

Study of Contributing Factors and Countermeasures of Job Burnout of Teachers in Junior Middle Schools

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Abstract: Under the situation of emphasizing the enrollment rate, teachers in junior middle school work under enormous pressure for a long time, which easily results in job burnout. It not only has negative impact on teachers' physical and mental health, but also poses a great threat to the quality of teaching and the stability of teaching staff. Regarding this issue, this study mainly analyzes the main causes of teachers' job burnout from four aspects: society, schools, students, and teachers, as well as offers countermeasures to alleviate it from the above aspects.

Keywords: Job Burnout; Junior Middle School Teacher; Countermeasures.

1. Introduction

The reform about the basic education is being carried out in an all-round way in our country now. The result and changes of the reform will bring some huge pressure to teachers inevitably, such as the enrollment rate, the challenges of knowledge and experience, teaching ability and teaching methods. Besides, the age of junior middle school students is adolescence, which is not only the best stage for physical and mental growth, but also the most unstable stage. It means teachers must pay attention to their learning and take care of their mentality at the same time, which increases teachers' workload. Under these circumstances, job burnout appears, which refers to the exhaustion of emotion, attitude and behavior that is caused by teachers' inability to deal with their work well and smoothly when they are faced with the long-term pressure. It does serious harm to teachers' physical and mental health, student's health and learning, the quality of teaching and the stability of teaching staff. Therefore, this study investigates the contributing factors and countermeasures of job burnout to reduce the frequency of job burnout and promote the improvement of teaching quality.

2. Job Burnout of Teachers

2.1. Definition

The term "job burnout" was initially proposed by American clinical psychologist Feldburg in the 1970s (Zhao & Li, 2016). And he believes that job burnout is a state of emotional and mental exhaustion most likely to appear in our daily work. It is not only a state of psychological exhaustion caused by work, but also a state of emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long-term exposure to the great pressure of the work (Maslach et al., 2001).

In fact, teacher's job burnout is an extension of burnout in educational domain. The teaching profession is bound to face great pressure which comes from family, individual's work, public opinions, education reform and individual differences among students. The great pressure is likely to result in the job burnout of teachers in junior middle schools. Job burnout of teachers in junior middle schools then lead to them taking a passive attitude towards the students or their own work and result in teachers having a sense of frustration that they are

helpless at their work. So, it is obvious to draw a conclusion that teacher's sense of psychological exhaustion and the sense of frustration towards their work is teacher's job burnout.

2.2. Characteristics

Numerous studies have shown that the specific manifestations of teacher burnout mainly include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low self-efficacy (Jiang Jun, 2023).

Emotional exhaustion is a state where individuals feel psychologically exhausted due to the continuous accumulation of work pressure. They may feel powerless or lack the energy to think about work and life, feeling trapped in a low emotion. This state mainly comes from long-term stress in work and life. Psychologist Jayne Leonard believes that people who work in demanding jobs are prone to emotional exhaustion, such as junior middle school teachers who not only need to maintain high concentration for a long time during work, but also spend a lot of time thinking about work in their free time. Therefore, junior middle school teachers have a particularly severe emotional exhaustion.

Depersonalization refers to a person gradually becoming indifferent and distant from their emotions and behaviors when interacting with others. Job burnout is an important factor leading to depersonalization among junior middle school teachers. In long-term teaching work, teachers may experience fatigue, anxiety, and other problems due to heavy workload and pressure, making them increasingly distant from students and colleagues, showing indifference, impatience towards students, and lack of understanding and resistance towards colleagues. Some researchers believe that occupational stress can positively predict emotional exhaustion and depersonalization of teachers (Xie, 2022).

Low self-efficacy is mainly manifested in a negative evaluation of oneself, belittling the meaning and value of one's own work. In a teaching environment, repetitive teaching work and increasing work pressure can make teachers easily doubt their own abilities, negate their own achievements, and lead to a decrease in work enthusiasm and a lack of attention to those around them. It can be inferred from the common manifestations of job burnout that the poor psychological state of teachers not only affects their personal physical and mental health, but also may lead to a decline in

teaching quality.

