



Secondary traumatic stress and burnout among school personnel serving children with adverse experiences - a case study of three schools

Introduction

Secondary traumatic stress is a physiological condition like Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

It can be experienced by those working closely with traumatized individuals including educators dealing with children with adverse experiences.

Consistent exposure to such stress can lead to teacher burnout, which has been a major concern in teacher attrition.

Social support systems are known to help cope better with stressful situations.

This paper explores the distribution of secondary traumatic stress and burnout among personnel from a group of three public charter schools in urban Midwest USA.

Data

Data was collected in two waves corresponding to the baseline and endline of a training module.

Collected data included essential personal characteristics and social network information on whom the personnel, especially teachers, sought for advice on subject instruction and classroom management.

Results

We find that the average reported stress and burnout levels decreased in two of the three schools over the academic year.

The secondary traumatic stress and consequential burnout varied based on certain background characteristics in the baseline but not in the endline.

Degree of closeness to others or number of peers available for support did not have monotonic relationship with changes in the reported levels of secondary traumatic stress and burnout, between baseline and endline.

Further investigation is required to understand if teacher characteristics moderate the coping effects of peer support and organizational factors, and if the training program had positive impact under certain circumstances.

Secondary Traumatic Stress and Burnout

The three sub-scales of STS corresponding to similar sub-scales of PTSD symptoms according to DSM VI classification are as follows. The Cronbach alpha reliability of these scales were all greater than 0.85:

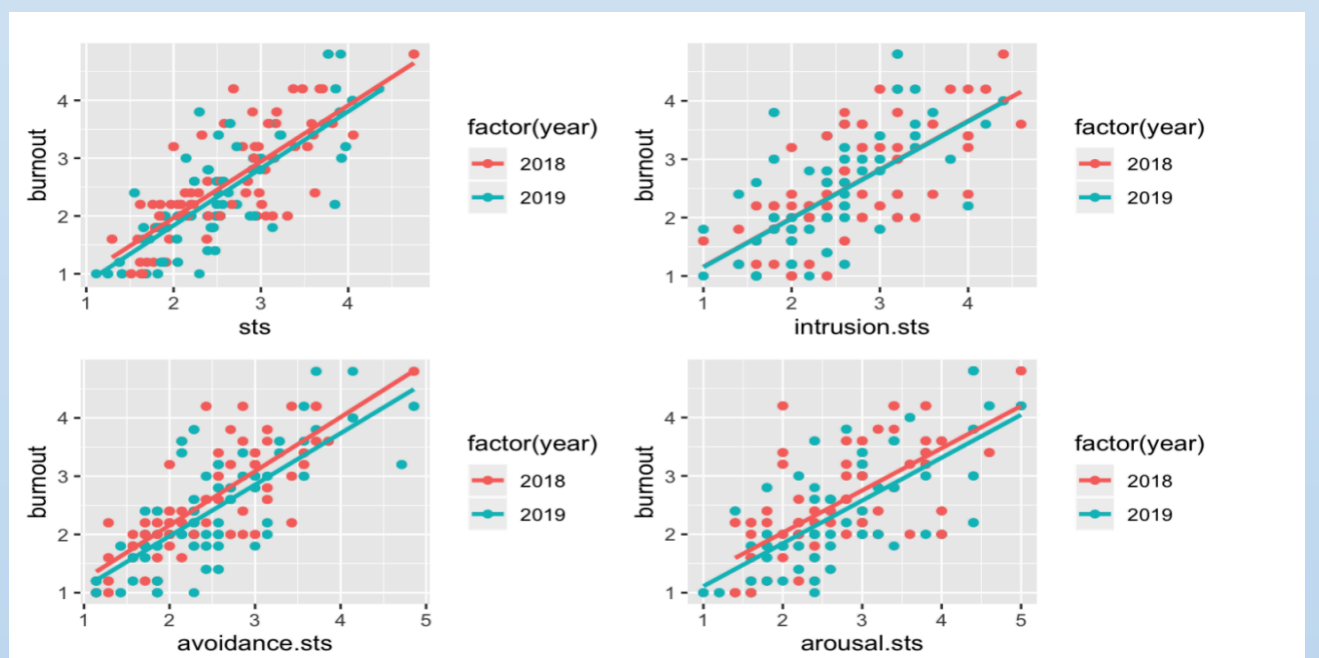
Intrusion is when thoughts about students' traumas and/or thoughts about the stress of work uncontrollably invades and can dominate your other thoughts.

