



## Teachers' Burnout levels in Iranian EFL Context: The case of Junior High School, Senior High School, University, and Private English Institute EFL Teachers

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### Abstract

Maslach and Jackson first introduced the concept of 'burnout' - a state of physical and emotional exhaustion emerging from work conditions- in 1980. The importance of investigations of burn out lies in the fact that it is directly related to the quality of teaching. There are three basic criteria set to predict, evaluate, and prevent burnout: depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and personal accomplishments. Teachers in Iran are not an exception to developing burnout, and neither are Iranian EFL teachers. To investigate the current situation of teacher burnout in general and the three criteria set by Maslach and Jackson among Iranian EFL teachers, the researchers selected 40 junior high school, 40 senior high school, 40 university, and 40 private English institute EFL teachers, and sought their burnout levels via Maslach Burnout Inventory. The statistical analysis of the data revealed the existence of significant differences among the burnout levels of these four groups of EFL teachers. Junior high school teachers reported the highest degree of reduced personal accomplishment whereas the highest levels of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and total burnout were reported by senior high school teachers. University teachers reported the smallest degree of burn out.

**Keywords:** depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishments, teacher burnout.

### INTRODUCTION

Of the three angles of language learning - the teacher, the learner, and the material - it is the teacher who ranks the first priority, and would co-ordinate the other two (Shirom, 2005). In fact, teachers do the most valuable job in a society, and since no valuable thing comes with no trouble, teaching in general, and teaching languages in particular is not the easiest thing to do.

In the course of their professional lives, teachers might have faced a wide variety of occupational-problems as economic issues, cultural issues, ethical

issues, and the like. Among these problematic matters that teacher might have encountered, one of the most significant ones, which has attracted a large amount of attention in the course of the past two decades is the teacher burnout (Shirom, 2005).

The concept of burnout was born with the psychoanalyst Freudenberger (1974), who defined it as a state of physical and emotional exhaustion developed from work conditions. This concept lurked in the dark isolation up to the early and mid-1980s, when Maslach and Jackson (1986) popularized it, and introduced it to the scientific circles. Other than mere popularizing it,

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however, Maslach and Jackson managed to revolutionize the concept of burnout, and turn it from an individual matter into a social and communal issue (Whitehead, 2001). Maslach's theoretical framework for teacher burnout is predominant in the field of occupational burnout.

As Maslach and Jackson's (1986) effort to bring the spotlight of the common public attention on teacher burn out, various studies have taken place, including that of Byrne (1999) who discovered two out of three new teachers leave their teaching careers in not later than four years, and over 50 percent of them leave within 7 years. Another shocking piece of statistics given is that of DePaul's (2000), who highlighted that between 20 to 30 percent of the newly-appointed teachers quit within the first three years of their service. While Ingersoll's (2002) reports demonstrated that the departure rate in non-teaching professions center around 11 percent annually, Cox, Parmer, Tourkin, Warner, and Lyter (2007) reported a quitting rate of 16 percent among public school teachers. Overall, it was concluded in scientific circles that the rate at which teachers quit their professions is paramountly higher than the rate of quitting in other careers (Minarik, Thornton, & Perreault, 2003). Hence, it would be fair enough to remark teaching is a profession which is emotionally and sentimentally taxing and frustrating (Lambert, O'Donnell, Kusherman, & McCarthy, 2006).

Since it came to the public attention in the 1980s, studying burnout and its reasons has penetrated into almost all the areas where workers deal with people in the course of their daily career, including the realm of education, and in fact, the concept of teacher burnout has become so significant that countless hours of research and intellectual labor has been put into investigating diverse aspects of this syndrome (e.g. Brewer & McMahan, 2003; Cheek, Bradley, Parr, & Lan, 2003; Clarke & Keating, 1995; Eastburg, Williamson, Gorsuch, & Ridley, 1994; Goddard, O'Brien, & Goddard, 2006; Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007; Leiter, 1991). This could be an alarm to warn us

that teacher burn out is far from a number of theories in journals. It is real, it is actual, it is happening as it has always been, but in a faster rate in our time.