3. The Overall Situation of Teacher Burnout

3.1. Social Environment Factors

The social environmental factors that lead to teacher burnout mainly include the following three aspects: teaching pressure, management pressure, and exam pressure.

For teaching pressure, it is known that teachers are always regarded as the main executive of educational activities. Therefore, the teaching effect and quality of junior middle school teachers have been closely concerned by schools and parents. In order to meet schools and parents' requirements, class teachers have no other choice but to invest more time and energy. If teachers' efforts are not recognized by schools and parents for a long time, they may have no interest in cultivating students and show no respect to them. In the long term, job burnout will come into being (Lv & Ling, 2014).

For management pressure, teachers are the person that children contact most apart from parents. Parents have many requirements and high expectations to teachers. Even the responsibility of guardianship that should be carried out by parents is also passed off to teachers. They propose that teachers should take the responsibility for students' thinking, learning and growth. However, the complex management tasks make teachers both physically and mentally tired, teachers have no time and energy to do other things. Long-term boring work makes teachers lose interest and enthusiasm in work.

For exam pressure, because of the current exam-oriented education, the enrollment rate has become a standard to measure the quality of school teaching and a yardstick to test whether teachers are qualified, which aggravates the job burnout.

Teacher occupation is a high pressure group, if the social support system lacks, when the pressure becomes overwhelming, it will develop into job burnout (Zhu & Wang, 2019).

3.2. School Management Factors

Teacher burnout is closely related to the current junior middle school teacher evaluation system (Yang & Duan, 2017). The teacher evaluation system is the most direct measure of teachers' work and self-worth. Whether the teacher evaluation system is reasonable and fair will greatly affect the teachers' work enthusiasm. However, the current teacher evaluation system is biased towards the excessive number of assessments and the single assessment standards. For the former, teachers need to spend a lot of energy to deal with the inspection and assessment of leaders, which makes teachers often fall into anxiety and worry. For the latter, although the school evaluation system for teachers has been improved, the most attention is still the student achievement and enrollment rate. For example, many schools adopt the system of survival of the fittest, clear rewards and penalties. Such an evaluation system, on the one hand, has a good effect on the school management and the improvement of teachers' professional quality. On the other hand, it also brings heavy psychological burden to teachers.

In addition, according to the national policy, the relevant regions need to undertake the corresponding curriculum reform plan. The national policy affects hundreds of schools. When the school receives the task of curriculum reform, it

should make efforts to implement it. Some schools impose apportionment on teachers without fully understanding the policy and without designing a reasonable implementation plan, which brings great challenges to teachers' teaching. The low quality of some middle-level leaders in the school also brings troubles to the teaching work of teachers. For example, the school often carries out formalist work inspection, which not only has no substantive help to improve the quality of education and teaching, but also makes teachers have to squeeze time to deal with it, which makes most teachers very repugnant.

In short, improper organizational management in schools can lead to teacher burnout behavior from the external environment.

3.3. Teachers' Personal Factors

There are many personal factors that contribute to job burnout of junior middle school teachers, among which subjective and objective factors have a significant impact.

From a subjective perspective, the character and personality of the teacher is a very important aspect that cannot be ignored when it comes to job burnout. Teachers who perceive emotions more clearly are prone to psychological problems. For example, competition and comparison among teachers can increase their work pressure, which may lead to a lack of cooperation among teachers and reduce opportunities for mutual support and communication which may make them feel lonely and helpless.

From an objective perspective, the factors that lead to teacher burnout include gender, position, teaching ages, professional levels and so on.

The gender of teachers is also an important factor leading to job burnout. Numerous studies have shown that female teachers are more prone to job burnout compared to male teachers, because they face greater work life conflicts compared to male teachers, especially under social role pressure, where women have to deal with more complex conflicts from work and life.

