of the sample based on the degree of agreement. Out of 13

respondents, 23.1% of teachers strongly agree, and 46.2% of teachers agree that they are stressed out by formal lesson observations. 15.4% of the respondents remained neutral, while 15.4% disagreed with the statement.

Figure 5: The increased size of the class stresses me out.

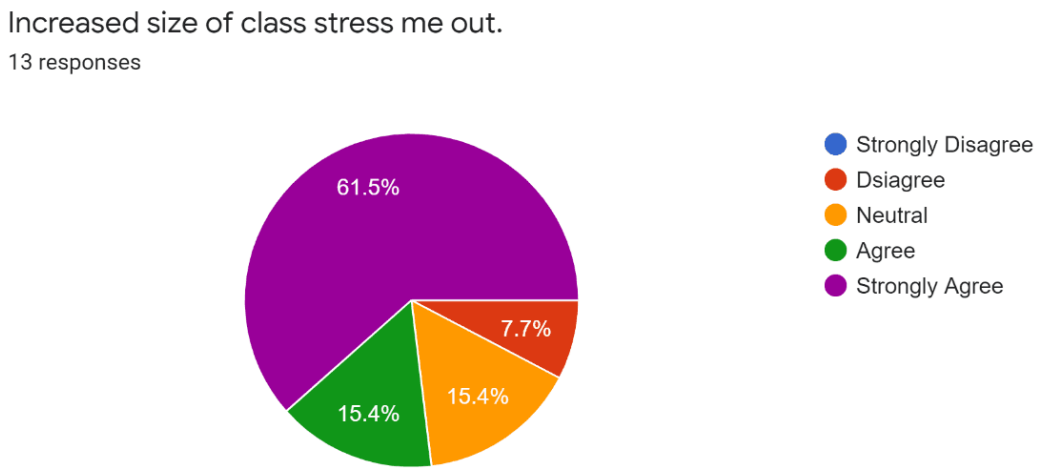

Figure 5 shows the frequency distribution of the sample based on the degree of agreement. Out of 13 respondents, 61.5% of teachers strongly agree, and 15.4% of teachers agree that they are stressed out by the increased size of the class. 15.4% of the respondents remained neutral, while 7.7% disagreed with the statement.

Figure 6: Student behaviour and discipline issues stress me out.

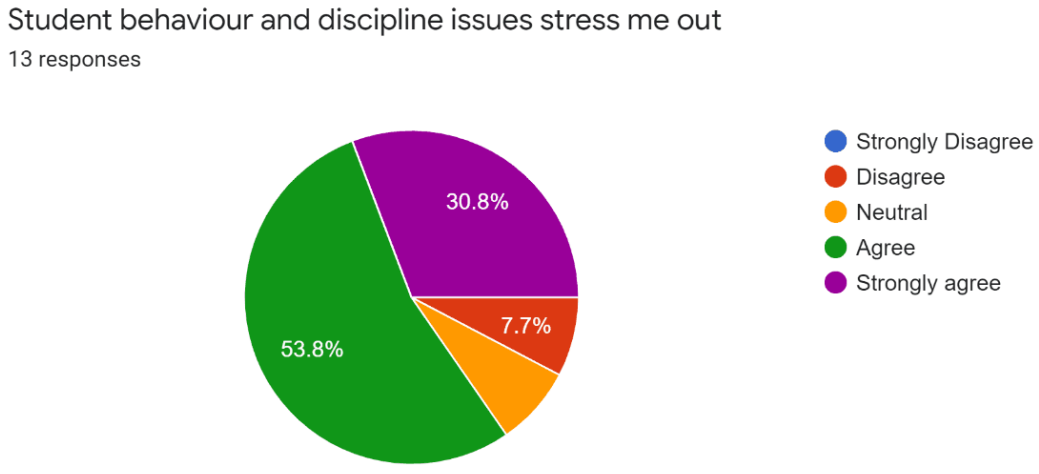

Figure 6 shows the frequency distribution of the sample based on the degree of agreement. Out of 13 respondents, 30.8% of teachers strongly agree, and 53.8% of teachers agree that they are stressed

out by student behaviour and discipline issues. 7.7% of the respondents remained neutral, while 7.7% disagreed with the statement.