Another reality is that teachers who are experiencing burnout have low levels of commitment and enthusiasm toward their career, and this would have an exact reflection in their job performance and as a result in the quality of education in general, and language education in particular (Kyriancou, 2001). In one word, teacher burnout is a serious personal and social syndrome, and it has to be stopped.

From different studies that have taken place to uncover the unknown aspects of burnout, different results have been reported as to the reasons why this phenomenon occurs, and the factors that contribute to it. Hosseini Fatemi and Raoufi (2014) detected the differences between two groups of teachers: public school and private institute teachers regarding their level of burnout and their teaching styles. They found a significant difference between public schools and private institute teachers in terms of burnout level and adoption of teaching styles.

Ghorbanzadeh and Rezaie (2016) investigated the relationship between English language teacher perfectionism, teacher burnout, and teacher efficacy. The results indicated a high positive correlation between these three variables and the correlation was higher or male participants than female ones.

Kovacs (2010) counted culture shock, excessive expectations of students, excessive expectations on behalf of the management of the school, huge amount of workload, the large number of students in a class, misbehaviors of the students, and many other factors as the ones that might result in teacher burnout in educational contexts. What is confusing is that a survey of applied linguistics literature highlights that different studies have come to believe that some of these reasons were stronger than others. Indeed, assumingly, according to Kovacs (2010) the reasons of teacher burnout, and as a result the ways to cope with it or prevent it, seem to differ from one culture and one education system to another. This means that

local models of burn-out would provide the decision makers with far more accurate data than the international model of it.

Iranian EFL community, for sure, is not an exception to the issue of burn-out. Bayani, Bagheri, and Bayani (2003) investigated 280 Iranian high school teachers on their sex, age, and years of experience to determine which factor was the most potential one to lead to burn-out. The results of their study highlighted that male teachers were more likely to be infected with burn-out compared to female teachers. This study emphasized the significance of designing a well-structured and evaluative burnout reduction program. In a similar investigation, Zamani Rad and Nasir (2010) studied 150 Iranian EFL teachers and reported the existence of significant differences in burnout and career self-concept between male and female Iranian EFL teachers. Furthermore, they reported that there was a negative correlation between career self-concept and burnout.

Similarly, Soleimani (2009) investigated the role of teachers' teaching procedures and teaching style in burnout. He discovered that teachers who apply direct instruction practices in their classes were far more likely to develop burnout syndrome than those who tended to teach indirectly. Nonetheless, this study did not report any meaningful relationship between burnout and semi-direct teaching method.

As also found by Kovacs (2010), lack of equipment and resources may be another reason for burnout. Again it could be argued that not only do Iranian school teachers not enjoy as much fancy and luxurious equipment and resources that EFL teachers in private English institutes and universities do, but they are also deprived from very basic gadgets such as a CD player in many high schools.

This study embarked on a journey to survey the attitudes and perspectives of four different groups of EFL teachers – university English instructors, junior high school English teachers, senior high school English teachers, and private English institute teachers – were sought and compared. The researcher assumed that through

such a survey, deeper knowledge of burn-out in Iranian EFL context would be generated, which could be helpful in making data-driven decision making (Marsh, Pane, & Hamilton, 2006).

As it would be impossible to offer a remedy for a disease without knowing its reasons, the same is true of burnout. Unless there are some local models of burnout to describe how Iranian EFL teachers reach burn-out, no decision could be made to prevent from this syndrome, and no treatment could be prescribed for that. As a result, Iranian EFL community is in dire need of studies that look into the reasons of burn-out, and factors that go along hand in hand to cause this social syndrome happen.

It is noteworthy to mention that the studies conducted by researchers such as Byrne (1999), Duatepe and Akkus-Cikla (2004), Konert (1997), Ozdemir (2007), and Sunbul (2003) attempted to find a relationship between burnout and years of experience. Since these studies reported results that were in contrast, the researcher tried to bring teacher with different years of experience - any length longer than 3 years - into the population to add to the generalizability of the study.

