

Teacher burnout causing exodus from the profession, study finds

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The risk of teacher attrition from burnout may be worse than it has ever been, according to a study involving the University of York.

Teacher attrition continues to be a global and increasing concern for school leaders and policy makers.

A joint study from York St John University and University of York has revealed that burnout increases the chance of teachers leaving the profession, with some estimates suggesting that over a third of new teachers leave the profession within five years.

Global data

Published in *Teaching and Teacher Education*, the research by Dr. Daniel Madigan (York St John University) and Dr. Lisa Kim (University of York) highlighted that burnout is one of, if not the, strongest predictor of teachers' intentions to leave the profession.

Their study, a meta-analysis of previously

published studies examining burnout, looked at global data from the last 35 years across primary, secondary, and tertiary education.

According to research, burnout in teachers is comprised of three symptoms: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced accomplishment. These symptoms have wide-ranging consequences for teachers.

The studies examined by Madigan and Kim's research show that burnout is associated with lower levels of job satisfaction and worse physical and mental health.

Prevention

Dr. Madigan, Senior Lecturer in Health Psychology at York St John University, said: "We sought to understand why teachers leave the profession at such alarming rates. Most notably, we found that teacher burnout increased the chance of teachers intending to leave their jobs.

"Significantly we found that the strength of this relationship, and therefore risk of teacher attrition from burnout, is increasing over time. In other words, teachers who experience burnout are likely to intend to leave the profession and are more likely to do so than at any time in the past 35 years."

Dr. Kim, Lecturer in Psychology in Education at the University of York, added: "The teaching profession is an important and valuable profession. Yet, our findings indicate that burnout is a significant reason as to why they may be considering leaving the profession.

"We need to find ways to encourage them to stay; and preventing and tackling burnout may be an important way to do this."

Pandemic

Research has shown that while attrition is a problem in most occupations, teachers leave the profession at much higher rates compared to other occupations.

This is a global issue, and it is likely that it has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Protecting teachers from [burnout](#) should be central to international policy aimed at reducing [teacher](#) turnover, the authors say.

More information: Daniel J. Madigan et al, Towards an understanding of teacher attrition: A meta-analysis of burnout, job satisfaction, and teachers' intentions to quit, *Teaching and Teacher Education* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.tate.2021.103425](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103425)

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