Figure 7: My timetable does not include time for teacher collaboration.

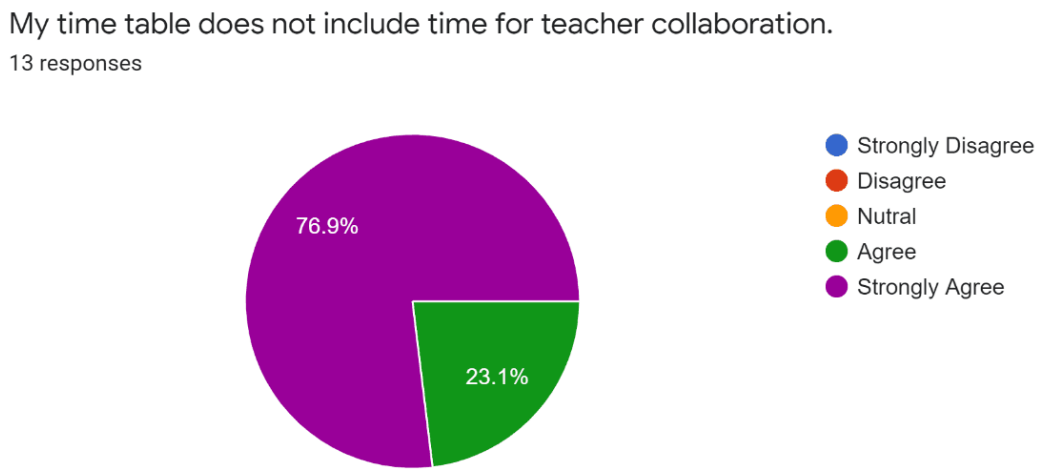

Figure 7 shows the frequency distribution of the sample based on the degree of agreement. Out of 13 respondents, 76.9% of teachers strongly agree that their timetable does not include time for teacher collaboration, while the remaining 23.1% of teachers agree with the same.

Figure 8: My overall workload stresses me out.

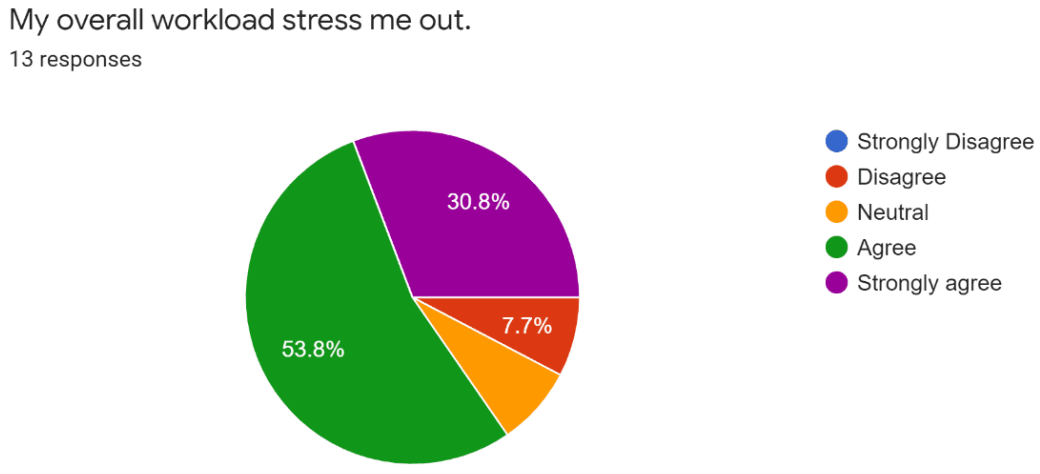

Figure 8 shows the frequency distribution of the sample based on the degree of agreement. Out of 13 respondents, 30.8% of teachers strongly agree, and 53.8% of teachers agree that their overall workload stresses them out. 7.7% of the respondents remained neutral, while 7.7% disagreed with the statement.

