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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

**Background of the Problem**

The common assumption regarding professional teaching is that teachers leave their alma maters with degree in hand and plans of making the world a better place through the students assigned to them. Their careers start with well thought out plans, based in autonomy, and fresh with new ideas. Teachers are regarded as being driven to do the right thing, ready to convey their ideas to allow students to take them and create something new. Teachers, nonteachers so often imagine, are motivated by self-efficacy, which is the belief that one can succeed and do whatever one sets their mind to.

However, the idea of teachers as altruistic idealists is often unexpectedly dashed by a debilitating condition referred to as burnout, which has many definitions. For instance, according to the National Education Association (NEA; 2021), teacher burnout is often a temporary condition in which an educator has exhausted the personal and professional resources necessary to do their job. Demoralization may occur as a consequence of burnout, wherein an educator believes that they are unable to perform their duties in ways that uphold the high standards of the profession. Fragga (2019) found that the World Health Organization (WHO) updated its definition of burnout, which now refers to the phenomenon as a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. Burnout often precipitates teachers leaving their careers to pursue other professions.

Many researchers have considered whether teaching at primary and secondary levels has become more difficult since the pandemic, based on job satisfaction, motivation, and self-efficacy being challenged (Author, year; Author, year). When burnout manifests itself it is psychologically and physically draining (Smith et al., n.d.). Burnout can leave teachers feeling hopeless, incapable, cynical, and resentful. Burnout essentially changes a teacher’s attitude completely. The perception of a teacher experiencing burnout becomes that they have nothing else to give from a pervading sense of mental exhaustion (Smith et al., n.d.). The physical aspects of burnout according to ADA Medical Knowledge Team (2022) are (a) feeling tired during or throughout the school day, (b) taking more sick days, and (c) developing insomnia and/or headaches due to anxiety/depression related to the prospect of being in the school environment. Educators are more likely to experience burnout in schools that lack a proper support system to address their personal needs and problems they may encounter in their role (ADA Medical Knowledge Team, 2022). According to Moss (2022) the first step in addressing burnout is repeating and internalizing the mantra, burnout is about the organization not the people.

Addressing burnout would give hope to teachers, improving their attitudes about teaching, and reviving their energy to the job that they, presumably, once enjoyed. Paying attention to burnout in schools would further show teachers that they are cared about by the administration. Although burnout is a natural risk factor conditional to teaching and administrators should recognize this as a clear and present danger to teachers (Agyapong et al., 2023), it is nevertheless a condition that can be avoided. Safety nets with proactive measures should be in place to keep teacher burnout in check. As it stands, burnout is