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AUTHOR Seidman, Steven A.
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ABSTRACT

The relationship between teacher burnout and the use of various media in teaching was examined with data collected from 545 elementary and secondary teachers in the Fort Worth, Texas public school system. Subscales measured factors indicating teacher burnout, including teachers' perceptions of the degree of administrative support received, career satisfaction, ability to cope with the stresses related to teaching, and attitudes toward students. The Teacher Burnout Scale (Zager and Seidman, 1983), a demographic questionnaire, and a media utilization inventory were employed. Results suggest that teachers on the lower end of the four burnout dimensions tend to use certain media materials more frequently than teachers who are more burned out. Games, simulations, filmstrips, pictures, models, and videotapes were more heavily utilized by low burnout teachers, although no discernible differences emerged for motion pictures and computers. The results also indicate that teachers tend to use media materials less, or not at all, as burnout feelings increase. Twenty-two references are listed. (LMM)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER BURNOUT AND MEDIA UTILIZATION

Paper for presentation to the Research and Theory Division, Association for Educational Communications and Technology, Annual Conference Anaheim, California January 17-22, 1985

Presented by

Steven A. Seidman, Ph.D.
Ithaca College

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The Relationship Between
Teacher Burnout and Media Utilization

The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between teacher burnout and the use of various media in teaching. Data were collected from schoolteachers in the Fort Worth, Texas public school system, and analyzed, in an attempt to answer the question: Do teachers who are low in burnout use certain media materials more frequently than do teachers who are on the other end of the burnout spectrum?

In the past decade, researchers have reported that workers in the human service field have been susceptible to, what has been termed, the "burnout syndrome" (Cherniss, 1980b). According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), persons in the "helping professions," such as teaching, frequently exhibit negative attitudes towards their clients, as well as tend to evaluate their own work negatively. In addition, many workers report that they are emotionally and physically exhausted, due to an inability to cope positively with high job-related stress (Pines & Maslach, 1978). Burnout, in general, can be defined as "a syndrome of inappropriate attitudes towards clients and towards self, often associated with uncomfortable physical and emotional symptoms ranging from exhaustion and insomnia to migraine and ulcer," as well as with "deterioration of performance" (Kahn, 1978, p. 61).

"Teacher burnout" can be defined, more specifically, as a negative pattern of responding to stressful teaching events, to students, and to teaching as a career, as well as a perception that there is a lack of administrative support. The inability to cope with teaching problems

and with uncooperative students in a constructive manner (Pratt, 1978), and the failure of supervisory personnel to provide positive leadership (Cook, 1979) have been cited as factors that are associated with low teacher morale and teacher burnout.

Teaching, at all levels of the educational system, can be a stressful experience. Researchers have stated that a certain proportion of teachers become dissatisfied with their jobs, and eventually burn out (Bloch, 1977; Truch, 1980; Weiskopf, 1980). A survey, by the National Education Association, found that 35% of public schoolteachers were dissatisfied with their current teaching jobs, and (of that group), almost 9% were highly dissatisfied ("NEA Survey," 1980). More than two-fifths (41%) of the teachers polled in the 1983 NEA Survey expressed doubts that they would become teachers again, if they had the chance to start over ("Given a Second Chance," 1983). Certainly, job dissatisfaction and burnout have contributed to high rates of teacher absenteeism and turnover, as well as to low school morale (Cunningham, 1982). Burnout is contagious. When dissatisfied and depressed teachers are present in a school, others can be infected with the "disease," in which negativism, lethargy and despair are symptoms. In a short period of time, the entire organization can become a dispirited place (Freudenberger, 1977).

While some school teachers cope well with job-related stress, others do not (for a variety of reasons, both personal and organizational). It has been suggested that teachers who have had an adequate professional preparation, and who have been encouraged and supported in their efforts to do a good job are less prone to burn out (Spaniol & Caputo, 1980). Therefore, teachers who report that their efforts are supported by their administrators, who have had a good media-utilization component

in their preservice and/or inservice training programs, and who are not enervated by the burnout syndrome should be more likely to use media in their teaching.

