ABSTRACT

The present study was designed to examine the psychological burnout among teachers in special and regular schools, within the framework of Cherniss model (1980a). Cherniss (1980a) in his model proposed that burnout was experienced due to the dynamic interactions between the attributes of the individual and the institutional environment provided to teachers at work.

The following hypotheses were tested:
1. The demographic characteristics will be significantly related to burnout and outcome measures in teachers of special and regular schools.
2. The effects of gender, school type and years of experience will be significant on worksetting factors (leadership, stimulation, feedback, interaction with colleagues, orientation, autonomy, workload, reality shock, scope of student contact, social isolation, role conflict and role clarity) separately and interactively.
3. Teachers of special and regular schools will significantly differ in their career orientations.
4. Teachers of different career orientations will differ significantly in the level of burnout experienced in the two types of schools.
5. The effects of gender, school type and years of experience will be significant on personal factors (supports and demands) separately and interactively.
6. The effects of gender, school type and years of experience will be significant on stress factors (organisational climate, lack of stimulation and fulfillment, problems with students, bureaucracy, incompetence) separately and interactively.
7. The effects of gender, school type and years of experience will be significant on burnout factors (greater self-interest, reduced work goals, emotional detachment, emotional detachment from colleagues, lessened idealism, lessened personal responsibility) separately and interactively.

8. The effects of gender, school type and years of experience will be significant on outcomes separately and interactively.

9. There will be significant intercorrelations among the worksetting, personal and stress factors, burnout and the outcome measures in teachers of special and regular schools.

10. Worksetting, personal and stress factors will significantly predict burnout in the teachers of special and regular schools.

11. Burnout will significantly predict the outcome measures in the teachers of special and regular schools.

The study used an ex post facto, 2 X 2 X 3 factorial research design. The three main sources of variance were gender, school type and years of experience. The data were obtained from male and female teachers from two types of schools, namely, special and regular schools, and having three different levels of experience, i.e., less, moderate and more experience.

The sample was selected by using a two stage procedure. At the first level, sixteen Government aided schools were selected, which included six regular schools and ten special schools. At a second level teachers were selected. Respondents for the present investigation included 308 full time male and female teachers 120 from regular schools and 188 from special schools. Of these 142 were males, and 166 were females.
The teachers selected were matched on gender, type of school and years of experience. The analysis was done at two different levels. At level one, the demographic, worksetting, personal and the stress factors were treated as the independent variables, and the burnout constituted the dependent variable. At the second level, the burnout was used as the independent variable and the outcomes as the dependent variable.

Data were collected by using questionnaires. The worksetting, personal, stress and the burnout scales were developed using the framework of Cherniss (1980a), while the scales for career orientations and the outcome measures were adapted. Personal information was gathered using a performa for demographic characteristics. All the scales were pretested and standardised. The reliability of all the scales for the sample was greater than .60.

The important findings were:

Demographic characteristics (age, socio-economic status, marital status and the level of education) of teachers in special and regular schools were not related to burnout and the outcome measures. Despite the non-significant relationships, some meaningful trends were observed, indicating that the older teachers and those having higher education experienced greater burnout while those who came from higher socio-economic status felt more responsible for the students and were more involved with them, they became less idealistic over the years. Teachers with higher education had much higher intentions to quit teaching in regular schools.

Female teachers in the two types of schools perceived their worksetting as more positive compared to their male counterparts. They perceived the worksetting as more
stimulating, allowing for greater scope of student contact and having lesser conflicts. Teachers in special and regular schools perceived their worksetting differentially, with teachers in special schools perceiving more workload, more intense and frequent contacts with students, more social isolation and more conflicts than the teachers in regular schools.

Teachers with more experience perceived fewer interpersonal interactions, but less of isolation and conflicts in both special as well as the regular schools.

Worksetting in special schools had direct relation to burnout, and an indirect relation with burnout through the stress score in regular schools. The worksetting factor of lack of proper training, emerged to be a good predictor of burnout in teachers of special schools. The worksetting factors of interpersonal interactions, role conflicts, work-overload, lack of orientation were related to greater self-interest. Teachers in special schools, who faced more role conflicts became emotionally detached.

The relationship between the worksetting and the burnout was not significant, for the teachers in regular schools. The worksetting was found to be only a necessary condition for burnout, as the association of worksetting was significant only through the stress score. This relationship were further confirmed by the regression analysis, in which the worksetting factors did not emerge as significant predictors of burnout, although, greater social isolation, lack of sufficient feedback, and greater role conflicts showed some relevance.

Teachers in special and regular schools varied in their career orientations. Artisans represented the largest group (58 percent) of teachers in special schools. The results were in line with the expectations as their appeared to be a fit between the expectations of the individuals and the demands made in the special schools. The
teachers in the two types of schools were comparable on careerist orientation, while self investors were few in the two types of schools.