Another point to put forward is that teaching English at schools takes place in a totally different circumstance from teaching English at universities, and both these settings are far different from those of private English institutes. Hence, it is a mature assumption that teachers teaching in these different contexts have different levels of burnout, and their burnout results from different factors.

The main objective of this study was to look into the burnout in Iranian EFL teaching context and evaluate the status of burnout among the teachers both as a whole, and subcategories via the three most popular dimensions of Maslach and Jackson (1985), namely personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization.

Teacher burnout is a devastating organizational syndrome (Talmor, Reiter, & Feigin, 2005) which could bear numerous downsides such as crippling schools, losing teachers' careers,

squandering the time and money spent to train the teachers, and the like, would automatically give rise to the importance of investigating different angles of this phenomenon.

Another aspect that added to the paramount of this study was that it considered the three major aspects of teacher burnout – lack of personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization – and measured the current status of Iranian EFL teachers on each of them separately.

The researcher, therefore, posed the following research questions.

1. Are there any significant differences among the junior high school, senior high school, university, and private English Institute EFL teachers in terms of emotional exhaustion?
2. Are there any significant differences among the junior high school, senior high school, university, and private English Institute EFL teachers in terms of depersonalization?
3. Are there any significant differences among the junior high school, senior high school, university, and private English Institute EFL teachers in terms of personal accomplishment?
4. Are there any significant differences among the junior high school, senior high school, university, and private English Institute EFL teachers in terms of their burnout level?

## **METHODS**

This study was descriptive and analytic in nature, since the sole medium of data collection was a questionnaire, and the only means of data analysis was the comparison of questionnaire results. Besides, since this study aimed at interpreting the status of the participants, it could be proposed that it was a descriptive study.

Teacher burnout is considered at three different categories: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment in junior high school, senior high school, university,

and private English institutes. Moreover, the years of experience of the teachers were delimited to at least three.

Four different categories of participants – university English instructors, junior high school English teachers, senior high school English teachers, and private English institute teachers – crowded the population in this study, and the researcher was seeking to find a relationship among the four groups

## **Participants**

A hundred and sixty participants – 40 Azad University English instructors, 40 junior high school English teachers, 40 senior high school English teachers, and 40 private English institute teachers – were selected through convenience sampling for the data collection of this study. In order to add to the generalizability of this research, the researchers tried to select participants with different age, gender, personality variables, socioeconomic status, and other personal factors. Near half of the participating teachers were females, with the age range between 25 in private language institute to 50 in university.

Since the main objective of this study was to determine the existence of any differences between the attitudes of university English instructors, junior high school English teachers, senior high school English teachers, and private English institute teachers on teacher burn out, teachers who had worked in more than one of the mentioned settings, for instance both at senior high schools and private institutes, were left out due to the conflict of interests.

## **Instruments**

The researcher used two instruments (a side and a main instrument) to collect the data required for this study. The side instrument was a form in which the participants jotted down their demographic data such as age, gender, years of experience, levels of proficiency, marital status, education, and the like. Although the researchers did not enter these information into data analysis in the present study, it was hypothesized that they may have significant impacts on the results.

However, the main instrument that the researcher utilized in this study was the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) questionnaire originally devised and developed by Maslach and Jackson (1986), modified later by Maslach, Jackson, and Schwab (1996). This questionnaire recites the attitudes of the teachers toward the concept of burnout in three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

This questionnaire comprises a total of 20 items (emotional exhaustion, 8 items; depersonalization, 5 items; and personal accomplishment, 7 items), and the participating teachers were required to express how they felt about each of the items via a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 to 6. The categories of the Likert scales were as follows.

- 0 = Never (never)
- 1 = Seldom (few times a year or less)
- 2 = Now and then (few times a month or less)
- 3 = Regular (few times a month)
- 4 = Often (once a week)
- 5 = Very often (few times a week)
- 6 = Always (every day)

Of course, it is worth mentioning that the Persian version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory

(MBI) questionnaire was used to avoid language barrier in teachers' expression of ideas. The reliability and validity of the Persian version of the questionnaire was assessed by Rostami, Abedi, Schaufeli, Ahmadi, Sadeghi (2013). The Persian version of MBI had satisfactory level of internal consistency among female students in university of Isfahan. They reported

Cronbach's alpha for the three subscales: exhaustion 0.78, depersonalization 0.78, and personal accomplishment 0.71.

