

**The Role of Gender, Teaching experience, and academic degree
in Iranian EFL Teachers' Burnout**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the burnout level among Iranian English language teachers at Tonekabon schools in Mazandaran province. More specifically, the present study intends to find out the possible effects of the participants' gender, academic degree, and teaching experiences on the three dimensions of burnout among Iranian English language teachers. In the present study, Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) Educatory survey (1986) was employed as the instrument to determine the burnout level among 30 teachers from various schools in Tonekabon. A series of one sample t-test, Independent-sample t-test and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the data. The results indicated that all the respondents suffered from burnout and females with less than five years of teaching experience, and bachelor degree teachers were more affected by the burnout dimensions. The findings of the study may help the ministry of education to provide programs that can help alleviate burnout problems among the teachers.

Keywords: Burnout Levels, Gender, Teaching experience, academic degree, Iranian EFL Teachers

INTRODUCTION

From a long time ago till present, burnout has become a matter in variety of profession including teaching. Pines and Aronson (1998) described burnout as a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion effected by long-term involvement in emotional

demanding situation. Teaching is stressful (Borg & Riding, 1991; Travers & Cooper, 1996) and teachers suffer in higher level of exhaustion and cynicism compared to other profession (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996; and Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Teachers are exposed to the stressors which coming from students and other related context. These may affect their feeling so to their performance. As a result, students will be affected from the weak performances of teachers. Therefore, it is vital to give attention to this issue, so that the burnout matter among teachers could be straighten out.

One of the person who was lead the of burnout study, Maslach et al (1996) defined burnout as a syndrome of physical and emotional exhaustion including the development of negative job attitude, poor professional self-concept and of emphatic concern for client (Pines & Aronson, 1998). Consequently, she came out with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduce personal accomplishment as three dimensions of burnout.

Emotional exhaustion refers to the feeling of over extension and exhaustion resulting from daily conflict in work. It is particularly defined as the lack of enthusiasm and the sense of emotional draining by other people among teachers (Gavrilovici, 2008). Depersonalization, referring to negative, cynical or excessively detached response to one's clients and colleagues, represents the interpersonal component of burnout. Reduced personal accomplishment refers to a decline in one's feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people and represents the self-evaluation component of the syndrome (Maslach, 1998).

Demographic factors that have been closely attributed to burnout are such as gender, age, number of years of service, location of schools, teaching level, type of school, etc. In terms of gender, in the study among Malaysian English teachers, Mukundan and Khandroo (2009), indicated that female teachers suffer higher level of emotional exhaustion compared to males but do not differ in terms of reduced personal accomplishment which was also significant. This finding is supported by among Hong Kong teachers (Lau, Yuen, & Chan, 2005; Kokkinos, 2007; Ozan, 2009). Moreover, the findings of other studies have shown that male teachers are more subject to burnout than female teachers (Greenglass, Pantony, & Burke, 1988; Labone, 2002; Haberman, 2004; Salami, 2011; Asgari, 2012). However, existing studies on gender do not show consistent results (Al-Qaryoti & Al-Khateeb, 2006;

Gavrilovici, 2008; He, 2011; Jamshidirad, Mukundan, & Nimehchisalem, 2012; Soltanabadi Farshi, Omranzadeh, 2014). The factor of age is also found to affect burnout level where younger teachers are indicated to experience higher levels of burnout (Lackritz, 2004; Lau et al., 2005; Mukundan & Khanderoo, 2010). Teachers 'experience level which is indicated by years of teaching also affects the levels of burnout. A number of studies have shown that the more experienced the teacher, the less prone he or she is to burnout (Lau et al., 2005; Mukundan & Khanderoo, 2009; He, 2011; Mousavy, Thomas, Mukundan, & Nimehchisalem, 2012; Hosseini Fatemi & Raoufi, 2013). However, a study conducted by Kokkinos (2007) indicated otherwise where teachers having more than 10 experiences show higher levels of emotional exhaustions.

