



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANISATIONAL ROLES AND
COMMUNICATION CLIMATE WITH BURNOUT AMONG TEACHERS
IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KLANG DISTRICT**

AANANTHI A/P THURAIAMY

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By

AANANTHI A/P THURAISAMY

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Master of Science**

October 2002



SPECIAL DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to ...

My parents ...

Mr. A. Thuraisamy and Mrs. P. Savapakiam ...

**... for their continuous support, encouragement, patience,
understanding and love,**

My sister ...

Selvarani ... for simply being there whenever needed,

My mentors ...

Pak Joko and Ibu Tuti ...

... for their advice, motivation, support, care and kindness,

My good friend ...

**Cik Norhafidah Ibrahim ... for helping out everywhere with
everything,**

My dearest friend ...

**Mrs. Komathy Saravanan ... for her generosity, faith, interest
and assistance.**

Thank you very much !

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

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Chairperson : Narimah Ismail, Ph.D.

Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication

This study was conducted to determine the extent of burnout experienced by teachers in secondary schools in Klang District as well as to examine the relationship between organisational communication factors and burnout. Simple random sampling was used to select three secondary schools from three different clusters of schools in the Klang District. A total of 136 teachers from these three schools participated in this study. The study used self-administered questionnaires as the research instrument. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Inferential statistics such as Pearson Correlation and T-test were used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. A significance level of 0.05 was used.

This study discovered that the teachers experienced moderate level of burnout. The perceived organisational roles and communication climate among teachers within the selected schools were generally moderate.

Organisational roles were the main source of burnout. These stressors include role conflict and role ambiguity. Non-conducive communication climate also contributed toward burnout. Burnout had significant positive relationship with organisational roles and significant negative relationship with communication climate respectively.

This study recommended that organisational roles and communication climate should be given serious attention by the school administration whereby interaction in the workplace should enhance conducive communication climate and reduce the extent of role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by teachers. The administrators should share their ideas, suggestions and decisions through open discussions and agreement with teachers in order to help reduce role conflict and role ambiguity among teachers. There is a need for administrators to provide social support to teachers to buffer the negative effects of role conflict and role ambiguity on job satisfaction in order to tackle the problem of burnout among teachers.

It is recommended that future research on burnout focus on teachers in different settings such as preschools, primary schools and secondary schools across the country. Teachers from other types of schools such as smart schools, vocational schools and boarding schools may also be focused. A comparative study of burnout among teachers from Malay, Chinese and Tamil primary schools can be conducted in order to better understand the occurrence of the phenomena of burnout. Burnout studies can also be conducted using interviews and observation methods besides administering questionnaires.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**HUBUNGAN DI ANTARA PERANAN ORGANISASI DAN IKLIM
KOMUNIKASI DENGAN *BURNOUT* DI KALANGAN GURU-GURU
SEKOLAH MENENGAH TERPILIH DI DAERAH KLANG**

Oleh

AANANTHI A/P THURAISAMY

Oktober 2002

Pengerusi : Narimah Ismail, Ph.D.

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Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengenal pasti tahap *burnout* yang dialami oleh guru-guru di sekolah menengah di Daerah Klang dan juga mengkaji hubungan di antara faktor-faktor komunikasi organisasi dengan *burnout*. Tiga buah sekolah menengah dipilih secara persampelan rawak mudah daripada tiga kelompok sekolah di Daerah Klang. Seramai 136 orang guru dari tiga buah sekolah telah mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan borang soal-selidik. Data yang diperolehi dianalisis dengan menggunakan statistik diskriptif dan inferensi. Bagi menjawab persoalan kajian dan menguji hypotesis kajian, statistik inferensi seperti Pearson Correlation dan ujian T digunakan. Aras signifikan 0.05 telah digunakan pada ujian.

Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa guru-guru mengalami tahap *burnout* yang sederhana. Persepsi guru-guru terhadap peranan organisasi dan iklim komunikasi di sekolah-sekolah terpilih ini pada umumnya adalah pada tahap sederhana juga.