## RESULTS

The first research question is concerned with the differences among the junior high school, senior high school, university, and private English Institute EFL teachers in terms of emotional exhaustion.

Table 1 depicts the result of descriptive statistics on the emotional exhaustion section of burnout. As the results of the study demonstrated, the highest degree of emotional exhaustion belonged to senior high school teachers who had the average statistical mean of 33.63. On the contrary, the smallest degree of emotional exhaustion was for university teachers with the mean of 21.3. In addition, junior high school teachers and private institute teachers with means of 29.03 and 27.73 respectively stood in the middle.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Emotional Exhaustion among private institute, Junior and senior high school and university teachers*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
Private Institute Teacher	40	27.43	5.773	33.328	.391	.374	-.975	.733
Junior High School Teacher	40	29.03	5.700	32.487	.340	.374	-.726	.733
Senior High School Teacher	40	33.63	6.938	48.138	-.791	.374	.571	.733
University Teacher	40	21.30	6.446	41.549	-.156	.374	-.076	.733

In the Analysis of the Variance, the  $p$  was  $.000 < 0.05$  and the  $F$  was 26.68, so it could be concluded that the differences among the means of the four groups were statistically significant, with the senior high school teachers, having the highest degree of emotional ex-

haustion. Moreover, the first hypothesis was rejected as there was a statistically significant difference between the degree of emotional exhaustion among Iranian EFL teachers of private institutes, junior high schools, senior high schools, and universities.

**Table 2**  
*ANOVA for Emotional Exhaustion*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3112.569	3	1037.523	26.689	.000
Within Groups	6064.525	156	38.875		
Total	9177.094	159			

Delving into the analysis of emotional exhaustion further and find out where the significant differences lied, the researcher decided to administer Tukey HSD post-hoc analysis. As the results in Table 3 illustrate, the difference between private institute teachers and junior high school

teachers was none-significant ( $.661 > 0.05$ ). Senior high school teachers and junior high school teachers did report a significant difference in their emotional exhaustion since the  $p$  value reported is  $0.007 < 0.05$ .

**Table 3**  
*Tukey HSD Analysis for Emotional Exhaustion*

(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence	
					Lower	Upper
Private Institute	Junior High School	-1.60000	1.39419	.661	-5.2206	2.0206
	Senior High School	-6.20000	1.39419	.000	-9.8206	-2.5794
	University Teacher	6.12500	1.39419	.000	2.5044	9.7456
Junior High School	Private Institute	1.60000	1.39419	.661	-2.0206	5.2206
	Senior High School	-4.60000	1.39419	.007	-8.2206	-.9794
	University Teacher	7.72500	1.39419	.000	4.1044	11.3456
Senior High School	Private Institute	6.20000	1.39419	.000	2.5794	9.8206
	Junior High School	4.60000	1.39419	.007	.9794	8.2206
	University Teacher	12.32500	1.39419	.000	8.7044	15.9456
University	Private Institute	-6.12500	1.39419	.000	-9.7456	-2.5044
	Junior High School	-7.72500	1.39419	.000	-11.3456	-4.1044
	Senior High School	-12.32500	1.39419	.000	-15.9456	-8.7044

Results on the depersonalization aspect of burnout were almost the same as those on the emotional exhaustion. As table 4 indicates, Senior high school teachers had the highest level of depersonalization with the mean of 27.25, in con

trast to the university EFL teachers who reported the smallest degree of depersonalization with the mean of 20. Means of 22.5 and 24.4 put the private institute and junior high school EFL teachers in the middle of these two groups.

