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DOES ANXIETY PREDICT BURNOUT? A 5575-PARTICIPANT STUDY

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Introduction. Burnout is usually viewed as a combination of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. The link between burnout and anxiety is not well understood.

Objectives. We examined the extent to which history of anxiety disorders (HAD) and current anxiety symptoms (CAS) predict burnout.

Methods. The present study included 5575 French teachers (mean age: 41; mean job tenure: 15 years). The Maslach Burnout Inventory was used to assess emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Participants indicated whether they had ever been diagnosed for an anxiety disorder by a health expert and self-reported their CAS by using the 7-item Generalized Anxiety Disorder scale. A multiple regression analysis was carried out with HAD, CAS, age, and job tenure as predictors.

Results. CAS predicted both emotional exhaustion (β = 0.67; 95% CI: 0.65-0.69), depersonalization (β = 0.36; 95% CI: 0.33-0.39), and reduced personal accomplishment (β = 0.25; 95% CI: 0.23-0.28), all ps < .0001. HAD only predicted emotional exhaustion (β = 0.03; 95% CI: 0.01-0.05), p < .01, and reduced personal accomplishment (β = 0.03; 95% CI: 0.00-0.06), p < .05. Age and job tenure did not predict burnout. The tested model accounted for about 46% of the variance in emotional exhaustion, 13% of the variance in depersonalization, and 7% of the variance in reduced personal accomplishment.

Conclusions. CAS predicted all dimensions of burnout, particularly the emotional exhaustion dimension. Although HAD may be a risk factor for burnout, its importance seems much more limited.