Of course, there are many reasons (technological, administrative/institutional, economic, and personal) why teachers do not employ media (Gillet, 1973; Rose, 1982). Gillet (1973) suggested that weariness (associated with burnout) and laziness were factors in the failure to utilize media. Rose (1982) believed that educators resist using instructional technologies due, in part, to the lack of motivation "to adapt course content to the technology, to manipulate the equipment, and/or to prepare software" (p. 12). One aspect of burnout is the feeling that the job and the clients are not worth the effort. An extremely burned-out individual is more likely to cope with job-related stress with expressions of anger, sadness and/or depression, not by trying harder. Burnout is characterized by a lack of enthusiasm and excitement by workers (Cherniss, 1980a). The regular use of many (though probably not all) media requires some motivation and exertion of effort, as well as positive administrative support.

This study investigated whether teachers who scored low on the subscales of an instrument designed to measure teacher burnout used media materials in their classrooms more frequently than did teachers who had higher scores on the subscales. The subscales measured teachers' perceptions about the degree of administrative support received, their career satisfaction, their ability to cope with the stresses related to teaching, and their attitudes towards students -- all major factors underlying teacher burnout (Seidman & Zager, 1984).

Method

Sample

A total of 545 public schoolteachers participated in the study in early April, 1984. All were members of the Fort Worth Classroom Teachers' Association, which distributed 1490 data packets to teachers in all schools with at least 24 members. The return rate was thus 37%. It also should be noted that 79% of all Fort Worth public schoolteachers belong to this teachers' association. In the various statistical analyses, the number of valid cases ranged from 470 to 483, due to the exclusion of 32 special education teachers, and the elimination of those participants who submitted forms with multiple responses or missing data.

These regular classroom teachers were predominantly female (78.9%) and married (68.1%). The median age of the sample was 42, and the median years of teaching experience was 15. Slightly more than half (51.2%) of the teachers indicated that the bachelor's degree was the highest they held; 48.4% reported that the master's was the highest degree held; only 0.4% had earned a doctor's degree. Finally, 40.9% of the Fort Worth sample were elementary schoolteachers, 29.1% taught in middle or junior high schools, and 30.1% worked at the high school level. The characteristics of schoolteachers in this sample were similar to those of teachers in recent NEA surveys ("Given a Second Chance," 1983; "NEA Survey," 1980; Turner, 1983), except there was a higher proportion of females in the present study. Similar percentages of both the Fort Worth sample (73.3%) and those in the national, NEA survey (74%) indicated that they were relatively satisfied with their teaching careers ("Given a Second Chance," 1983).

Instruments

The Teacher Burnout Scale (Zager & Seidman, 1983), a demographic questionnaire, and a media utilization inventory were employed in this study. The Teacher Burnout Scale is a 21-item, Likert-type scale with six response options ("strongly," "moderately," and "slightly" agree or disagree). It has four subscales: (a) perceived administrative support, (b) career satisfaction, (c) coping with job-related stress, and (d) attitudes toward students. The reliability and validity of the subscales is high, according to Seidman and Zager (1984). The Teacher Burnout Scale (broken down into subscales) is presented in Table 1. The media utiiization inventory also used the Likert-scale format to measure the frequency that materials for 11 different media (e.g., filmstrips, motion pictures, and computer programs) were used in one's teaching. Seven response categories were offered to participants: "Never" (0 points), "A few times a year or less" (1), "Once a month or less" (2), "A few times a month" (3), "Once a week" (4), "A few times a week" (5), and "Every day" (6).

Data Analysis

The scores on the subscales of the Teacher Burnout Scale were summed. Then these subscale scores were correlated with the frequency of utilization of materials for each of the media (i.e., Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated). Additionally, teachers with low scores on the four subscales (i.e., equal to or below an average of 2.0 per item) and those with high scores (i.e., equal to or above an average of 5.0 per item) were placed in "low burnout" and "high burnout" groups, respectively, and their utilization of media materials was compared, using t-tests, on the four dimensions of teacher burnout.