**Table 4**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Depersonalization*

	N	Mean	td. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
Private Institute Teacher	40	22.50	6.869	47.179	-.109	.374	-1.018	.733
Junior High School Teacher	40	24.40	5.922	35.067	.443	.374	-.408	.733
Senior High School Teacher	40	27.25	5.660	32.038	-.682	.374	.638	.733
University Teacher	40	20.00	4.967	24.667	-.136	.374	-.816	.733

The results of the Analysis of the Variance in Table 5 depict that there was a statistically significant difference between the four groups ( $F(3) = 1079$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) at the significance level of 0.05. Hence, the second research hypothesis was rejected, and this study demonstrated that there was a significant difference between the degrees of

depersonalization among Iranian EFL teachers of private institutes, junior high schools, senior high schools, and universities. Besides, the significant difference reported here confirmed that the highest and lowest degrees of depersonalization belonged to senior high school and university teachers, respectively.

**Table 5**  
*ANOVA for Depersonalization*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1124.675	3	374.892	10.792	.000
Within Groups	5419.100	156	34.738		
Total	6543.775	159			

In order to pinpoint the location of these significant differences, Tukey HSD post-hoc analysis was conducted. As indicated in Table 6, Tukey did not report any statistically significant difference between depersonalization of private institute teachers and junior high school teachers

( $p = .475 > 0.05$ ), just like emotional exhaustion. It also did not report any differences between private institute teachers and university EFL teachers ( $p = .234 > 0.05$ ), nor between junior high school teachers and senior high school teachers ( $p = .138 > 0.05$ ).

**Table 6**  
*Tukey HSD Analysis for Depersonalization*

(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence	
					Lower	Upper
Private Institute	Junior High School	-1.90000	1.31791	.475	-5.3225	1.5225
	Senior High School	-4.75000	1.31791	.002	-8.1725	-1.3275
	University Teacher	2.50000	1.31791	.234	-.9225	5.9225
Junior High School	Private Institute	1.90000	1.31791	.475	-1.5225	5.3225
	Senior High School	-2.85000	1.31791	.138	-6.2725	.5725
	University Teacher	4.40000	1.31791	.006	.9775	7.8225
Senior High School	Private Institute	4.75000	1.31791	.002	1.3275	8.1725
	Junior High School	2.85000	1.31791	.138	-.5725	6.2725
	University Teacher	7.25000	1.31791	.000	3.8275	10.6725
University	Private Institute	-2.50000	1.31791	.234	-5.9225	.9225
	Junior High School	-4.40000	1.31791	.006	-7.8225	-.9775
	Senior High School	-7.25000	1.31791	.000	-10.6725	-3.8275

The other aspect of burnout which was under consideration in the present study was personal accomplishment. With partial difference to the previous scales on depersonalization, the highest degree of reduced personal accomplishment belonged to junior high school teachers with the

average of 28.48, while just like the other scales, university teachers, with the mean of 16.52, again reported the lowest degree of reduced personal accomplishment. With the average mean of 23.67 and 27.03, private institute teachers and senior high school teachers stood in the middle ranks.

**Table 7**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Personal Accomplishment*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
Private Institute Teacher	40	23.67	6.490	42.122	.145	.374	-.152	.733
Junior High School Teacher	40	28.48	5.519	30.461	.016	.374	-1.324	.733
Senior High School Teacher	40	27.03	5.563	30.948	-.531	.374	.192	.733
University Teacher	40	16.52	5.074	25.743	.730	.374	.112	.733

ANOVA shows the p value of .000; meaning that the difference was significant. So, the third research hypothesis was rejected. The data analysis of this study showed there was a difference

between the extent of reduced personal accomplishment among Iranian EFL teachers of private institutes, junior high schools, senior high schools, and universities.

**Table 8**  
*ANOVA for Personal Accomplishment*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3405.400	3	1135.133	35.123	.000
Within Groups	5041.700	156	32.319		
Total	8447.100	159			

The researcher conducted Tukey HSD post-hoc test to spot the differences among the

groups. The results are illustrated in Table 9.