Compared to other teachers, the responsibility borne by a teacher in charge of a class is greater, the tasks faced are more trivial, and the energy required is also greater, so it is easier to experience professional burnout.

For teaching ages, on the one hand, new teachers may feel work pressure and challenges due to unfamiliarity with teaching, lack of experience and skills, and are prone to job burnout. On the other hand, teachers who have been engaged in educational work for a long time may feel a lack of motivation and enthusiasm due to teaching being too mechanized, dull and monotonous, and lacking freshness, leading to job burnout.

In addition, the professional level of teachers is also one of the important factors. With the development of the ages and the continuous updating of information, teachers need to constantly upgrade and iterate in teaching methods, teaching methods, teaching tools, and other aspects. The high demands for the teaching profession place high pressure on the teacher community. Under long-term influence, the emotional state of teachers is more prone to problems.

3.4. Student Factors

Middle school students are currently in their adolescence and may experience rebellious psychology. It is inevitable that there will be some bad behaviors among students, such as weariness of study, disrespect for teachers, skipping classes,

smoking, going to Internet cafes, etc. which is not easy for teachers to manage (Mao & Song, 2016). This not only increases the workload of teachers, but also makes them feel mentally exhausted.

4. Countermeasures of Teacher Burnout

Teachers will always be confronted with different kinds of problems or trouble in their work. If these problems cannot always be solved in time, it is easy for teachers to form psychological barriers, which will lead to the phenomenon of slack work. Therefore, it is necessary and urgent to eliminate or alleviate teachers' job burnout. According to the causes of junior middle school teachers' job burnout, the study puts forward some mitigation measures from the aspect of society, school, teachers themselves and students, so as to create a relaxed, pleasant and harmonious working atmosphere for teachers.

4.1. Changes of the Society

In order to fundamentally alleviate teachers' job burnout from the perspective of society, it is essential to consider many factors.

First of all, government should improve the salary of teachers. Junior middle school teachers undertake important teaching and education work, which need to pay a lot of effort, energy and time at present. However, the effort they invested is not equal to their salary. Teachers' salary cannot fully meet the family's living expenses such as house purchase and car purchase, which makes teachers produce strong life pressure and job burnout.

Secondly, in the society, it is necessary to create an atmosphere of respecting teachers so as to make teachers have a sense of professional satisfaction and pride. Local governments should publicize examples of teachers' positive energy, so that parents can truly realize that teachers really pay in teaching and change their views towards teachers.

Finally, from the view of the public, teachers should be offered more space. Teachers themselves are "educators", but the society has always attached many irrelevant "gossamer hats" to them. Therefore, the whole society should correctly understand the responsibilities and obligations of teachers and guide teachers to complete their teaching tasks properly, freely and happily, which will greatly alleviate teachers' job burnout.

4.2. Changes of School

4.2.1. Humanized Management

Instead of top-down management system, creating a reasonable and democratic one is essential, which means schools should let the teachers have the opportunity to participate in the school decisions so that they can really benefit from the school policy. At the same time, when a school formulates school rules or regulations, it should take into account the teachers' physical and mental health and the law of physical and mental development of students. Importantly, the school leaders should also fully listen to the opinions of the delegates and are willing to invest in manpower and financial resources to reform the problems that the teachers are most concerned about.

4.2.2. The Division of Labor Should be Reasonable

Teaching division is an important part of school management, which is closely related to the orderly

development of school teaching. As educators, teachers' job is to teach, educate and disabuse. However, due to the promulgation of various educational policies, teachers have increased many other types of work, such as management and research. As a result, the overall workload of teachers increases, resulting in a serious squeeze on the time spent in teaching, which may reduce the quality of teaching. At the same time, the psychological state of teachers will be disordered, which will easily lead to job burnout. Therefore, reducing the burden on teachers should decrease the workload unrelated to teaching. For example, schools can set up teachers who are specialized in class management, instead of being replaced by subject teachers.