The purpose of this study is to examine the three dimensions of burnout among English language teachers. More specifically, the present study intends to find out the possible effects of the participants' gender, academic degree, and teaching experiences on the three dimensions of burnout among English language teachers. The following research questions are addressed in this study:

- 1- What are the levels of burnout components among the English language teacher?
- 2- Are there any significant differences between the three dimensions of burnout and participants' gender?
- 3- Are there any significant differences between the three dimensions of burnout and participants' academic degree?
- 4- Are there any significant differences between the three dimensions of burnout and participants' teaching experiences?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Teaching is among those occupations with the highest levels of job stress (Chaplain, 2008; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Many studies have been done to investigate causes of stress and its consequences (e.g., Kokkinos, 2007; Kyriacou, 2001; Liu & Ramsey, 2008; Travers &

Cooper, 1996). One of these consequences that is very important is teacher turnover (e.g., Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006; Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008).

In the last decade, there has been a surge of interest in scrutinizing the role of teachers' personal characteristics in their teaching preferences. Frequently the studies focus on how demographic variables such as gender, age, and experience influence teaching and learning styles (Brew, 2002; Severiens, 1997). Gender is one crucial factor which might influence, in one way or another, teachers' professional lives in general and their teaching preferences in particular considering their personality and individual characteristics. It is believed that social relations and the dominance of either gender (usually male) affects teachers' lives (Karimvand, 2011). Female professionals are usually subordinate to male authorities in educational settings where professional interactions are usually characterized by marginalization of women (Bartlett, 2005). However, studies which have focused on how gender might affect teachers' choice of different teaching styles are a few and have shown some different results (Karimvand, 2011). For instance, in a study of gender differences in Iran, Aliakbari and Soltani (2009) found that Kurdish females prefer active, reflective, sensing, intuitive, verbal and sequential styles except for the visual and global ones. They also found that Persian male EFL teachers and students prefer all teaching styles including active, reflective, sensing, intuitive, visual, verbal, and global except for the sequential one. The way we think affects all aspects of our private and social life and education is not an exception. Human beings think differently and teachers who have key roles in education do so. Recently proper attention has been given to the ways teachers think (Calderhead, 1987) and now teaching is more characterized as a thinking activity (Richards & Farrell, 2005). One of the prevailing concepts in educational reform today is critical thinking. The significance of critical thinking in education and particularly higher education is now acknowledged by a large number of educators.

One of the major goals of teaching is to bring about beneficial changes in learners. However, these changes, as Voller (1997) argues, are determined by a complex set of factors which depend on the learners' and teachers' perceptions of their respective roles, their past and present experiences, and the decisions imposed upon them. In order to promote autonomy among language learners, the teachers need to make every effort to adjust their own roles. Many scholars have written on the nature of these roles. Among them, Knowles (1975) believes that teachers should act as consultants, facilitators, and helpers. In a similar vein,

Voller (1997) argues that language teachers should play the role of a facilitator who supports the processes of decision-making, a counselor who cares for the students' ongoing needs, and is a resource person whose knowledge and expertise are available to his learners when needed.

In a number of studies, researchers have examined the possible effects of various factors on teachers' classroom management approaches. Martin, Yin, and Mayall (2006) in a study on the impact of teaching experiences and gender differences on teachers' classroom management styles concluded that experienced teachers were significantly more controlling than novice teachers and female teachers were more interventionist than males regarding people and behavior management. In another study, Rahimi and Asadollahi (2012) investigated the relationship among Iranian EFL teachers' classroom management orientations, their individual differences, and the contextual variables. They found that gender, age, experience, and school type were not significantly related to classroom management orientations. But results revealed that teachers' education and district of school location were related to classroom management orientations. It means that teachers with higher education degree and working in less privileged areas of the city are less controlling and interventionist.