Results

As shown in Tables 2 through 5, a relationship exists between the frequency that certain media materials are utilized and teachers' attitudes about their careers and their students, as well as how well they cope with teaching-related stress and how they view their administrators. The negative Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients indicate that, in general, teachers who employed various media materials (with motion pictures, overhead transparencies, and computer programs being notable exceptions) are somewhat more satisfied with their teaching careers, cope better with job-related stress, and have a more positive attitude toward students and administrators. Statistically significant correlation coefficients, for the total sample, ranged from -.16 to -.08.

The correlational analysis of the combined data from all three types of school (i.e., elementary, middle/junior high, and high school levels) thus revealed the existence of a relationship between the utilization of certain media materials and the dimensions of teacher burnout. However, separate correlational analyses (also reported in Tables 2 through 5) showed that this relationship was strongest at the elementary level (at which 17 of 44 Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were significant at the .05 level) and weakest at the high school level (3 of 44 were significant). Appropriately, the correlational analysis for the middle/junior high school teachers (10 significant coefficients out of 44) placed them in between the other two groups. One should keep in mind, in interpreting these results, that the elementary group was larger than the other two groups, thus making it easier for the correlation coefficients for elementary teachers to attain statistical significance.

In particular, elementary schoolteachers who used filmstrips more frequently had more positive attitudes toward students (r = -.27), felt more satisfied about their careers (r = -.18), coped better with job-related stress (r = -.16), and believed that they received more support from administrators (r = -.16). Use of video tapes, at the elementary level, also was significantly correlated with these four factors of teacher burnout (r = -.21, -.28, -.14, and -.15, respectively). In addition, the frequency that models and 35mm slides were utilized by elementary teachers was significantly correlated to three of four burnout factors, and the use of audio tapes to two of the four dimensions.

At the middle/junior high school level, teachers who employed games and simulations felt more positively about students (r = -.21) and about their careers (r = -.19) than did colleagues who used these materials less often. Those who utilized phonograph records and models more frequently coped better with teaching-related stress (r = -.16 and -.17, respectively) and had greater career satisfaction (r = -.14 and -.17).

High school teachers who used video tapes in their classrooms coped better with on-the-job stress (r = -.17) and had a more positive attitude toward students (r = -.14) than did teachers who used video tapes less frequently. On the other hand, there was a tendency for high school teachers who were more dissatisfied with their careers to utilize computer programs more often than did their more satisfied colleagues (r = .14).

Finally, means were calculated for the frequency of utilization of each of the 11 different media by "low" and "high burnout" teachers on each of the four subscales of the Teacher Burnout Scale. As previously mentioned, only teachers who (on the average) were in strong or moderate agreement with "low burnout" items, on the subscales (after recoding), were included in this analysis. The "low burnout" group comprised 26% of the total sample for Subscale 1, 27% for Subscale 2, 24% for Subscale 3, and 18% for Subscale 4. Teachers who were in strong or moderate disagreement with "high burnout" items made up 6%, 14%, 6%, and 7% of the sample for Subscales 1 through 4, respectively.

T-tests revealed (as reported in Tables 6 through 9) that 14 (of 44 possible) pairs of means were reliably different. As Table 6 indicates, teachers who believed that they received a great deal of support and encouragement from their administrators used filmstrips, games and simulations, overhead transparencies, and pictures from books and magazines more frequently than did teachers who perceived that administrators failed to support and praise their efforts ($p < .05$). Those who viewed their teaching careers positively employed games and simulations, video tapes, models ($p < .01$), filmstrips, and audio tapes ($p < .05$) more often than did teachers who were dissatisfied with their careers (as reported in Table 7). Teachers who coped positively with job-related stress made more frequent use of models ($p < .01$) than did those who coped negatively (see Table 8). Finally, as Table 9 shows, teachers who had a positive attitude about students utilized filmstrips ($p < .01$), games and simulations, book and magazine pictures, models, and video tapes ($p < .05$) more frequently than did the teachers who held negative sentiments.