4.2.3. Teachers' Evaluation Should be Diversified

It was found that the unreasonable teacher evaluation system leads to the lack of development of teachers' professional ability and level, which is also one of the important factors affecting teachers' job burnout (Zeng & Jiang, 2022). Schools cannot take scores as the evaluation criteria for teachers and students but should make the evaluation criteria diversified and reasonable. To build a scientific evaluation system, schools at all levels should establish the system based on curriculum reform and teachers' professional development. At the same time, schools should promote the comprehensive and coordinated development of teachers, build an equal and reasonable incentive mechanism, and make every school achieve fairness and justice. In addition, the school should also provide professional psychological counseling help for teachers.

4.3. Changes of Teachers Themselves

When it comes to the school, the society or the students, the change cannot be achieved immediately. However, in all the measures to alleviate job burnout, the teacher's own adjustment is the fastest and the most effective way. So the teachers can adjust their attitude and maintain a positive mood in order to always maintain an optimistic attitude in the face of adverse environment. There are several aspects teachers can adjust. Firstly, arrange teaching time and teaching plan reasonably. Teachers can review their own teaching behavior, and find out the main time period when they are prone to feel job burnout or have bad mood, and take corresponding measures in advance to prevent their negative teaching behavior. Secondly, strengthen self-identification with work. People will work harder only when they do what they think is valuable, which is no exception for teachers. Only when teachers themselves identify with their work from the bottom of their heart will they put more time and energy into their work to avoid the occurrence of job burnout. Teachers themselves should realize that their work is important and sacred so as to enhance their teaching enthusiasm and make more efforts to finish teaching activities. At the same time, teachers should also correct their work attitude. Teacher should clearly understand that teaching and educating is the essence of teachers' work, and money should not be the focus of their work. Finally, perfect one's own character and morality. There is a great relationship between teacher burnout and their own emotions. When teachers are in a negative mood and suffer their own emotional instability, they are most prone to job burnout. Therefore, teachers should take some measures constantly to improve their own moral character to avoid their negative emotions affecting teaching activities, such as learning the necessary psychological knowledge, dealing with family relations well, building a

good relationship with colleagues, conducting psychological counseling and so on.

4.4. Changes of Students

The influence between teachers and students is mutual. Teachers' negative mood and teaching behavior are also affected by students' performance to a certain degree. Therefore, students and their parents should show full respect for teachers (Ban Hua, 2010). Students can make some changes from the following aspects. First of all, students should actively cooperate with teachers, and seriously complete the learning tasks that are assigned by teachers so that teachers can work smoothly. For students, homework and other after class tasks assigned by teachers can not only help students review and consolidate the knowledge they have learned, but also provide an important guarantee for the smooth learning of follow-up courses (Chen Yong, 2013).

In addition, the cooperation of students and their parents with teachers' work should also be reflected in positive feedback and communication with teachers, so as to provide necessary opinions and suggestions for teachers' work. In this way, the burden of teachers' work will be reduced to a great extent and the sense of identity of teachers' work will be enhanced, which will in turn reduce the occurrence of job burnout.

Finally, for students, the understanding of teachers' work should also be shown in the acceptance of teachers' procrastination. Students should understand that due to the different teaching contents of each class, it was inevitable that some classes would be delayed (Wu Xue, 2014). The reason why teachers procrastinate is that they want to teach more knowledge to students and let students learn more knowledge. Therefore, students should accept the procrastination and have a better understanding of teachers' responsibility for work.

5. Conclusion

In a word, the job burnout of junior middle school teachers is a complex and serious problem, which needs the common attention and efforts of all sectors of society. Only through effective coping strategies and teachers' continuous efforts can teachers come out of the shadow of job burnout and better promote the all-round development of students.

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