More recently there has been a surge of interest on scrutinizing the role of teachers' personal characteristics in their teaching preferences. Frequently the studies focus on how demographic variables such as gender, age, and experience influence teaching and learning styles (Severiens, 1997; Brew, 2002). Gender is one crucial factor which might influence, in one way or another, teachers' professional lives in general and their teaching preferences in particular considering their personality and individual characteristics. It is believed that social relations and the dominance of either gender (usually male) affects teachers' lives (Karimvand, 2011). Female professionals are usually subordinate to male authorities in educational settings where professional interactions are usually characterized by marginalization of women (Bartlett, 2005). However, studies which have focused on how gender might affect teachers' choice of different teaching styles are a few and have shown different results (Karimvand, 2011). For instance, in a study of gender differences in Iran, Aliakbari and Soltani (2009) found that Kurdish females prefer active, reflective, sensing, intuitive, verbal and sequential styles except for the visual and global ones. They also found

that Persian male EFL teachers and students prefer all styles including active, reflective, sensing, intuitive, visual, verbal, and global except for the sequential one.

While some attempts have been made on assessing teachers' perception of classroom management in Iran as an EFL context, no information is available on investigating teachers' actual practices of classroom management and assessing discrepancies between the teachers' beliefs and actual practices of classroom management. Accordingly, the present study intended to examine the relationship between the EFL teachers' beliefs and actual practices of classroom management.

Markley (2004, as cited in Ghasemi & Hashemi, 2011) indicated about the significant role of English language teachers in their academic success and learners' learning that highly depends on teachers and their methodologies in their classes. Strong self-efficacy makes teachers to be less critical about students' errors (Ashton & Webb, 1986), to work more with students who feel stress (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), and to be more patient with students' difficulty (Meijer & Foster, 1988; Podell & Soodak, 1993; Soodak & Podell, 1993). Moreover, teachers show greater enthusiasm for teaching (Allinder, 1994; Guskey, 1984; Hall, Burley, Villeme, & Brockmeier, 1992).

Akbari and Moradkhani (2010) studied relationship between teaching experience, academic degree and teacher efficacy among 447 Iranian EFL teachers. The results of data analysis revealed that experienced teachers (with more than three years of teaching experience) had a significantly higher level of efficacy, efficacy for classroom management, efficacy for student engagement, and efficacy for instructional strategies compared to their novice counterparts. Rastegar and Memarpour (2009) explored teacher self-efficacy with respect to teacher emotion and demographic variables in an EFL context in Shiraz, Iran. The results showed a positive correlation between teacher emotional intelligence and self-efficacy.

In a study conducted by Evrim, Gökçe, and Enisa (2009), beliefs of a Turkish EFL teacher on classroom management were examined. The study also investigated the similarities and differences between the teacher classroom management beliefs and actual teaching practices. The researchers utilized the Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control (ABCC) inventory, a philosophy of teaching statement, and a stimulated recall session as instruments of the study for purpose of data collection. The study revealed that the teacher was interactionalist in her general beliefs regarding classroom management. It was also found that there was

congruence between the teacher's beliefs on classroom management and her actual practices in the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

A survey method was used in this study. The following section indicates the participants, instruments, and the data analysis method used in this study.

PARTICIPANTS

The sample of the study was the 30 participants that were involved in English language teaching in Tonekaboon, Mazandaran, Iran. They were all English teachers that teach in secondary schools. As for their sex, 42% of the participants were males and 58% were females. The majority of them, about 64% were Bachelor's degree holders while 28% were Diploma and 12% were Master degree holders. Out of the whole population, 10% had teaching experience ranging between 16 to 25 years, 25% had 5 to 15 years, 5% had more than 25 years, whereas 60% had less than 5 years of teaching experience.

INSTRUMENTS

Two questionnaires were distributed among the subjects. One was aimed to get the demographic information, including the teachers "gender, teaching experience and academic degree. The other questionnaire was the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBIES) (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986). It is a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0-6 (where 0 = never and 6 = every day). It includes 22 items that asked the respondents how often they experience feelings that relate to burnout. These items are related to the three dimensions of burnout (i.e., Emotional Exhaustion (EE) = 9 items; Depersonalization (DP) = 5 items; and Personal Accomplishment (PA) = 8 items). The Emotional Exhaustion subscale assesses the feelings of being emotionally exhausted or overextended (e.g., "I feel used up at the end of the workday"). The Depersonalization subscale evaluates the feelings of impersonal response toward people (e.g., "I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects"). The Personal Accomplishment subscale measures the feelings of successful achievement (e.g., "I feel very energetic"). High internal consistency (EE=.90; DP=.79; PA=.71) and test-retest (EE=.82; DP=.60; PA=.80) reliability values (Cronbach's Alphas) have been reported for this scale (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1996). However, the reliability of these items was checked in this study and a high Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = .77$) was

obtained for the average of EE ($\alpha = .86$), DP ($\alpha = .69$), and PA ($\alpha = .77$) subscales. This indicates that all the items of the scoring scale are measuring the same construct.