Avoidance is knowingly and unknowingly engaging effortful avoidance of trauma-related and stress-related situations and thoughts and can expand into a broader distancing one's self from others and activities.

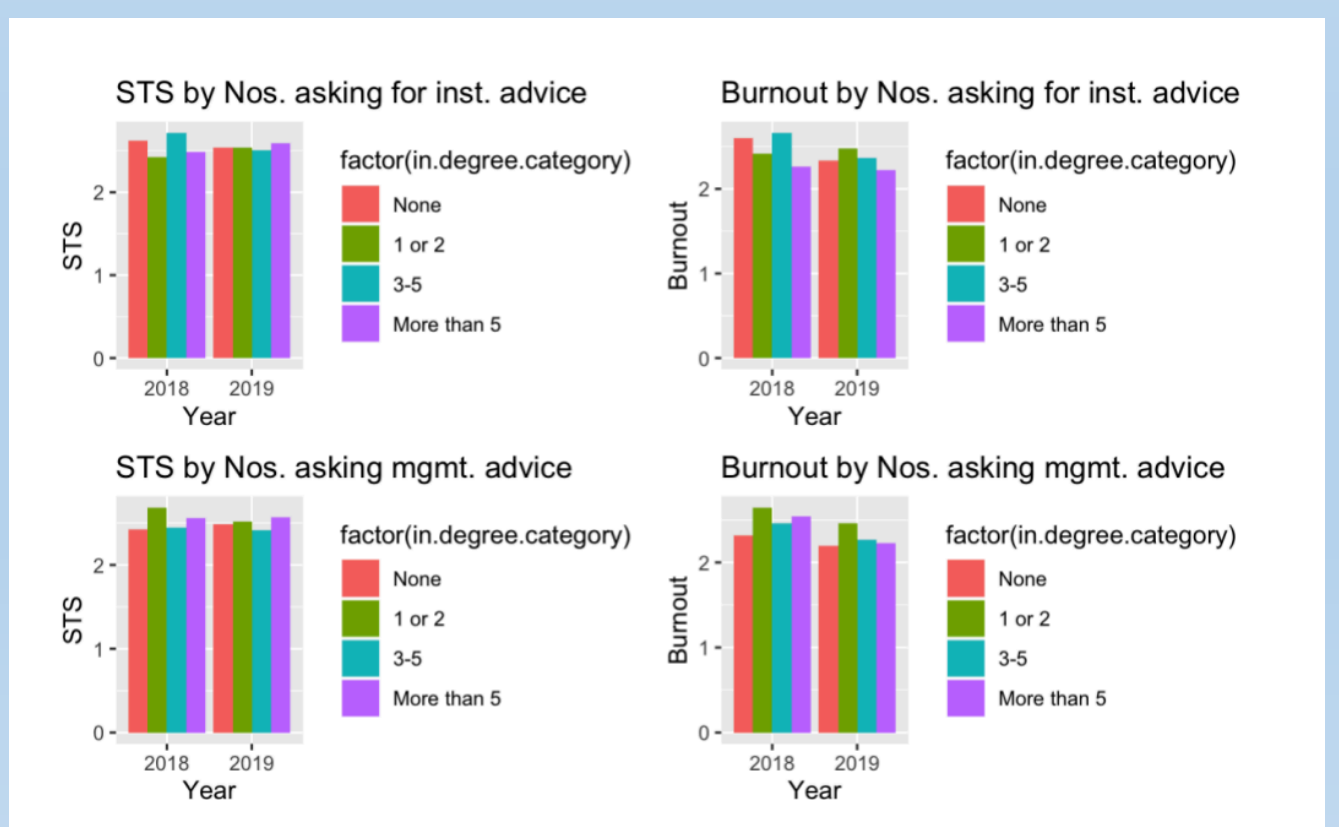
Arousal is an increase in alertness and reactivity because of the negative effects that thoughts about your students' traumas and/or the stress of work has on your emotional and psychological well-being .

Burnout was defined and measured as work related emotional exhaustion that builds gradually over time. The symptoms include distancing one's self from co-workers and students, and lack of feelings of personal accomplishment with work.

STS vs. Burnout in Baseline and Endline



STS vs. Burnout in Baseline and Endline – In degree vs. Out degree



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