

Exploring Burnout of Educators in the context of Professional Identity

Savitha K and Venkatachalam J

Periyar University, Salem

The uniqueness of the current study is that it attempts to compare the amount of burnout in the teaching profession by some demographic variables while simultaneously examining the relationship between professional identity and burnout. Through dual questionnaires, one assessing professional identity and the other measuring burnout and The data were analysed using a Pearson correlation and an independent sample t-test, investigation reveals a significant negative correlation between burnout and professional identity. Notably, private-sector lecturers exhibit higher burnout levels, while no discernible differences based on gender or family type are observed. The study aims to illuminate the protective role of professional identity against burnout, providing valuable insights for educators, institutions, and policymakers. Strengthening teachers' professional identities emerges as a key strategy to alleviate occupational exhaustion, fostering resilience in the face of challenges.

Keywords: professional identity, burnout, demographic variables, college lecturers

A good teacher aids in our development as socially responsible and patriotic citizens. In order to produce excellent students for the future of the country, teachers play a crucial role. Thus, teachers have the power to shape any country's future. As a result, it is crucial to support teachers' career development and enhance teaching in schools and colleges by having an in-depth understanding of their inner lives, particularly their professional identities and their job burnout.

Zhao, Mustapha, and Wang (2020) thought that the degree to which teachers incorporated their identities into their lessons rather than the use of a particular teaching strategy was the essence of teaching. From this vantage point, teachers' professional identities would undoubtedly have an impact on their level of job burnout. Job burnout is more common among teachers who lack a strong sense of their professional identity (Zhang, 2019). Some studies have revealed that the level of job burnout among teachers is significantly influenced by their attitude and

behaviour at work, which are determined by their professional identities.

This paper will give a better understanding of the relationship between teachers' professional identity and job burnout and then offer some insightful advice to lessen their work burnout and advance their professional development. This is done in order to clarify more about the underlying processes and thoroughly comprehend the teachers' professional identity and job burnout.

Teachers' Professional Identity

Although the literature contains numerous theoretical works on teacher identity as professionals, barely some researchers describe it properly in their research. A teacher's professional identity, according to Kramer and Hoffman (1981), is their sense of belonging to and affiliation with their profession.

"Professional identity formation involves a continuous process of identification,

interpretation, reinterpretation, and negotiation of self-images, teaching and learning experiences, and professional roles associated with a specific sociocultural and institutional context,” as Lim (2011) proposed. This process entails conflicts and tensions as a result of the integration of many perspectives, expectations, and professional roles.

Kozminski (2008) adds that one’s professional identity provides an answer to the question, “Who or what am I as a professional?” Avraham’s (1986) definition of professional identity encompasses perceptions of one’s qualities, talents, sentiments, professional values, and interactions with other individuals he comes into contact with while working.

Martnez-de-la-Hidalga and Villardón-Gallego (2016) state that “there is no unanimous understanding of professional identity.” It is primarily related to the manner in which teachers consider oneself professionally as an outcome of their understanding of the continual interactions that take place in professional contexts. Interactions among individual, occupational, and circumstances shape it. Given the above given criteria, it is clear that the professional identity of a teacher is linked to relationships that occur in an occupational context.

Teachers Burnout

According to Friedman and Gavish (2003), a burnt-out teacher has an impact on the mood and ambiance of the classroom, and may even have a bad effect on one’s own and co-workers’ job satisfaction. Maslach (2001) delves deeper into job burnout, identifying it as a persistent reaction caused by an employee’s failure to appropriately deal with continual pressure at job. Burnout from work was further described by her as emotional tiredness, depersonalization, and decreased sense of personal achievement.

Zhang (2003) investigated the effects of teacher burnout on education. He concluded that teachers’ job burnout would have a detrimental impact on their ability to learn and teach, and that they would have an unsatisfactory connection with their learners, reducing the effectiveness of their in-class learning.

Despite the recognised importance of professional identity and burnout, there remains a significant research gap in the literature concerning the relationship between these variables among college lecturers. While studies have explored these variables independently in the broader educational context, few have specifically investigated their interplay within the context of college education. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how professional identity may serve as a protective or mitigating factor against burnout among college lecturers. In doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics within the academic profession and provides valuable insights for educators, educational institutions, and policymakers.