PROCEDURE

Data were collected on June 2017, from teachers in Tonekabon schools in Mazandran province, Iran. The participants were asked to complete a two-sided printed questionnaire that would have probably taken five to ten minutes of their time. The raw data were collected by hard copies of the questionnaires as a whole by the researchers in a period of time of two to three days.

DATA ANALYSIS

This study was done supported by Maslach et al. (1996) burnout inventory and the software used for this study was SPSS 20.0 version. One sample t-test, Independent t-test and one-way ANOVA were used to determine the significant difference between the variables.

RESULT

The overall burnout dimensions

Data analysis was carried out through the use of SPSS version 20. One-sample t-test was the statistical method used in the scores of respondents on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The typical levels of burnout are low, moderate, and high. Nevertheless, only high levels of the three dimensions were taken into account for elaboration in the present study. Based on the literature, there are studies suggested the range scores for each burnout dimension to define high level of burnout (Rosenberg & Pace, 2006). If the scores is higher than 27 for emotional exhaustion, exceeding than 13 for depersonalization and below 31 for personal accomplishment, the burnout level considered to be high. As presented in table 1, all p values are 0.000, less than 0.005, therefore all burnout dimensions reported to be significantly high among all respondents. The mean value for is higher than 27, for depersonalization is higher than 13, and the mean value for personal accomplishment is below 31. The results indicate that burnout levels among the English teachers in the area of Tonekabon are high. In other words, this show the participants have problem in burnout.

Table 1: Statistics and one-sample t-test for overall burnout dimensions

Burnout	N	Mean	SD	Test value	Sig.(2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
EE	30	36.32	6.683	27	.000	9.32	.945
DP	30	17.96	5.547	13	.000	4.96	.748
PA	30	26.06	7.955	31	.000	-4.94	1.125

Burnout level and Gender

Table 2 shows the relationship between gender and burnout dimensions. Based on the mean scores, the female teachers indicated slightly higher emotionally exhausted scores ($M=38.97$, $SD= 4.15$) than male teachers ($M=32.67$, $SD= 7.82$). As for statistical significant difference, according to the t-test results, ($t = -3.69$, $p= .001$), indicated a significant value of less than .05 that shows that there is significant difference between emotional exhaustion between male and female teachers. Moreover, as for depersonalization reference to gender, t-test results shows ($t=-1.28$, $p=.208$), the significant value is greater than .05. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between male and female teachers, however mean score for female teachers ($M=18.79$, $S=5.76$) is slightly higher than male teachers ($M=16.81$, $S= 5.15$). Finally, as it could be observed, male teachers were more reduced in personal accomplishment compared to females but this difference ($t=-.982$, $p=.331$) is statistically non-significant.

Table 2: Statistics and independent sample t-test for burnout dimensions with reference to gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	DF	Sig.(2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error difference
EE	11	32.67	7.82	-3.69	48	.001	-6.29885	1.70804
	19	38.97	4.15					
DP	11	16.81	5.15	-1.28	48	.208	-1.98358	1.58027
	19	18.79	5.76					
PA	11	24.76	9.86	-.982	48	.331	-2.23810	2.28023
	19	27.0	6.26					

Burnout level and Teaching experience

Table 3 shows the result for the relationship between teaching experiences with burnout dimensions. For emotional exhaustion, $F=18.504$, $p=.000$, since $p<.005$, therefore there is significant difference between three different levels of teaching experience and emotional exhaustion. From mean values, those who had 16 to 25 years of teaching experience were less affected in emotional exhaustion compare to other group. Table 3 also indicates that there is significant difference between depersonalization and three levels of teaching experience ($F=18.148$, $p=.000$) and the mean scores shows teachers with less five years of teaching experience are more suffered from depersonalization compared to other teachers. Moreover, as indicated in Table 3, there is significant difference between three levels of teaching experience and personal accomplishment ($F=15.06$, $p=.000$). Those who had more than 26 years of teaching experience reported high in personal accomplishment.