Figure 9: I always feel stressed out about my work.

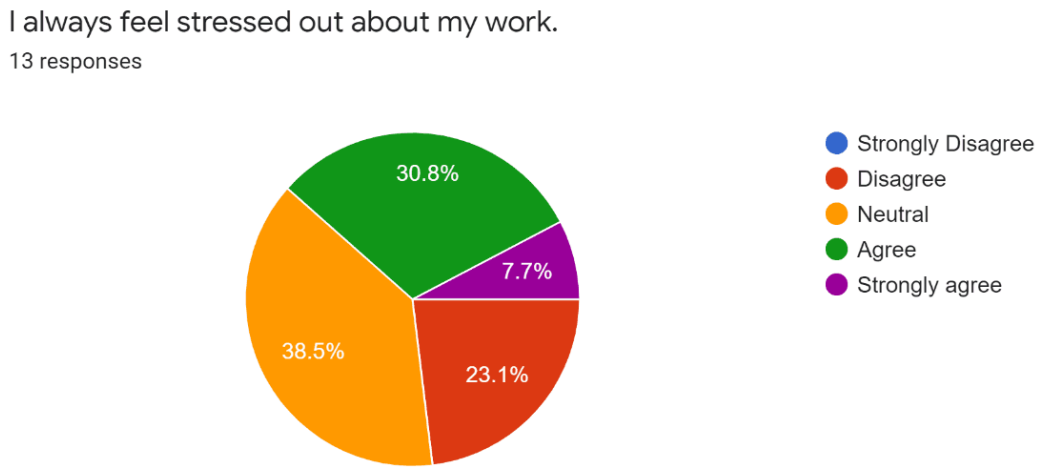

Figure 9 shows the frequency distribution of the sample based on the degree of agreement. Out of 13 respondents, 7.7% of teachers strongly agree, and 30.8% of teachers agree that they always feel stressed out about their work. 38.5% of the respondents remained neutral, while 23.1% disagreed with the statement.

Figure 10: The amount of non-teaching work stresses me out.

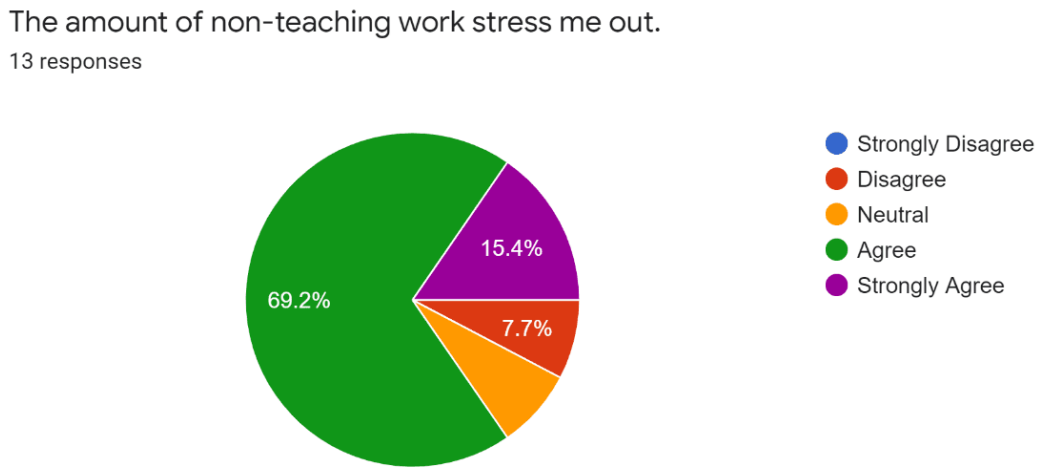

Figure 10 shows the frequency distribution of the sample based on the degree of agreement. Out of 13 respondents, 15.4% of teachers strongly agree, and 69.2% of teachers agree that their overall workload stresses them out. 7.7% of the respondents remained neutral, while 7.7% disagreed with the statement.