**Table 9**  
*Tukey HSD Analysis for Personal Accomplishment*

(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence	
					Lower	Upper
Private Institute	Junior High School	-4.80000	1.27119	.001	-8.1012	-1.4988
	Senior High School	-3.35000	1.27119	.045	-6.6512	-.0488
	University Teacher	7.15000	1.27119	.000	3.8488	10.4512
Junior High School	Private Institute	4.80000	1.27119	.001	1.4988	8.1012
	Senior High School	1.45000	1.27119	.665	-1.8512	4.7512
	University Teacher	11.95000	1.27119	.000	8.6488	15.2512
Senior High School	Private Institute	3.35000	1.27119	.045	.0488	6.6512
	Junior High School	-1.45000	1.27119	.665	-4.7512	1.8512
	University Teacher	10.50000	1.27119	.000	7.1988	13.8012
University	Private Institute	-7.15000	1.27119	.000	-10.4512	-3.8488
	Junior High School	-11.95000	1.27119	.000	-15.2512	-8.6488
	Senior High School	-10.50000	1.27119	.000	-13.8012	-7.1988

The results of the Tukey's analysis shows that the most intense degree of burnout was reported

by senior high school teachers with the statistical mean of 87.9. On the contrary, university teach-



ers reported the burnout degree with the mean of 57.83, which is the lowest among the four groups. The second and the third ranks, also, are

occupied by private institute teachers and junior high school teachers, respectively, which have the means of 73.6 and 80.57.

**Table 10**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Total Burnout*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
Private Institute Teacher	40	73.60	14.227	202.400	-.014	.374	-.383	.733
Junior High School Teacher	40	80.57	15.048	226.456	-1.248	.374	3.914	.733
Senior High School Teacher	40	87.90	9.639	92.913	-.166	.374	-.401	.733
University Teacher	40	57.83	7.765	60.302	-.058	.374	-.672	.733

Since the data for the distribution of total teacher burnout was nonparametric (Skewness ratio for junior high school group = 3.3), the nonparametric analysis of Kruskal Wallis Test replaced ANOVA, and as shown in Table 11, the p value for the asymmetry of Kruskal Wallis Test was .000. In other words, there was a meaningful difference between their results. This way, the fourth research hypothesis of this study was rejected, as the data analysis showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the degree of teacher burnout among Iranian EFL teachers of private institutes, junior high schools, senior high schools, and universities.

**Table 11**  
*Ranks of Kruskal Wallis Test Statistics*

	Total
Chi-square	80.940
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Sidak Post-Hoc analysis revealed all the teacher groups reported burnout scores that were significantly different with one another, except for the junior high school and private institute teachers who reported no difference with the p value of  $0.139 > 0.05$ .

**Table 12**  
*Sidak Post-Hoc Test for Total Burnout Scores*

(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence	
					Lower	Upper
Private Institute	Junior High School	-6.47500	2.85290	.139	-14.0775	1.1275
	Senior High School	-14.30000*	2.85290	.000	-21.9025	-6.6975
	University Teacher	15.77500*	2.85290	.000	8.1725	23.3775
Junior High School	Private Institute	6.47500	2.85290	.139	-1.1275	14.0775
	Senior High School	-7.82500*	2.85290	.040	-15.4275	-.2225
	University Teacher	22.25000*	2.85290	.000	14.6475	29.8525
Senior High School	Private Institute	14.30000*	2.85290	.000	6.6975	21.9025
	Junior High School	7.82500*	2.85290	.040	.2225	15.4275
	University Teacher	30.07500*	2.85290	.000	22.4725	37.6775
University	Private Institute	-15.77500*	2.85290	.000	-23.3775	-8.1725
	Junior High School	-22.25000*	2.85290	.000	-29.8525	-14.6475
	Senior High School	-30.07500*	2.85290	.000	-37.6775	-22.4725

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

All the research hypotheses in this study were rejected, and this study indicated that there were statistically significant differences in the degrees of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishments, and the total degree of teacher burnout among Iranian EFL university teachers, private English institutes, junior high schools, and senior high schools. Moreover, this study revealed that in all of the three scales as well as the total teacher burnout degree, university teachers reported the smallest degree of burnout. Except for the reduced personal accomplishment scale where junior high school teachers reported the highest degree, in all the other scales as well as in the total burnout degree, the highest intensity was reported by senior high school teachers. University teachers in Iran are least likely to be infected with teacher burnout whereas senior high school teachers are the most. The finding of this research study is in line with previous research (e.g. Maslach & Jackson, 1981), which suggested that high burnout level is associated with low levels of education. Sas, Boros, and Bonchis (2011) also found that pre-school teachers experience more stress than primary school teachers.

