

Burnout and Resilience Level Among Special Educators: A Correlational Study

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between burnout and resilience among special educators working with children with special needs. Due to the emotionally demanding nature of their work, these educators are often at risk of experiencing stress and burnout. A quantitative correlational design was used, with data collected from 150 special educators using standardized tools. The findings revealed a significant negative relationship between burnout and resilience ($r = -0.545$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher resilience is associated with lower levels of burnout. The results highlight the importance of resilience as a protective factor that helps educators cope with occupational stress. The study emphasizes the need for supportive work environments and resilience-building strategies to improve the well-being and effectiveness of special educators.

1. Introduction

Burnout is commonly understood as a state of deep emotional, mental, and sometimes physical exhaustion that develops when an individual is exposed to prolonged and unrelieved stress. Although it is most often discussed in relation to the workplace, burnout is not limited to professional settings alone. It can also emerge in other areas of life such as caregiving, parenting, and close relationships, where individuals are required to continuously invest time, energy, and emotional effort. In such situations, burnout tends to occur when the demands placed on a person consistently exceed their available resources to cope. In occupational settings, burnout is experienced as a combination of psychological and physical strain that affects an individual's motivation, satisfaction, and overall performance. Early discussions of burnout began in the 1970s, particularly among professionals working in emotionally demanding roles such as healthcare. However, over time, it has become clear that burnout can affect individuals across all types of professions and roles. The World Health Organization recognizes burnout as an occupational phenomenon that arises from chronic workplace stress that has not been effectively managed. This highlights that burnout is not simply about working long hours, but rather about the quality of the work environment and the individual's experience within it.

Several workplace-related factors contribute to the development of burnout. These include excessive workloads, unrealistic deadlines, constant time pressure, and lack of adequate rest. When individuals are expected to maintain high levels of performance over long periods without sufficient support, they may gradually experience exhaustion. In addition, lack of control over work tasks, unclear job roles, and conflicting expectations can increase stress levels. Environments where employees feel undervalued, unsupported, or unfairly treated further intensify these difficulties. Limited interaction with colleagues and

lack of emotional support may also lead to feelings of isolation, which can worsen the overall experience of stress. Burnout is not limited to the workplace and is also commonly observed among caregivers. Caregiver burnout develops when individuals dedicate a significant amount of time and energy to caring for others, often neglecting their own needs in the process. This may result in feelings of fatigue, frustration, helplessness, and emotional exhaustion. Caregivers may also experience social withdrawal, reduced interest in daily activities, and difficulty managing their responsibilities effectively. Factors such as lack of support, excessive caregiving demands, and role confusion can further increase the risk of burnout in such contexts.

The experience of burnout is often reflected through a range of physical, emotional, and behavioural symptoms. Individuals may report persistent tiredness, sleep disturbances, headaches, and frequent illness. Emotionally, they may feel irritable, anxious, or detached from their work and responsibilities. Behavioural changes such as withdrawal, reduced productivity, and loss of motivation are also common. These symptoms are generally understood through three key dimensions: emotional exhaustion, a sense of detachment or cynicism, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. As burnout progresses, individuals may find it increasingly difficult to concentrate, stay organized, and feel confident in their abilities. The development of burnout can be understood through different theoretical perspectives. Some approaches emphasize the imbalance between demands and an individual's capacity to cope, suggesting that stress arises when expectations exceed available resources. Other models describe burnout as a gradual process that begins with emotional exhaustion, followed by detachment, and eventually leads to reduced effectiveness. Humanistic perspectives highlight the role of meaning and purpose, suggesting that burnout may occur when individuals feel disconnected from the values and goals associated with their work. Similarly, the conservation of resources perspective explains burnout as the result of continuous loss of important resources such as time, energy, and emotional strength without adequate recovery. The long-term impact of burnout can be significant. If left unaddressed, it may lead to serious physical and mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, and reduced overall well-being. It can also affect relationships, productivity, and quality of life. In severe cases, individuals may neglect their health or struggle to carry out daily responsibilities effectively. Therefore, early identification and appropriate support are essential to prevent the progression of burnout and to promote recovery.

In contrast to burnout, resilience refers to the ability of individuals to adapt and recover when faced with stress, adversity, or challenging life situations. Rather than being a fixed trait, resilience is a dynamic process that develops over time through experience, learning, and support. It involves the capacity to maintain psychological balance, manage emotions, and continue functioning effectively despite difficulties. Individuals differ in how they respond to stress, and resilience plays a key role in shaping these responses.

Resilience is influenced by multiple factors, including personal characteristics, social relationships, and environmental conditions. Support from family, friends, and the community provides emotional comfort and practical assistance, helping individuals cope more effectively with stress. At the same time, individual qualities such as optimism, flexibility, and problem-solving skills contribute to adaptive functioning. Resilience also involves the ability to find meaning in difficult experiences and to gradually move forward without being overwhelmed by them. It is important to understand that resilience does not mean the absence of distress or the suppression of emotions. Instead, it involves acknowledging and processing difficult feelings in a healthy way. Individuals may continue to experience pain, loss, or uncertainty, yet still develop the strength to adapt and grow. Cultural and social factors also play a significant role in

shaping resilience, as access to resources, social support, and opportunities can influence how individuals respond to adversity.