Self investors in regular schools experienced greater burnout as compared to social activists, artisans and careerists. In special schools the careerists, self investors, artisans and social activists experienced similar levels of burnout. These findings were unexpected and departed from previous researches (Burke and Greenglass, 1988), which indicated that social activists were more prone, and the self-investors were less susceptible to experience burnout.

Female teachers had on themselves more demands to deal with, outside the work situation than the male teachers and the demands were much more for the less experienced female teachers. On the other hand, the more experienced male teachers received lesser support from significant others, but they perceived lesser demands imposed on them. Moderately experienced teachers in regular schools, and the less experienced teachers in special schools faced lesser demands.

Personal factors did not relate significantly to and predict the burnout in teachers. The findings were consistent with the previous researches (Constable and Russell, 1986; Russell, Altmaier and Van Velzen, 1987), but did not confirm the propositions of the Cherniss model (1980a). Lesser support received from the family, by the teachers in special and regular schools, contributed to their reduced workgoals, while excessive demands imposed on teachers resulted in emotional detachment from colleagues and their subsequent psychosomatic symptoms. Excessive demands from sources outside the work were found related to lessened personal responsibility.

The stress experienced in the two types of schools by the male and the female teachers differed. The results were in line with the previous researches (Samad, 1986).
Less experienced teachers found the stress more intolerable as compared to the moderate and more experienced teachers. Teachers in special schools experienced greater stress than the teachers in regular schools.

Stress was found to be a significant predictor of burnout for the teachers both in special and regular schools. The findings had support in some by previous researches (Shaw, Bensky and Dixon, 1981; Jackson and Schuler, 1983). Among the stress factors, lack of stimulation and fulfillment, bureaucratic hindrances and incompetence were found to correlate significantly with lessened personal responsibility in teachers of regular schools, while incompetence, problems with students, bureaucracy and the organizational climate predicted burnout.

In teachers of special schools, the organizational climate was significantly associated with lessened personal responsibility, while bureaucratic hindrances, lack of stimulation and fulfillment and problems with students were significantly correlated with emotional detachment. Lack of stimulation and fulfillment was found to significantly predict the burnout in teachers of special schools. The findings were in compliance with the Cherniss model (1980a).

Contrary to the expectations, teachers in special and regular schools did not differ significantly from each other in the experience of burnout. Both the teachers of special and regular schools were found to experience a moderate level of burnout. The results of the present investigation were supported by most of the past researches in India (Jain, 1991; Joshi and Mishra, 1992; Bagchi, 1993; Ratan, 1993; Mishra, 1994).

No significant gender differences were found in the experience of burnout. Teachers with moderate length of experience suffered greater burnout, as compared to the less and more experienced teachers. The results departed from the trends in the
previous researches which reported that the less experienced teachers suffered greater burnout (Zabel and Zabel, 1982; Schwab and Iwanicki, 1982, 1984).

For the teachers in special schools, lack of proper orientation and lack of stimulation and fulfillment were found to be good predictors of burnout. In teachers of regular schools, lack of feedback, more problematic students, greater role conflicts, bureaucratic hinderance, orientation and levels of competence were significant in the prediction of burnout.

Moderately experienced teachers were found more vulnerable to suffer from psychosomatic disorders, like headaches, stomachache, insomnia etc., compared to the less experienced teachers. The findings were in line with the expectations, but did not have much empirical support. Moderately experienced male teachers in special schools showed more psychosomatic symptoms and higher intentions to quit teaching. Gender differences in the experience of psychosomatic symptoms and intentions to quit were non-significant. The results were supported by Burke and Greenglass (1989).

Significant positive associations were found between burnout and the outcome measures. In teachers of special and regular schools burnout scores were found related to the psychosomatic symptoms and intentions to quit. The results were in line with previous researches (Jamuna and Ushashree, 1990). Burnout factors were identified as good predictors of outcome measures, i.e., psychosomatic symptoms and intentions to quit, since the variance explained by them was significant. The findings conformed with the previous researches (Burke, Deszca and Shearer, 1987; Burke and Greenglass, 1989a). The predictors in the two types of schools differed. In special schools the relevant predictors were lessened personal responsibility, emotional detachment, emotional detachment from colleagues, reduction in work goals and
lessened idealism, while in teachers of regular schools only lessened idealism was relevant in the prediction of outcome measures.

Following conclusions were drawn:

1. The demographic characteristics of the teachers and the personal variables were not important in the experience of burnout, unlike the Cherniss model.

2. The perceptions of worksetting as negative i.e. not providing sufficient opportunities for training, not stimulating enough, offering no feedback and freedom, excessively demanding etc. induced stress in teachers and resulted in their subsequent burning out in special as well as regular schools.