One of the causes of burnout among the teachers is teachers' personal factors. According to Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Ludtke, and Baumert (2008), particular attention should be devoted to the investigation of individual differences among teachers that can lead to either high levels of work commitment and engagement or to teacher burnout. Lau, Yuen and Chan (2005) found that younger teachers suffer from emotional exhaustion than do older teachers.

The results of this study showed that burnout is experienced by teachers at lower educational levels (i.e. junior high schools) compared to universities. Several different reasons could be offered to justify the findings of this study. First, Geving (2007) proposed that the learners' misbehavior was one of the most serious causes that leads teacher towards emotional exhaustion and hence burnout.

school learners, particularly high school learners show these behaviors in their classes quite often, and that could be one significant reason why school teachers, specifically high school teachers are more prone to depersonalization and burnout. Moreover, Kovacs (2010) believed that the extremely high expectations of learners and their parents from the teachers on the one side, and the extremely high expectations of authorities from the teachers on the other hand are two grave factors that impose a large amount of stress to teachers and lead them toward emotional exhaustion and burnout. In the Iranian university and private English institutes' context, not much pressure is put on the shoulders of the teachers for getting striking results. In the schools however, parents and school principals are more than enthusiastic to see school learners gain high-achieving results, and that is a factor to stress out Iranian school EFL teachers. This case is even worse when it comes to junior and senior high school EFL teachers given the fact that parents and authorities expect high percentages in universities' entrance exam. Okumbe (2007) supported this reason by stating that many teachers develop emotional exhaustion by striving to stage a good performance.

The findings of this study also showed that Iranian EFL teachers at school do not enjoy a high status and ample career opportunities, and hence they suffer from high degrees of reduced personal accomplishment. University EFL teachers in Iran enjoy a much higher status in terms of their profession, and private institute teachers enjoy much brighter career opportunities compared to school EFL teachers in Iran. That is why the two latter categories reported smaller degrees of reduced personal accomplishment. The results are in line with the findings of Kovacs (2010) that low social status of the teachers' profession as well as poor career opportunities are two other reasons that push teachers toward burnout.

Sichambo, Maragia, and Simiyu (2012) remarked that burnout could emerge as a result of the number of lessons teachers are asked to cover. In Iranian universities and private English in-

stitutes, the volume of the material that EFL teachers have to cover is not massive compared to the high schools. Teachers have almost full authority to determine the amount of material they would prefer to cover, and they set the amount on the basis of the time available; therefore, they do not feel under pressure to cover the set materials in a limited period of time. At schools, on the other hand, teachers are required to cover one whole book throughout the educational year. They usually complain about time limitations and the pressure they are suffering from because of the large number of the learners in the class, and possible lost sessions for public holidays and exam periods. This case is even worse for high school EFL teachers because they have a larger range of material in the books they have to cover, and they are mostly required to cover some extra material as well to assist learners in their success in universities' entrance exam. Hence, it is expected that they report higher degrees of burnout. In Fernet, Guay, Senécal, and Austin's (2012) point of view, overload could play a strong role in the emergence of depersonalization in teachers. It goes without saying that Iranian junior and senior high school teachers have to carry a much huger load of work than EFL teachers at private English institutes and universities. They have to teach much longer hours and they have to deal with a lot of more side activities such as correcting more test papers.

### **Final Remarks on Burn-out Remedies**

Throughout years of investigation and academic research on teacher burnout, various remedies have been offered to heal this mental and physical wound. Sarros (1989) proposed that building a healthy and productive atmosphere in educational facilities is an efficient way to deal with teacher burnout. When teachers feel they are working in a productive setting which causes the mutual growth of their learners and themselves, they would feel more accomplished and less exhausted.

