

Teacher Burnout and Distance Learning

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The Problem

Teacher burnout is a well-studied phenomenon in which feelings of being over-worked or without sufficient resources lead effective educators to the leave the field (Freudenberger, 1974; Lemons et al., 2015). Like burnout, the topic of distance learning has existed in literature for over thirty years. However, recent changes in the educational setting due to the COVID-19 pandemic bring to light new challenges when it comes to teacher burnout and distance education.

Results

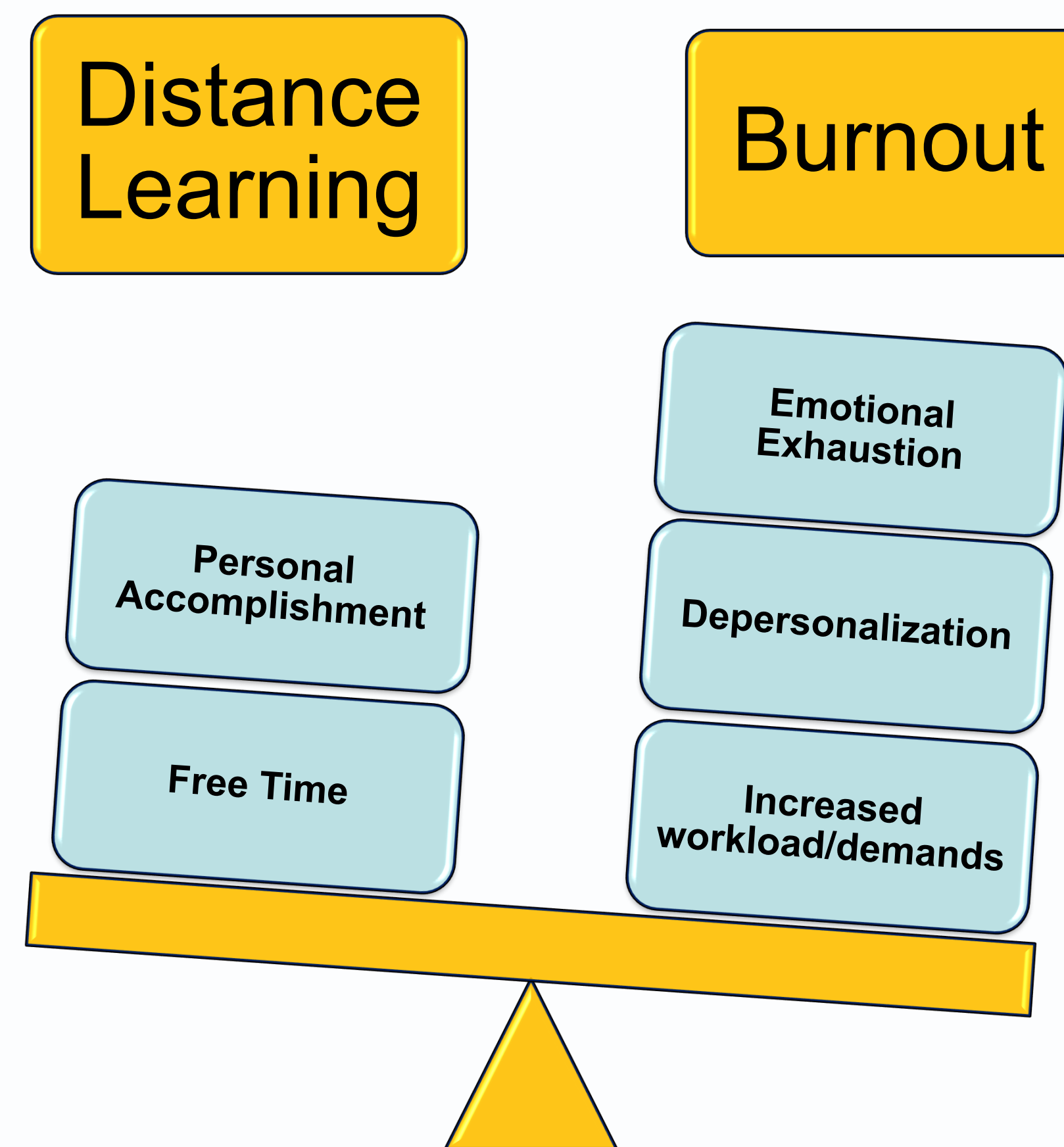
Out of 46 potential participants, 9 teachers and 1 non-teacher took the survey. Group results were tabulated for each of the three critical areas of burnout

- ❖ **Emotional Exhaustion** - The group averaged a score of 2.1 out of 7 (SD=1.1).
- ❖ **Depersonalization** - The group averaged 0.6 out of 7 (SD=0.7).
- ❖ **Personal Accomplishment** - The group averaged 5.1 out of 7 (SD=0.7).

The results indicate teachers experience emotional exhaustion once a month or less and depersonalization only a few times a year. On the other hand, personal accomplishment is felt a few times a week.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study is to explore the effects of distance learning on teacher burnout levels. More specifically, it seeks to uncover how distance learning has affected burnout in middle school teachers and which areas, if any, seem to be most affected by distance learning at this time. Such information will lead to a deeper understanding of the causes of teacher burnout and illuminate potential trends in teacher attrition. Identifying such risks factors could help teachers and districts adapt to meet the needs of their staff, therefore, preventing a potential wave of teacher attrition



Methodology

This study used a descriptive-quantitative design to measure burnout in three critical areas: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Forty-six middle school teachers across various disciplines involved in a hybrid/distance learning situation were surveyed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey (MBI-ES). The survey consisted of 22 items in which participants rated their feelings on a scale of 0 "Never" to 7 "Every day."

Sample survey items included:

"I feel emotionally drained from my work."
"I don't really care what happens to some of my students."

Implications

- ❖ Amid other crises going on during the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher attrition could become a widespread issue.
- ❖ Past studies have linked teacher burnout with higher rates of early retirement and leaving the field.
- ❖ Data in the present study suggest teachers are experiencing relatively low levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization; however, a small sample size in may have skewed the results.
- ❖ The overall lack of response could indicate higher rates of burnout than were detected in this study.
- ❖ Future studies with larger sample sizes are needed in order to draw more accurate conclusions.

1. Freudenberger, H. J. (1974). Staff burn-out. *Journal of Social Issues*, 30, 159-16.

2. Lemons, L. L., Brashears, M. T., Burriss, S., Meyers, C., & Price, M. A. (2015). Factors contributing to attrition as reported by leavers of secondary agriculture programs. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 56(4), 17- 30. doi:10.5032/jae.2015.04017