

## **Abstract**

Teaching is considered as one of the largest and most visible profession in the world today. In the past it was considered as a rather routine job without hard or hazardous work. However the present day school teacher have to play multiple roles in their day-to-day work with children, colleagues and administrators. In addition to the multiple roles in the school, many women teachers work the second shift at home. Therefore teaching is now considered as a high stress profession. As a result there was a growing concern among researchers about teachers' mental health and other health problems related to their profession during last few decades. Several researchers have identified number of occupational health problems including burnout. Burnout has not studied in any occupational setting in Sri Lanka.

The present study was planned to describe the occupational health problems, occupational and life style factors, determine the prevalence and risk factors of burnout among female primary school teachers in the Southern Province, Sri Lanka.

Since there is no proper instrument available for the measurement of burnout among teachers in Sri Lanka, the Maslach Burnout Inventory- Educators Survey (MBI-ES) was selected for this purpose after a through literature search. It was translated to Sinhala and validated against a diagnosis of a Consultant Psychiatrist.

A descriptive cross sectional study was carried out among the 660 female primary school teachers of the Southern Province using a self-administered questionnaire. According to the findings of this study, the prevalence of bronchial asthma was 9.8%, varicose veins was 21.25% and hoarseness of voice during the teaching career was 25.5%. Majority (50.6%) of the primary school teachers had suffered an infectious

disease during the last year and common cold was the commonest (46.6%) infectious disease. 19.8% of female primary school teachers were suffering from chronic knee joint pain and 18.1% had chronic backache. 14% of female primary school teachers had an accident/injury during last year while they were working in the school.

Prevalence of burnout among female primary schoolteachers in the Southern Province was 115.63 per 1000 population. According to the school category the highest burnout prevalence of 148.15 per 1000 population was found in female primary school teachers of 1AB schools while the lowest burnout prevalence of 95.65/1000 population was present among female primary school teachers in category 2 schools. The prevalence rate for burnout was highest (157.89/1000 population) in the Hambanthota district. A stepwise increase in prevalence of burnout was observed respectively from Galle, Matara to Hambanthota district.

A case control study was conducted to identify the occupational and life style risk factors for burnout among female primary school teachers. Logistic regression analysis identified the following risk factors. Teaching more than 20 years has a 11.73 times of increased risk of burnout compared to teaching 20 years or less (1.94-70.85)., Living more than 10 kilometres away from the school has a 6.80 times of increased risk compared to living less than 10 kilometres (1.21-36.50). Spending more than five hours per week for home work has a 15.91 times of increased risk compared to spending less (3.77-67.16). Participation in school activities at weekends has a 5.07 times of increased risk of burnout (1.13-22.79). Less than seven hours of sleep per day has a 7.28 times of increased risk of burnout compared to the 7 or more hours of sleep (1.70-31.11) and having one hour or less than one hour of leisure time per day

has a 6.85 times of increased risk of burnout compared to the leisure time more than one hour per day with the confidence interval of OR, 1.25-37.63.

It is recommended to translate this questionnaire to the Tamil language and validate it in order to facilitate cross-cultural research in Sri Lanka. The present study found many risk factors for burnout among female primary school teachers. Some of these risk factors can be prevented or reduced. Therefore, it is recommended that relevant authorities take necessary steps to address them and to establish appropriate referral centers with adequate resources to prevent such problems.

**Key words ; Burnout, Occupational health problems of teachers.**