Sichambo et al. (2012) asserted that an effective means of dealing with burnout is to break the monotonous trend of teachers' routines. They

proposed that new challenges and new work opportunities could revive teachers' motivation to work and give them the feeling of accomplishment. In the Iranian EFL context, breaking the stereotypes and routines of English teaching at schools, particularly high schools, could noticeably reduce the amount of burnout in teachers.

Moreover, Bruce (2009, p. 57) proposed a number of other remedies for teacher burnout:

- "Reducing the stress level of the teachers
- Keeping the personal health of the teachers strong
- Constructing a strong social network among the teachers to increase teacher's scientific, emotional and professional support of each other
- Obtaining clearly-stated expectations in all facets of teachers' professional life
- Improving teachers' time management
- Teachers' participating in mentoring programs
- Encouraging teachers toward self-reflecting on personality attributes that may contribute to stress and burnout"

This study, on the other hand, revealed that EFL teacher burnout was more intense among Iranian school teachers, particularly senior high school teachers, compared to EFL teachers working in other educational facilities. The researcher is of the opinion that the best remedy to offer for reducing this acute burnout level is to pay attention to the needs and obsessions of school EFL teachers, and endeavor to provide a safe and unthreatening atmosphere for them at work. Increasing the motivation of school EFL teachers to teach through various methods such as taking financial and social measure could be a very effective remedy. Moreover, building chances for them to improve in their careers and feel they are well-achieved could also play a crucial role in decreasing their burnout levels.

### **PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

As this study outlined a detailed and clear

report on the current status of burnout among English teachers who worked in different sectors of education in Iran, the data results derived from this report could have numerous pedagogical implications. In this section, several major implications would be discussed.

This study revealed that Iranian senior high school EFL teachers showed high levels of burnout. This makes it necessary for the authorities of education to come up with solutions for this grave issue, and attempt to make teachers more motivated and more accomplished though financial, emotional, and life support.

Moreover, this study revealed that at university and private institutes, teachers were less likely to develop extreme burnout levels compared to school settings. This could lead authorities to pay more attention to the circumstances of schools, and identify the conditions that lead to burnt in those education settings.

The implication of this study for fresh EFL teachers or EFL teacher students is a warning that at school settings, they are more likely to develop burnout feelings. Hence, if student teachers feel they might suffer from depersonalization, or they are over ambitious and they might suffer from reduced personal accomplishments, teaching in private institutes would be a safer choice of career for them.

Another application of this study involves school EFL teachers whose burnout level has reached beyond repair, and they are on verse of quitting. According to the findings of this study, teaching in private institutes is far less burnout-causing than school settings, particularly senior high school setting. So, instead of quitting, they would have the choice of shifting to teaching in institutes instead.

Just like any other academic research, this study was able to answer several questions regarding the situation of teacher burnout in Iran, and helped us get to know several aspects of burnout in Iranian context that we did not know. Yet, it did not manage to answer all what was unknown to us, and it raised several more questions itself. So these questions could be perfect ideas for planning and conducting further studies.

The researcher would like to share some of these ideas in the following.

A lot was learned in this study from the comparison of the views and attitudes of four different categories of EFL teachers together. Other teacher-related issued such as teacher autonomy, teacher observation, teacher promotion, etc. could gain benefit from studies like this, which compare the attitudes of various categories of teachers.

An interesting further study could be investigating the ideas of students on teacher burnout, and probing what would cause a teacher to reach ultimate burnout in the perspectives of the learners. These views might lead to finding valuable and practical solutions for teacher burnout.

This study targeted burnout in general, and did not incorporate gender, age, years of experience, and other personal variables in it. Other follow-up studies which take these factors into consideration could answer more questions regarding teacher burnout.

This study focused on the three aspects of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and reduced personal accomplishment. Other studies could be conducted to look into other aspects of burnout such as motivation, financial matters, job security, and the like.

Another topic for further research would be investigating burnout among teachers of other fields. A comparison of the degrees of burnout among EFL teachers and teachers of other majors could help find practical ways to deal with this issue.

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