Discussion

The results of this study should be interpreted with some caution. While the demographic and attitudinal data obtained from the Fort Worth sample would seem to indicate that it is fairly representative of the public-schoolteacher population of the United States, all the respondents were members of a teachers' association and there was a higher proportion of female teachers than would be present in a national sample. Furthermore, the 37% rate of return (although not atypical for studies such as this one) injects some further doubt about the sample. In addition, the teachers in the study were not asked about the availability of equipment and software, as well as about their training in media utilization. Data on these factors should be collected in future investigations.

Despite the above reservations, one can come to some tentative conclusions. The correlational analyses revealed that teachers on the lower end of the four burnout dimensions tended to use certain media materials more frequently than did teachers who were more burned out. This seemed to be somewhat more the case for elementary teachers than for public schoolteachers at higher educational levels. While the relationship between media utilization and teacher burnout is not a particularly strong one (in terms of the magnitude of the correlation coefficients) or present for all media materials, it is apparent that the relationship exists. The lack of an association between teacher burnout and the utilization of motion pictures, overhead transparencies, and computer programs, in general, can be explained by the probable use of such materials by teachers at all levels of career satisfaction, attitudes toward students, coping with job-related

stress, and perceived administrative support. Films are often obtained by supervisors or interested teachers and shown to more-than-one class. Overhead transparencies can be made quickly and can function as software for "electronic chalkboards." Utilization of computer programs, if available at all, is as likely to be imposed on unwilling teachers as on those eager to employ this new technology. In fact, there is some evidence in this study to suggest that forcing teachers to use computers could contribute to higher burnout levels for high school instructors.

Use of other media materials, particularly video tapes, filmstrips, 35mm slides, and models, would seem to demand a more positive attitude and more energy on the part of a teacher. As Bellamy, Whitaker, and White (1978) wrote: "The majority of teachers are afraid of media equipment, are unaware of resources available, and are unwilling to expend the extra effort required to locate media resources, plan for the use of such resources in a presentation, or make arrangements for set-up and operation of necessary equipment" (p. 7). Although factors other than burnout no doubt affect media utilization to some extent, it would appear that teachers who are victims of the "burnout syndrome" generally use media materials less frequently in their classrooms.

The analysis of the media-utilization data of the "low" and "high burnout" groups (which together comprised between 25% to 41% of the sample) revealed that generally teachers with moderate to extreme burnout feelings used media materials less than did those who had the opposite beliefs. Almost every media-utilization mean for the "low burnout" groups, on all four dimensions, were higher

than were the means for the "high burnout" groups, with differences for games and simulations and for filmstrips statistically significant on three of the four subscales. Pictures from books and magazines, as well as models and video tapes, also were more heavily utilized by "low burnout" teachers, as shown by statistically significant t-test results. In fact, the only two media for which no discernible differences emerged were motion pictures and computers.

The results of this study, although exploratory, indicate that teachers tend to use media materials less (or not at all) as burnout feelings increase. Does teacher burnout cause victims of this syndrome to utilize media less, or does the failure to employ media enhance such feelings? We cannot answer this question, but it seems safe to at least conjecture that the unwillingness to use media is both a symptom and a cause of burnout. Gray (1982) suggested that the employment by teachers of a variety of stimulating media programs and instructional strategies could help them "overcome burnout and face [their] old jobs with renewed interest" (p. 22). It would seem that many public schoolteachers may become negative about their students and their careers, and at some point "give up." Such emotionally and physically drained persons, who are insensitive to the needs of their students, are unlikely to use most media very often in their teaching to motivate and instruct (if they ever did).

How can we lower burnout levels and increase the frequency that various media are utilized by teachers? It is possible that a concerted effort to interest schoolteachers to use instructional media materials could help revitalize those persons who are "burning out." If there is any hope of this strategy succeeding, then it is necessary that

those concerned with teacher education and professional development provide training programs and assistance in media utilization, as well as arrange for workshops, retreats, self-support groups, and other approaches that have proven to help in alleviating burnout among teachers.

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Table 1

The Teacher Burnout Scale

Subscale 1: Perceived Administrative Support

*3. I get adequate praise from my supervisors for a job well done.
8. I feel that the administrators are willing to help me with classroom problems, should they arise.
11. I believe that my efforts in the classroom are unappreciated by the administrators.
15. My supervisors give me more criticism than praise.
18. I feel that the administrators will not help me with classroom difficulties.
20. The administration blames me for classroom problems.