Figure 11: The amount of Standardized Testing (CAT, PIM, PIE, etc.) stresses me out.

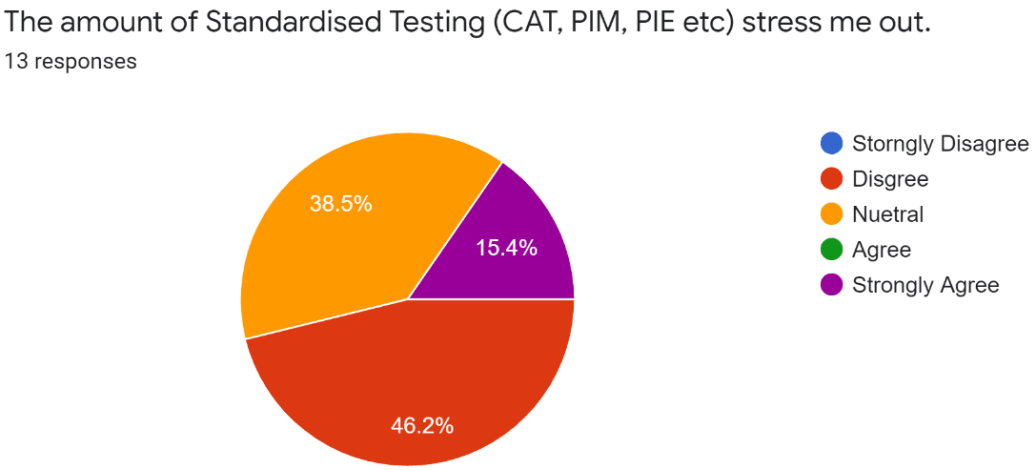

Figure 11 shows the frequency distribution of the sample based on the degree of agreement. Out of 13 respondents, 15.4% of teachers strongly agree that they are stressed out by the amount of standardized testing. 38.5% of the respondents remained neutral, while 46.2% disagreed with the statement.

Figure 12: At my current school, I feel I am completely burnt out.

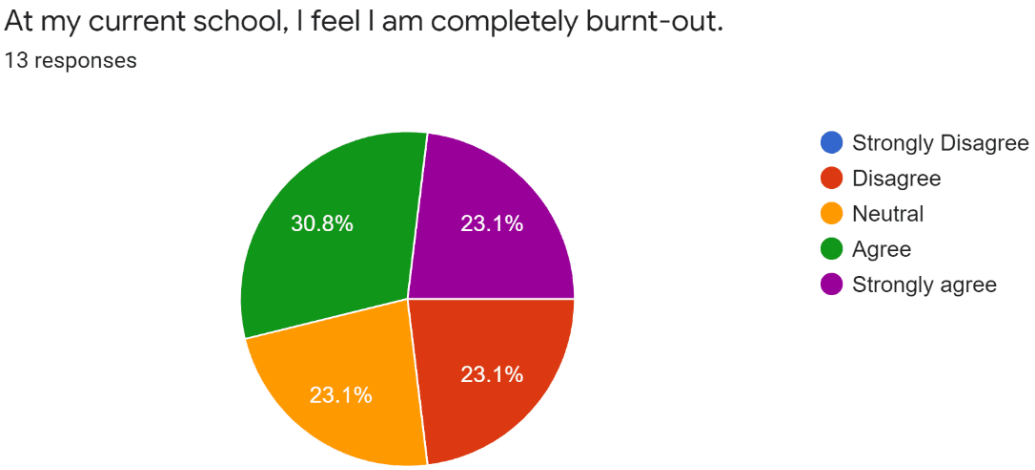

Figure 12 shows the frequency distribution of the sample based on the degree of agreement. Out of 13 respondents, 23.1% of teachers strongly agree, and 30.8% of teachers agree that they are completely burnt out at their current school. 23.1% of the respondents remained neutral, while 23.1% disagreed with the statement.