The relationship between burnout and resilience is particularly important. While burnout reflects the negative impact of prolonged stress, resilience acts as a protective factor that helps individuals manage and recover from such stress. Higher levels of resilience are often associated with better coping, reduced emotional exhaustion, and improved well-being. Therefore, strengthening resilience through supportive environments, healthy coping strategies, and meaningful connections can play a crucial role in reducing burnout and enhancing overall quality of life.

2. Literature Review

Saini (2025) conducted a comprehensive review focusing on the role of resilience in reducing anxiety and burnout among teachers working in inclusive education settings. The study highlights that educators in such environments often face multiple challenges, including managing diverse learning needs, limited professional training, and insufficient institutional support. These ongoing demands can contribute to increased levels of occupational stress, which may eventually lead to anxiety and burnout. Drawing from both national and international research, the review emphasizes resilience as a key psychological resource that helps teachers cope with these pressures. It explains that resilience acts as a protective buffer, enabling educators to manage stress more effectively and maintain emotional balance. The study further discusses various theoretical perspectives on resilience and its connection to teacher well-being. Importantly, it suggests that promoting resilience requires not only individual efforts but also systemic and institutional support, such as training programs, supportive work environments, and access to mental health resources. In a related study, **Antoniou, Pavlidou, Charitaki, and Alevriadou (2024)** explored the relationship between burnout, work engagement, and job satisfaction among special education teachers. The researchers adopted a person-oriented approach to better understand how different combinations of these factors form distinct profiles among teachers. The study included a large sample of 664 in-service special education teachers working across primary and secondary schools. Using cluster analysis, four distinct profiles were identified: passionate, workaholic, operational, and overworked. Each profile reflected a unique pattern of engagement, satisfaction, and burnout levels. The findings revealed that certain groups, particularly those categorized as overworked, were more vulnerable to high burnout and low engagement. Additionally, variations were observed based on demographic and professional factors such as age, educational background, teaching experience, and region of employment. This study underscores the importance of early identification of at-risk teachers and highlights the need for targeted interventions to support their well-being and professional functioning.

Similarly, **Baatz and Wirzberger (2025)** examined resilience as a professional competence and its role in promoting teachers' health. Through a detailed review of existing literature, the authors investigated how resilience influences various aspects of teachers' well-being, including stress perception, coping ability, risk of burnout, overall health, and job effectiveness. The findings consistently demonstrated that resilience has a positive impact on teachers' mental and emotional health. Teachers with higher levels of resilience were found to manage stress more effectively, experience lower levels of burnout, and maintain better overall well-being. The study also introduced the concept of teacher-specific resilience resources, emphasizing that certain skills and supports are particularly relevant for educators. Despite these positive findings, the authors noted a lack of well-established intervention programs aimed at strengthening

resilience among teachers. As a result, the study calls for the development of structured and evidence-based strategies to enhance resilience and support long-term teacher health.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Question

The present study was undertaken to examine the relationship between burnout and resilience among special educators. The focus was on understanding how these two variables are interconnected within the context of teaching children with special needs, particularly in environments that involve continuous emotional and professional demands.

3.2 Objectives

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- To assess the level of burnout among teachers working with children with special needs.
- To evaluate the level of resilience among teachers working with children with special needs.
- To examine the relationship between burnout and resilience among special educators.

3.3 Hypotheses

(H₀): There is no significant relationship between burnout and resilience among special educators.

4. Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative, non-experimental correlational research design. This design is suitable as it allows the researcher to examine the relationship between burnout and resilience without manipulating any variables. The focus is on understanding how these variables are associated with each other among special educators in real-life settings.

4.1 Sampling Technique

The study includes approximately 150–200 teachers who are currently working with children with special needs in special schools. Participants are selected using a purposive sampling technique, ensuring that only those who meet the specific criteria relevant to the study are included. This method helps in obtaining a sample that is directly related to the research focus.

4.2 Inclusion Criteria

- Teachers who are actively engaged in teaching children with special needs.
- Teachers working in both government and private special schools.

4.3 Exclusion Criteria

- Teachers who are not directly involved in classroom teaching.
- Teachers working only in administrative or managerial roles.
- Teachers working in general (mainstream) schools.

5. Tool Description

• Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) – General Version

Developed by Schaufeli, De Witte, and Desart (2019), this tool measures burnout as a multidimensional construct. It assesses four key areas: exhaustion, mental distance, emotional impairment, and cognitive impairment.

• Nicholson McBride Resilience Scale (NMRQ)

This is a standardized self-report measure used to assess resilience. It consists of 12 items rated on a five-point Likert scale and evaluates how individuals cope with stress and adapt to challenges.