Subscale 2: Satisfaction with Teaching Career

1. I look forward to teaching in the future.
5. I am glad that I selected teaching as a career.
10. Teaching is more fulfilling than I had expected.
12. If I had it to do all over again, I would not become a schoolteacher.
19. I look forward to each teaching day.

Subscale 3: Coping with Job-Related Stress

2. I feel depressed because of my teaching experiences.
4. The teaching day seems to drag on and on.
7. My physical illnesses may be related to the stress in this job.
9. I find it difficult to calm down after a day of teaching.
13. I feel that I could do a much better job of teaching if only the problems confronting me were not so great.
14. The stresses in this job are more than I can bear.

Subscale 4: Attitudes Toward Students

6. The students act like a bunch of animals.
16. Most of my students are decent people.
17. Most students come to school ready to learn.
21. Students come to school with bad attitudes.

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*Numbers indicate the placement of the item, when administered.

Table 2

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Use of Different Media Materials and Perceived Administrative Support (Subscale 1 of Teacher Burnout Scale)

Medium	Elementary School Teachers (N = 191-192)	Middle/Junior High School Teachers (N = 138-139)	High School Teachers (N = 139-141)	Total Sample (N = 470-472)
Filmstrips	-.16*	-.14*	-.06	-.10*
35mm Slides	-.14*	-.04	-.10	-.10*
Pictures from Books and Magazines	-.08	-.01	.04	-.01
Games and Simulations	-.07	-.10	-.11	-.06
Motion Pictures	.01	-.07	.13	.03
Video Tapes	-.15*	-.14*	.05	-.07
Audio Tapes	-.15*	.01	.07	-.04
Phonograph Records	.00	-.01	.11	.04
Overhead Transparencies	-.02	-.15*	-.02	-.06
Models	-.17**	.03	-.08	-.08*
Computer Programs	.02	-.13	-.02	-.04

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 3

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Use of Different Media Materials and Career Satisfaction (Subscale 2 of Teacher Burnout Scale)

Medium	Elementary School Teachers (N = 191-192)	Middle/Junior High School Teachers (N = 141-142)	High School Teachers (N = 141-143)	Total Sample (N = 474-476)
Filmstrips	-.18**	-.14	.00	-.13**
35mm Slides	-.17*	-.03	-.01	-.08*
Pictures from Books and Magazines	.02	-.16*	-.11	-.09*
Games and Simulations	-.08	-.19*	-.14	-.15**
Motion Pictures	-.05	.07	.09	.00
Video Tapes	-.28***	-.08	-.06	-.14**
Audio Tapes	-.10	-.13	-.03	-.10*
Phonograph Records	-.03	-.18*	.02	-.09*
Overhead Transparencies	.00	-.10	-.01	-.04
Models	-.13*	-.14*	-.12	-.14**
Computer Programs	.02	-.07	.14*	.03

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 4

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Use of Different Media Materials and Coping with Job-Related Stress (Subscale 3 of Teacher Burnout Scale)

Medium	Elementary School Teachers (N = 193-194)	Middle/Junior High School Teachers (N = 134-135)	High School Teachers (N = 145-147)	Total Sample (N = 474-476)
Filmstrips	-.16*	-.12	-.06	-.11**
35mm Slides	-.08	.12	-.08	-.03
Pictures from Books and Magazines	-.06	-.02	-.07	-.05
Games and Simulations	-.10	-.09	-.12	-.09*
Motion Pictures	.02	.02	.12	.04
Video Tapes	-.14*	.00	-.17*	-.12**
Audio Tapes	-.02	-.02	-.06	-.03
Phonograph Records	.01	-.16*	.09	-.01
Overhead Transparencies	.02	-.08	-.04	-.02
Models	-.07	-.17*	-.01	-.08*
Computer Programs	-.04	-.09	-.04	-.05

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 5

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Use of Different Media Materials and Attitudes Toward Students (Subscale 4 of Teacher Burnout Scale)