Method

Sample

Three hundred and sixty-six (366) lecturers from colleges in Udupi district (India) participated in the study. They had worked in the field for 1–37 years.

Instruments

Professional Identity Questionnaire: The teacher’s professional identity was evaluated by using the Teachers’ Professional Identity Questionnaire by Abu and Khasawneh (2013). The scale has 24 items with four dimensions: work, student, self-based, and skill. A five-point Likert scale is used to grade each item that is that is 1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree.

Table 1: The Reliability of Questionnaire on Professional Identity

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
.954	24

Maslach Burnout Inventory: Educators Survey

The educators' version of the Burnout Questionnaire by Maslach, Jackson, and Schwab (1996) was used. The questionnaire has 22 questions on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (every day), grouped into three subscales: emotional exhaustion, cynicism or depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment.

Table 2: The Reliability of Burnout

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
.969	22

Statistical tool

From the descriptive data, correlation analysis was carried out by the SPSS 25.0 programme to determine whether there is a strong connection between the professional identity of lecturers and burnout on the job. To evaluate the association among professional identity as a teacher and burnout on the job, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in burnout on the job among lecturers with respect to gender, sector (public and private), and family type (nuclear and joint).

Table 3: Correlation between Professional Identity and Burnout among lecturers

Study Variables	Occupational exhaustion	Depersonalisation	Personal accomplishment	Burn out
1. Work	-.719**	-.708**	-.701**	-.736**
2. Student	-.738**	-.731**	-.737**	-.763**
3. Self	-.748**	-.767**	-.774**	-.789**

4. Skill	-.701**	-.767**	-.774**	-.756**
Professional Identity	-.768**	-.782**	-.781**	-.804**

P < 0.01

The table 3 shows the relationship between professional identity and burnout among college teachers. The professional identity was shown to be significantly negatively correlated with occupational exhaustion (r = -.768), depersonalization (r = -.782), personal accomplishment (r = -.781), and total burnout (r = -.804).

It was discovered that there is a notable negative association between lecturers' professional identities and burnout on the job using a correlation value. To be more specific, a lecturer who believes that teaching is not pleasurable and is worthless is more inclined to feel exhausted at job.

Teachers may enjoy their job or understand many institutional expectations if they recognize and agree with the responsibilities and principles of the institutions they serve. According to that viewpoint, they rarely develop job burnout regardless of how challenging and tough their job is (Zhao and Wang, 2020).

Table 4. Differences in Burnout by demographic categories

Variables	Category	N	M	SD	t-value
Gender	Male	162	82.33	26.630	1.060NS
	Female	204	79.33	27.081	
Sectors	Private	308	84.84	25.273	7.344**
	Public	58	58.43	24.323	
Family Type	Nuclear	213	79.08	28.873	1.365NS
	Joint	153	82.85	23.767	

P < 0.01.

The majority of the lecturers (N = 204) were female, while the remaining were male. Gender difference analysis of burnout

revealed both male and female in Burnout ($t = 1.060$) have the same perception as far as their burnout is concerned. The difference in their perception was found to be non-significant. The data did not support the prediction that there would be significant differences in burnout among teachers based on gender. In other words, the gender component had no effect on burnout levels. This may also be due to the fact that male and female teachers frequently experience the same pressures at work, such as heavy workloads, time constraints, problems with student behaviour management, and a lack of resources. Both men and women experience equal degrees of burnout as a result of these pressures, which can cause burnout regardless of gender.

When mean scores of male and female were compared for all three dimensions of burnout, compared to men, women are more likely to feel irritated at work and more burned out; they are also less likely to believe they have made a positive contribution to the institution and feel less strongly that they manage emotional difficulties calmly. Women are seen as being more susceptible to certain factors, frequently reporting high emotional exhaustion scores (Maslach and Jackson, 1993; Grayson and Alvarez, 2008; Purvanova and Muros, 2010), possibly as a result of juggling multiple responsibilities at work and at home that drain their emotional reserves (Blix et al., 1994).

There is a statistically significant difference between private and public sector teachers in burnout ($t = 7.344$) as determined by the t test results, leading to a significant difference in burnout on the basis of sector. The results supported the prediction that there would be significant differences in burnout rates among teachers depending on whether they were private or public. Compared to teachers in the public sector, teachers in the private sector had higher signs of burnout. On the other hand, compared to teachers in public schools,

private school teachers could have less decision-making autonomy. Frequently, teachers at private schools are asked to adhere to more rigid curricular standards or prescribed teaching strategies. Burnout symptoms may result from this constrained autonomy and demanding responsibility.

