

# Stress versus Eustress: Evaluating the Effects of Compassion Fatigue and Secondary Traumatic Stress on Agricultural Educator Burnout

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## Introduction

- **Burnout** is one of the leading causes of agricultural educator attrition (Sorensen et al., 2016).
- Many agricultural education students struggle with **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** and look to their teachers for guidance and compassion (Norris & Norris-Parish, 2024).
- Agricultural educators often do not feel comfortable emotionally supporting students with ACEs but report supporting them regularly (Norris & Norris-Parish, 2024).
- Schmidt et al. (2022) reports a **significant** relationship between **Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)** and **burnout** in early-career teachers in Oregon.
- A combination of **compassion fatigue** and STS can lead to burnout among some educators.

## Objective

- Evaluate the effects of secondary traumatic stress on agricultural educator burnout.

## Theoretical Framework

- The **Contemporary Trauma Theory (CTT)** served as the theoretical framework for this study (Goodman, 2017).
- This theory aims to provide insight into ACEs' effect on psychosocial function (Goodman, 2017).

## Facts About ACEs

- When compared to someone with no ACEs, an individual with four or more ACEs is (Petrucci et al., 2019):
  - Seven times more likely to abuse alcohol.
  - Ten times more likely to use illicit drugs.
  - Twelve times more likely to attempt suicide.
  - Is at a significantly higher risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and Obesity.

## Methodology

- Descriptive correlational research design.
- Population was agricultural educators in New Mexico ( $N = 132$ ).
- Agricultural educators were asked to complete the survey at the 2024 summer teachers' conference.
- Yielded  $n = 67$  responses with  $n = 59$  usable responses.
- 50.8% response rate.
- The instrument was developed from the Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) survey (Stamm, 2010).
- This study replicated Schmidt et al.'s (2022) inquiry.
- The ProQOL survey measures burnout, compassion satisfaction, and STS using a five-point Likert scale.
- The data was analyzed using a linear regression.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

- Positive association between STS and burnout.
- Compassion fatigue and STS can lead to increased burnout and ultimately, attrition.
- The lack of confidence agricultural educators exhibit when supporting students with ACEs (Norris & Norris-Parish, 2024) could be caused by STS.
- Norris and Norris-Parish (2024) also determined that 10.2% of agricultural educators have four or more ACEs.
- When combined with STS, this could exacerbate health issues associated with ACEs.
- We recommend providing training to educators on how to properly support students with ACEs.