3. Male and female teachers in the two types of schools experienced similar levels of burnout.

4. Special educators did not differ much from the teachers in regular schools in the experience of burnout. Teachers in the two types of schools experienced a moderate level of burnout.

5. Teachers in their midcareers were more susceptible to the experience of burnout, than the novices and those with more years of experience in teaching.

6. Teachers in their mid career became vulnerable to the negative consequences of burnout in special and regular schools.

7. The worksetting in regular schools was the necessary condition, but stress was the sufficient condition to cause burnout.

8. The role of work setting in special schools was crucial, as the worksetting alone as well as in interaction with stress predicted the variance in burnout.
9. The different factors in the worksetting explained the experience of burnout for the teachers in special and regular schools.

10. Absence of sufficient opportunities for interpersonal interactions, positive feedback, bureaucratic hindrances, greater role conflicts and difficult and problematic students were good predictors of burnout.

11. Burnout in teachers of special and regular schools, frequently resulted in negative consequences, like psychosomatic symptoms and intentions to quit the teaching profession.

12. Overall, only a weak support was found for the Cherniss model in the present research.

The present research had some important implications. Firstly, the findings of the present study indicated the gaps in the professional training provided to the teachers, especially the special educators, which resulted in their burnout. The training programmes for the teachers required drastic changes in content and the methodology in order to be effective. Thus well thought training programmes should be designed by the training institutes like District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) and State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), besides the teachers' training colleges which should focus on:

(a) Imparting interpersonal skills to teachers to be able to successfully relate to students, administrators and colleagues. This would require incorporation of new modules in interpersonal skills.

(b) Training programmes should be made more reality oriented, by putting less reliance on theories, but more on practical knowledge and ability to innovate in the given situation.
The existing training programmes failed to emphasize the organisational conflict situations and the needed conflict resolution strategies, when in conflict with the co-workers or the administrators. The training programmes should train the teachers for the realistic school situation ingrained with sufficient skills for successful conflict resolution.

The findings indicated the need for frequent in-service or refresher courses for the teachers based on their needs and skill requirements.

Training programmes should incorporate modules on various stress reduction and group support techniques, which could be introduced by using workshops to lessen the isolation and to enhance group support through sharing.

Secondly, the various panels of worksetting, personal and stress factors separately were not sufficiently powerful to cause burnout, while only the interactions of these were effective in the prediction of burnout. The deviations in the findings pointed out the culture specificity of the model, as the Cherniss model was proposed and developed in West. This implied that the model may not be valid in the same form in the Indian context. It required certain modifications based on the collectivistic orientation of the Indian society. More emphasis should be given to the interactions among the individual and their work environment.

Thirdly, the findings indicated that the teachers especially the special educators have had activities and people in the environment outside their work, which gave their life a meaning. The future researches should thus attempt to identify meaningful domains in a person's life, to explore the existential perspective in understanding burnout (Pines and Aronson, 1988; Pines, 1990a, 1992b, 1994).
Fourthly, since the negative perceptions of the worksetting were found to include stress and resulted in subsequent burning out of teachers, it implied that attempts needed to be made on a priority basis to improve the worksetting of teachers. Teachers should be involved in the decision making process. In addition to this other worksetting factors like, scope of student contact, feedback to teachers about their efforts, lessening of excessive paper work in the schools, increasing teacher-student ratio to facilitate interactions between the teacher and the students, and the decentralization of work required the attention of the policy makers to make the worksetting less stressful for the teachers, and thereby reducing the chances of burnout among them.

Finally, the policy makers should look for mechanisms with in the system that could help the teachers to vent out their stress, anxieties and despair. There should be provisions for individual counselling or formation of support groups.

A few limitations of the present investigation were that it used only cross-sectional data to examine a developmental model, constraining the investigator from drawing inferences about causality. The generalisability of the results was also limited by the fact that the data were drawn from a Metropolitan city. Besides, a few items in the questionnaire dealt with the administration of the schools which may not have elicited the honest responses of teachers. The role of the personality factors was also not investigated by the present research, as these were not included in the Cherniss model (1980a). However, it appeared useful to incorporate them in the model to get a comprehensive picture of burnout experienced by the teachers in the two types of schools.
Future researches should focus to improve methods of measurement of burnout and investigate the process of burnout in a longitudinal study. The issue of teacher burnout should be widely studied in different teacher groups and in various settings to examine the generality of the phenomena. This could help make conclusive statement about the incidence, usefulness and the theory of burnout in the Indian cultural context. Future researchers may also differentiate across the different training programmes, and should attempt to identify the most and the least vulnerable teacher groups and settings in order to discern clearly the causal factors of burnout.