Type of family differences analysis for burnout revealed both nuclear and joint families ($t = 1.365$), and the difference in their perception was found to be non-significant. Regardless of family type, college lecturers may have access to various sources of support and coping mechanisms that influence their experiences of burnout. For example, both nuclear and joint families may provide emotional and practical support, such as help with household tasks or childcare, which can help individuals manage stress and maintain a healthier work-life balance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The comprehensive examination of burnout among college lecturers has uncovered significant insights into the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon and its complex relationship with various factors. The results of our t-test analysis, which assessed differences in burnout based on gender and family type, revealed no statistically significant relationships in these aspects. This suggests that, in our study, gender and family structure alone were not significant determinants of burnout among college lecturers. These findings emphasise the need for an advanced approach when examining the complexities of burnout, considering a range of factors that may interact and contribute to educators' well-being.

One striking finding from our study was the notable difference in burnout levels between private and public sector teachers. Specifically, private sector teachers reported experiencing more burnout compared to their counterparts in the public sector. This

disparity underscores the profound impact of workplace environments and job-related factors on educators' experiences of burnout. The heightened burnout levels among private sector teachers may be attributed to several key factors, including differences in job demands, compensation, job security, and available resources. Private educational institutions often operate under unique conditions, which may involve increased workloads, greater competition, and financial pressures. These factors can contribute to heightened stress levels and job-related exhaustion among private sector educators.

Our study used Pearson correlation analysis to investigate the relationship between professional identity and burnout, and the results showed a significant negative correlation. It was evident that a decrease in professional identity was associated with an increase in burnout levels among college lecturers. This finding underscores the pivotal role of professional identity in shaping educators' experiences and well-being.

The importance of fostering and enhancing educators' professional identities is highlighted by the strong negative association between burnout and professional identity. Educational institutions and policymakers should consider strategies and interventions aimed at enhancing educators' sense of belonging, commitment, and purpose within the teaching profession.

Individuals' emotional engagement in and devotion to their chosen profession build their professional identity (Peng and Li, 2019). The greater their degree of professional identity, the stronger their connection with the organisation, which influences individuals' attitudes about their profession and helps to decrease burnout (Lu et al., 2019). On the other side, people with a lower level of professional identity have a worse sense of attachment to their jobs and become more prone to burnout.

The institution should strive to develop teachers' professional identities by

increasing their professional knowledge and discourse power, as well as addressing job burnout at its root. We also recommend that authorities in education departments focus on developing teachers' professional identities by strengthening the structure of the institution's environment and increasing teachers' professional autonomy (Ding and Xie, 2021). Additionally, school administrators should actively arrange and coordinate a variety of group activities to strengthen teachers' sense of community and enable them to enjoy a calm, joyful, and free environment while on campus and feel the mutual support and warmth of their fellow teachers (Zhao, Mustapha, and Wang, 2020).

It has been found that job burnout is strongly correlated with teachers' professional identities. Therefore, through strengthening their professional identities, teachers' occupational exhaustion may be decreased, which might be advantageous for teachers as well as students and society as a whole. Teachers who are confident in their professional identity are typically more resilient and better equipped to deal with the challenges and demands of their line of work. They could have more faith in their ability to positively impact their students' lives. By guiding individuals through trying situations and setbacks, this belief can reduce their risk of burnout.

Although having a strong professional identity can aid in lowering burnout rates, it is important to keep in mind that burnout is a complex issue that is influenced by a variety of factors, including workload, organisational support, and personal wellbeing. One component of a thorough strategy to treat teacher burnout is developing a good professional identity. Burnout remains a dynamic and evolving issue within the teaching profession. Continuous research and assessment of factors contributing to burnout are essential to inform evidence-based policies and practices that support teacher well-being and resilience.

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Savitha K, PhD Research Scholar, Dept. of Psychology, Periyar University, Salem
636011savitha29k@gmail.com

Venkatachalam J, Professor, Dept. of Psychology, Periyar University, Salem
636011(chalam66@yahoo.com)