Table 1

Regression Analysis Assessing STS Effect on Burnout

Variable	B	$\beta$	p
(Constant)	7.22	-	.01
STS	.75	.64	<.001

Note.  $n = 59$

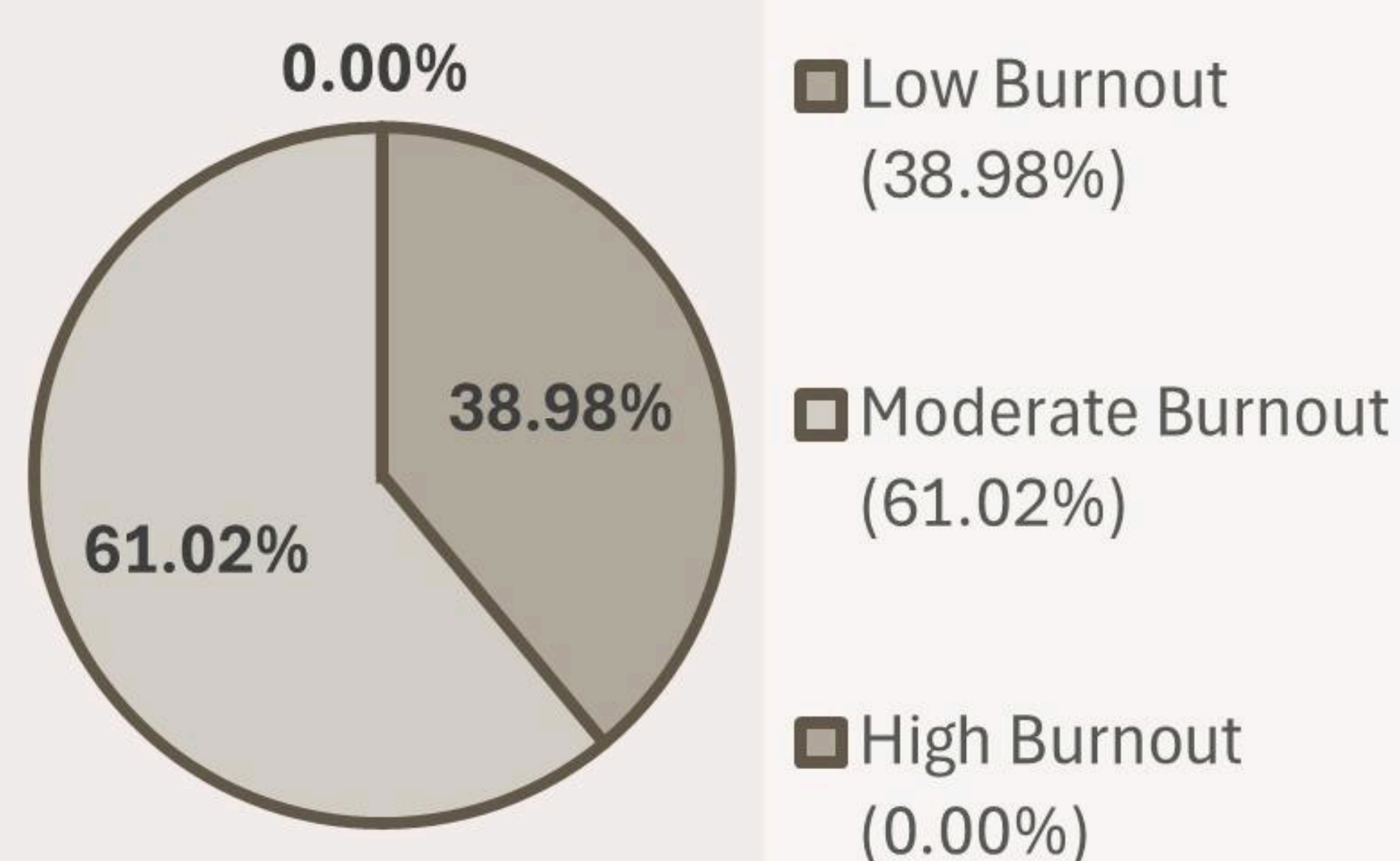
## Results

- A simple linear regression suggested that there is a statistically significant association between burnout and STS [ $F(1, 57) = 38.87, p < .001$ ].
- The Adjusted  $R^2$  was .40, suggesting that 40% of the variance in burnout was explained by STS.

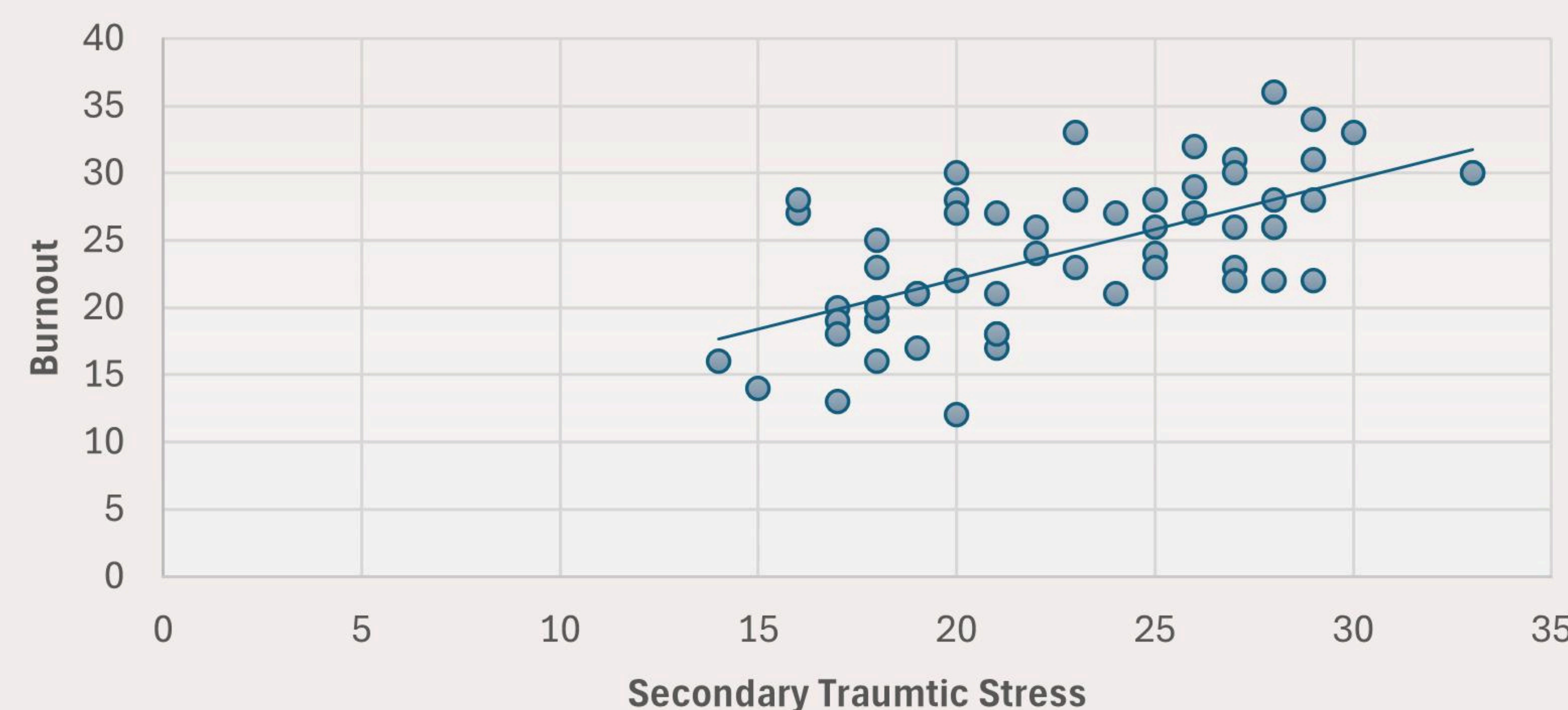
Scan for References



## Percentage of Agricultural Educators Facing Burnout



## Relationship Between Secondary Traumatic Stress and Burnout



## Percentage of Agricultural Educators Facing Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