Peranan organisasi adalah punca utama *burnout*. Punca ini meliputi konflik peranan dan kekaburan peranan. Iklim komunikasi yang kurang kondusif juga menyumbang kepada masalah *burnout*. *Burnout* mempunyai perkaitan yang signifikan secara positif dengan peranan organisasi dan perkaitan yang signifikan secara negatif dengan iklim komunikasi.

Kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa peranan organisasi dan iklim komunikasi harus diberikan perhatian yang serius oleh pihak pentadbiran sekolah di mana interaksi di tempat kerja dapat mewujudkan iklim komunikasi yang kondusif serta sebanyak mungkin mengurangkan konflik peranan dan kekaburan peranan yang dialami oleh guru-guru. Pihak pentadbir perlu berkongsi idea, cadangan dan keputusan melalui perbincangan terbuka dan persetujuan anggota-anggotanya supaya dapat membantu mengurangkan konflik peranan dan kekaburan peranan di kalangan guru-guru. Pihak pentadbir perlu memberikan sokongan sosial kepada guru-guru untuk mengurangkan kesan negatif konflik peranan dan kekaburan peranan ke atas kepuasan kerja supaya dapat menangani masalah *burnout* di kalangan guru-guru.

Adalah dicadangkan kajian selanjutnya tentang *burnout* melibatkan guru-guru dari persekitaran yang berbeza seperti guru-guru dari prasekolah, sekolah rendah dan menengah di seluruh negara. Guru-guru dari jenis sekolah yang berlainan seperti sekolah bestari, sekolah vokasional dan sekolah berasrama penuh juga boleh diberi tumpuan. Satu kajian perbandingan di kalangan guru-guru dari sekolah kebangsaan Melayu dan sekolah jenis kebangsaan Cina dan Tamil boleh dijalankan untuk memahami dengan lebih mendalam tentang kejadian fenomena

burnout. Kajian *burnout* boleh juga dibuat dengan menggunakan kaedah seperti temuduga dan pemerhatian selain daripada menggunakan borang soal selidik.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will introduce the phenomenon of burnout in organisation and discusses the teaching profession and burnout, background of the study, statement of problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study and limitations of the study.

The Problem of Burnout in Organisation

Stress and burnout are now recognised features of contemporary life. According to Harden (1999), stress and burnout induced by work results in about 20 million days lost each year in the UK at a cost of more than £12 billion. According to a survey commissioned for the 1998 Mental Health Awards, 93% of managers claimed that they suffered from excessive or moderate levels of stress and burnout in their work and 80% felt that stress and burnout was damaging to productivity (Harden, 1999).

Job burnout is occurring at critical levels in today's workforce (Leiter & Maslach, 2001). Employees in every level of the workforce are experiencing this phenomenon called burnout. Both white-collar and blue-collar workers experience stresses and feel insecure, misunderstood, undervalued and alienated in the workplaces. According to Leiter and Maslach (2001) highly qualified people

working in a wide range of professions are vulnerable to burnout. Burnout is a crucial issue for businesses committed to quality and organisations that are innovating constantly because such organisations need top performance from talented people.

Burnout thrives because of mismatches between people and their jobs (Leiter & Maslach, 2001). Burnout is not primarily a problem of the individual, but rather the social environment in which people work. The price paid for this burnout not only affects the job, but also personal functioning. Therefore, managers must ask themselves what can be done, for they cannot slow down the pace of organisational, technological or societal change. Yet they realise that these changes strain the creative energy of their staff to the limit.

With all the changes going on in the workplace, the environment is not what it was years ago. It has lost the close-knit atmosphere and become a cold, hostile demanding environment not only economically but psychologically. The root of the problem appears to lie in economic trends, technology, management philosophy and organisational communication. People and products are no longer valuable commodities and cash flow is the bottom line (Leiter & Maslach, 1997).