Medium	Elementary School Teachers (N = 196-197)	Middle/Junior High School Teachers (N = 140-141)	High School Teachers (N = 145-146)	Total Sample (N = 482-484)
Filmstrips	-.27***	-.10	.06	-.15**
35mm Slides	-.15*	.06	-.12	-.10*
Pictures from Books and Magazines	-.14*	-.03	-.04	-.10*
Games and Simulations	-.10	-.21**	-.09	-.14**
Motion Pictures	-.06	.00	.04	-.04
Video Tapes	-.21**	-.11	-.14*	-.16***
Audio Tapes	-.13*	-.11	-.06	-.12**
Phonograph Records	-.04	-.13	-.02	-.09*
Overhead Transparencies	-.01	-.02	.00	-.01
Models	-.17**	.02	-.02	-.09*
Computer Programs	-.03	-.11	.11	.00

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 6

Mean Media-Utilization Scores for Negative and Positive Administrative Support Groups (Subscale 1 of Teacher Burnout Scale)

Medium	Negative Administrative Support Group (N = 30)	Positive Administrative Support Group (N = 127-129)	t
Filmstrips	1.33	2.00	2.29*
35mm Slides	.50	.71	1.34
Pictures from Books and Magazines	1.93	2.82	2.26*
Games and Simulations	1.87	2.81	2.45*
Motion Pictures	1.33	1.48	.49
Video Tapes	.57	.92	1.95
Audio Tapes	1.40	1.58	.48
Phonograph Records	2.07	2.16	.21
Overhead Transparencies	2.40	3.26	2.07*
Models	1.50	2.08	1.38
Computer Programs	1.03	1.29	.57

*$p < .05$.

Table 7

Mean Media-Utilization Scores for Negative and Positive Career Satisfaction Groups (Subscale 2 of Teacher Burnout Scale)

Medium	Negative Career Satisfaction Group (N = 71)	Positive Career Satisfaction Group (N = 132-134)	t
Filmstrips	1.56	1.99	2.14*
35mm Slides	.54	.71	1.26
Pictures from Books and Magazines	2.83	3.31	1.70
Games and Simulations	2.21	3.05	2.89**
Motion Pictures	1.65	1.54	-.49
Video Tapes	.62	1.10	3.16**
Audio Tapes	1.17	1.71	2.30*
Phonograph Records	2.00	2.59	1.83
Overhead Transparencies	2.92	3.28	1.19
Models	1.59	2.47	2.74**
Computer Programs	1.14	.95	-.65

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 8

Mean Media-Utilization Scores for Negative and Positive Coping with Job-Related Stress Groups (Subscale 3 of Teacher Burnout Scale)

Medium	Negative Coping Group (N = 30)	Positive Coping Group (N = 116-118)	t
Filmstrips	1.50	2.01	1.76
35mm Slides	.43	.62	.87
Pictures from Books and Magazines	3.00	3.03	.09
Games and Simulations	2.63	2.91	.65
Motion Pictures	1.67	1.38	-.88
Video Tapes	.60	1.06	1.90
Audio Tapes	1.40	1.54	.39
Phonograph Records	2.30	2.35	.10
Overhead Transparencies	2.43	3.02	1.38
Models	1.20	2.33	2.69**
Computer Programs	.97	1.25	.63

**$p < .01$.

Table 9

Mean Media-Utilization Scores for Negative and Positive Attitudes Toward Students Groups (Subscale 4 of Teacher Burnout Scale)

Medium	Negative Attitudes Toward Students Group (N = 33)	Positive Attitudes Toward Students Group (N = 87-88)	t
Filmstrips	1.36	2.24	3.06**
35mm Slides	.45	.76	1.78
Pictures from Books and Magazines	2.48	3.45	2.45*
Games and Simulations	2.42	3.25	2.04*
Motion Pictures	1.79	1.66	-.41
Video Tapes	.55	1.16	2.58*
Audio Tapes	1.09	1.73	1.78
Phonograph Records	1.94	2.80	1.91
Overhead Transparencies	2.94	3.43	1.19
Models	1.79	2.52	1.72
Computer Programs	1.06	.95	-.27

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.