Inferential Statistics of Burnout Scale

This section presents the inferential statistical analysis of the items of the Teacher Burnout Scale.

Table 1.3

Comparison mean score on Burnout Scale Items based on gender

Dependent Variables	Gender	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Relationship with SLT	Male	6	3.5	0.5
	Female	7	2.85	0.989
Relationship with administrators	Male	6	3.16	0.372
	Female	7	2.28	0.451
Autonomy	Male	6	3.83	0.897
	Female	7	3	1.195
Lesson observations	Male	6	3.83	0.897
	Female	7	3.71	1.030
Class size	Male	6	5	0
	Female	7	3.428	1.049
Student behavior	Male	6	4.166	0.471
	Female	7	4	1.069

Time for Collaboration	Male	6	4.66	0.471
	Female	7	4.857	0.349
Workload	Male	6	4.33	0.471
	Female	7	3.857	0.989
Stress about work	Male	6	3.166	0.687
	Female	7	3.285	1.030
Non-teaching work	Male	6	4	0.577
	Female	7	3.857	0.832
Standardized Testing	Male	6	3.33	1.247
	Female	7	2.428	0.494
Burnout	Male	6	3.5	0.957
	Female	7	3.57	1.178

Table 1.3 compares teachers' perceptions of the various items on the teacher burnout scale based on gender. The table indicates a difference in view of male teachers (M=3.5, SD=0.5) and female teachers (M=2.85, SD=0.989) and shows that male teachers are more stressed in terms of their relationship with the principal/ SLTs as compared to female teachers. Similarly, the table identifies a difference in perception of male teachers (M=3.16, SD=0.372) and female teachers (M=2.28, SD=0.451) and shows that male teachers are more stressed in terms of their relationship with the administrators as compared to female teachers. In terms of the level of autonomy, the perception of males (M=3.83, SD=0.896) and females (M=3, SD=1.195) differ, and male teachers are more stressed by the level of autonomy at work. Similarly, the table identifies differing views of male teachers (M=5, SD=0) and female teachers (M=3.428, SD=1.049) and shows that male teachers are more stressed by the increase in class size as compared to female teachers. There is a slight difference in the perception of male teachers (M=4.66, SD=0.471) and female teachers (M=4.857, SD=0.349) in terms of the time available for collaboration. Similarly, the table identifies a difference

in the perception of male teachers (M=3.857, SD=0.989) and female teachers (M=4.33, SD=0.471) and shows that female teachers are more stressed by their workload as compared to male teachers. The table further identifies a difference in perception of male teachers (M=3.33, SD=1.247) and female teachers (M=2.482, SD=0.494) and shows that male teachers are more stressed by the level of standardized testing as compared to female teachers.

Conclusion

Teacher burnout is a problem that plagues the field of education. Each year, many teachers quit the profession due to the increasing demands that lead to extreme stress. This study identified the various stressors that teachers face and measured their perceptions about the degree of stress that is caused by each. The study has revealed that factors such as level of autonomy and power, relationship with the school principal, lesson observations, increased class size, and discipline issues add to the stress of teachers. Collaboration is an important tool that helps teachers build professional ties and learn from each other's good practices. However, all teachers reported that their timetables did not allocate time for collaboration. Similarly, workload, especially related to non-teaching tasks, is a source of stress for teachers. The information gathered through this survey can help the school administrator plan interventions to reduce stress and diminish the incidence of occupational burnout. For future studies, a focus on interventions can be helpful to identify the successful measures that schools are taking to reduce employee stress.

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