6. Data Collection

- Data are collected using structured questionnaires administered to participants.
- Participants provide demographic details followed by responses to the burnout and resilience scales.

7. Statistical Analysis

The collected data are analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

- **Descriptive statistics** such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage are used to summarise the data.
- **Inferential statistics**, specifically Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation, are used to examine the relationship between burnout and resilience.

8. Results

This chapter presents the findings of the study along with the analysis conducted to understand the relationship between burnout and resilience among special educators.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, for burnout and resilience among the participants.

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	N
Burnout	2.01	0.628	150
Resilience	41.84	7.233	150

The descriptive analysis presented in Table 4.1 indicates that the mean score for burnout among special educators is 2.01, with a standard deviation of 0.628, based on a sample of 150 participants. This suggests a moderate level of burnout with relatively low variability among the participants. Similarly, the mean score for resilience is found to be 41.84, with a standard deviation of 7.233 for the same group.

Table 2 shows the correlational analysis of burnout and resilience support among the participants.

Variables	Pearson’s correlation	r value	Decision
Burnout	1	-0.545**	Rejected (H ₀)
Resilience			

Pearson’s correlation analysis was carried out to examine the relationship between burnout and resilience among the participants. The results indicate a moderate negative correlation between burnout and resilience ($r = -0.545, p < 0.01$). This means that as resilience increases, burnout tends to decrease among special educators. Likewise, lower levels of resilience are associated with higher burnout levels. Since the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, the null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected.

Overall, the findings clearly show that resilience plays an important role in reducing burnout among special educators.

9. Discussion

The findings of the present study revealed a statistically significant negative relationship between parental stress and perceived social support among parents of children with autism spectrum disorder ($r = -0.956, p < 0.01$). The mean score for parental stress was found to be 58.80 (SD = 18.426), while the mean score

for perceived social support was 49.38 (SD = 18.722). These results indicate that higher levels of perceived social support are associated with lower levels of parental stress.

The findings of this study are in line with earlier research that emphasizes the role of social support in reducing stress among parents. For example, Bhatta et al. (2025) reported that parents who perceived greater social support experienced lower levels of stress while caring for children with disabilities. Similarly, Lin et al. (2023) found that perceived social support played a significant role in reducing parental burnout among parents of children with autism spectrum disorder. The consistency of these findings strengthens the evidence that social support functions as an important protective factor in caregiving contexts.

The results of the present study suggest that although parenting a child with autism can involve increased demands and challenges, the presence of emotional and practical support enables parents to cope more effectively. Support from family members, friends, and the community can help in sharing responsibilities, providing reassurance, and reducing feelings of isolation. As a result, parents are better able to manage stress and maintain their overall well-being. In addition, strong support systems appear to reduce the psychological burden associated with long-term caregiving. When parents feel supported, they are more likely to experience emotional stability and confidence in handling caregiving responsibilities. This not only benefits the parents but can also contribute positively to the family environment and the child's development. Overall, the findings of this study highlight the importance of strengthening social support networks for parents of children with autism. Ensuring access to supportive resources, including family support, community programs, and professional services, can play a key role in reducing stress and improving family functioning.

10. Summary

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between burnout and resilience among special educators. Working in special education requires continuous emotional involvement, patience, and the ability to handle diverse needs, which can often lead to stress and exhaustion. Therefore, understanding the role of resilience in coping with these challenges is important. A quantitative correlational research design was adopted to study the relationship between burnout and resilience. The sample consisted of 150 special educators selected through purposive sampling from NGOs and private institutions. Both male and female participants with varying levels of experience were included. The study was guided by a null hypothesis stating that there would be no significant relationship between burnout and resilience. Ethical guidelines such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly followed. Data were collected using standardized tools and analysed using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation through SPSS. The results showed a statistically significant correlation at the 0.01 level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. A significant negative relationship was found between burnout and resilience, indicating that higher resilience is associated with lower burnout.

Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of resilience in reducing stress and improving the well-being of special educators, thereby enhancing the quality of care provided to children with special needs.

11. Conclusion

The study found a significant negative relationship between burnout and resilience among special educators ($p < 0.01$), showing that higher resilience is linked to lower burnout. It highlights that building

resilience can help educators manage stress better and improve their overall well-being and effectiveness in supporting children with special needs.

12. Limitations

The study has a few limitations that should be considered. The sample did not have equal representation of male and female participants and was drawn from a limited number of NGOs and private institutions, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The study was also restricted to special educators, so the results may not apply to other groups. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires, which may reflect individual perceptions, and no qualitative insights were included. Additionally, the study was conducted within a specific geographical area, and factors such as workload, organizational support, and coping strategies were not examined.

13. Recommendations

The study highlights the importance of resilience in reducing burnout among special educators. Institutions should provide emotional and professional support to help educators manage stress effectively. Training programs focusing on stress management and resilience-building can be introduced to improve their well-being. The study can also serve as a base for future research to explore other factors influencing burnout. Further studies with larger and more diverse samples from different regions are recommended to improve the generalizability of the findings.