According to Miller (2000), there is always someone who after deciding enough is enough walks off from his career after many years of service. This is because the person believes life is too short and there is more to it than his or her current job offers. This is due to the overwhelming effects of burnout everywhere. Miller (2000) is of the opinion that the effect of burnout is not caused by long working hours. Recent studies have shown the typical United States worker

experiences a shorter workweek now than ever before with the growth of flextime, job sharing, four-day workweeks and the like (Miller, 2000). However, studies can be misleading.

According to Leiter and Maslach (1997) technology also plays a part in job burnout. Sophisticated technology can replace a job entirely. When these changes pervade the workplace and job security is at stake, stress becomes a big factor in job performance. Besides, communication technologies such as fax machines, electronic mail, pagers, cell phones and pocket-sized computers now enable human beings to take their office and its stress with them everywhere they go. The cause behind that feeling of exhaustion humans are experiencing is much more complex than the number of hours they spend at work.

In addition to technology and a strong economy, people create additional stress in their lives by being their own worst enemies. They take on more than they can handle, starting with full-time jobs from which there is no escape. Voice mail and electronic mail communication can also add to the stress. Messages are left and memos are sent at all hours of the day and night, weekdays and weekends. At its best, it is evidence of individuals' commitment to success. At its worst, it is workaholism (Leiter & Maslach, 1997).

Adding to that is the peoples' mix desires for life outside of the office. For those employees with kids, this includes taking their children to the playgrounds or parks, band concerts, swim lessons, piano lessons, doctor and dentist appointments and on and on through colour-coded personal calendars. For others, having a life

involves the challenge of managing the variety of activity concerning life, friendships and relationship demands.

Burnout is a nonproductive relationship with work. It is not a clinical disturbance, but rather an extreme point on a three-dimensional continuum: energy, involvement and effectiveness (Leiter & Maslach, 2001). On one end lies engagement with work, a state of feeling energetic and effectively involved with work and people. This is a positive and productive relationship that works for the individual and the company. On the opposite end of the scale is burnout, a state of feeling ineffective, exhausted and distant from work and people. This is a negative and unproductive relationship with work for the individual and the company.

According to Leiter and Maslach (2001) burnout is a widespread and significant problem confronting people in every line of work. Regardless of their profession, people experience crises in the energy, involvement and effectiveness they bring to their work. Individual productivity is not a personal quality of an independent person, but arises from mutually beneficial relationships among people, their work and the organisations in which they work. A disruption of that relationship is burnout while a well-functioning relationship is engagement with work. Experiences at work move people toward one end of that continuum or the other. A fulfilling quality of work life moves people towards engagement with work and away from burnout.

The problem of burnout, especially when the quality of life and the quality of work of employees are given emphasis, has become an important issue to management, medicine and public health. Training to face this problem

professionally is increasing especially in the field of management, medicine, social work, administration of health, industrial management, public administration, organisational psychology, clinical psychology and business administration (Quick, Quick, Nelson and Hurrell, 1997). Besides that, many organisations have started to prepare stress and burnout preventative programmes in the forms of counselling to the forms of hypnosis therapy to help their staffs who are facing this problem.

All the above statements are based on the phenomena in the United States of America and United Kingdom because many studies have been conducted regarding the issue, besides the existence of a few specific institutions related to stress and burnout in these countries such as The American Institute of Stress. In Malaysia, the focus towards the problem of burnout is still lacking but indeed this problem is occurring in our society and it is inevitable. Therefore starting from this premise, studies relating to burnout have to be given attention and priority in Malaysia.

Teaching Profession and Burnout

Teachers are important members of the society. As such, they must portray good qualities of exemplary educators to provide quality education to the students. Teachers are also considered as main contributors to the cognitive (mental) and affective (attitude) development and the moulding of the physical and social abilities and skills of the students. Even in the National Education Philosophy (1988), it is emphasised that an individual who is developed through the education system must go through a balanced growth parallel with the development of social and physical