Table 3: Statistics and independent sample t-test for burnout dimensions with reference to teaching experience

Burnout Levels		Sum of Square	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
EE	Between groups	1196.991	3	398.997	18.504	.000
	Within groups	991.889	46	21.563		
	Total	2188.880	49			
DP	Between groups	817.353	3	272.451	18.148	.000
	Within groups	690.567	46	15.012		
	Total	1507.92	49			
PA	Between groups	1533.701	3	511.234	15.06	.000
	Within groups	1567.119	46	34.068		
	Total	3100.82	49			

Burnout level and Academic Degree

Table 4 below demonstrates the scores between respondents academic degree with reference to burnout dimensions. As it is presented in the Table, there is no significant difference between three groups of academic degree and emotional exhaustion ($F=2.149$, $p=.085$). However, there is significant difference between depersonalization scores with the three different groups of academic degree ($F=5.408$, $p=.001$). Mean score shows that teachers with bachelor degree were more suffered in depersonalization compare to others group. In addition, as illustrated in table 4, there is significant difference between three group of different qualification degree and personal accomplishment scores ($F=5.791$, $p=.001$). The mean scores indicate the teachers with master degree were more reduce in personal accomplishment compared to those with bachelor degree and diploma.

Table 4: Statistics and independent sample t-test for burnout dimensions with reference to academic degree

Burnout Levels		Sum of Square	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
EE	Between groups	357.21	4	89.303	2.194	.085
	Within groups	1831.67	45	40.70		
	Total	2188.880	49			
DP	Between groups	489.558	4	122.309	5.408	.001
	Within groups	1018.362	45	22.630		
	Total	1507.92	49			
PA	Between groups	1053.71	4	263.427	5.791	.001
	Within groups	2047.11	45	45.491		
	Total	3100.82	49			

4. Discussion

Based on the data reported above, female proved to be more exhausted emotionally compared to males but there are no significant difference between males and females in depersonalization and personal accomplishment. The results of this study is consistent with the findings of the previous studies in that female teachers suffer higher level of emotional exhaustion compared to males but do not differ in terms of reduced personal accomplishment ((Lau, Yuen, & Chan, 2005; Kokkinos, 2007; Ozan, 2009). For example, Lau, Yuen and Chan (2005) reported that males got higher scores on depersonalization compared to emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment, while females achieved higher scores in emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. On the other hand, some of the previous studies found that male teachers are more subject to burnout than female teachers (Greenglass, Pantony, & Burke, 1988; Labone, 2002; Haberman, 2004; Salami, 2011; Asghari, 2012). For example, Asgari (2012) found that the performance of Iranian female

teachers reduced in two burnout levels of (EE and DP), while the mean value of the female group increased in the (PA) compared to the male group. In general, there are no consistent results with regard to gender and its relation to teachers' burnout level. However, it can be argued that it rely on some sociological factors in different contexts.

The findings of the present study revealed that teachers who had less than 16 years of teaching experience were more exhausted emotionally compared to those who had more than 16 years of teaching experience. The findings of the current study are in line with previous studies in that the more experienced the teacher, the less prone he or she is to burnout (Lau et al., 2005; Mukundan & Khanderoo, 2009; He, 2011; Mousavy, Thomas, Mukundan, & Nimehchisalem, 2012; Hosseini Fatemi & Raoufi, 2013). It is interesting to note that those who had less than 5 years of teaching experience were more troubled by depersonalization; however, this finding is in contrast to previous findings (e.g., Mukundan & khanderoo, 2009) in that teacher with less than 5 years of teaching experience did not show sign of depersonalization. It is crystal clear that the results of the present study and previous studies emphasized on the important role of teaching experience. High experience teachers are able to how conduct their classes since they have more familiarity with course materials and they are also able to act as an expert how to teach the content of a course effectively.

Based on the findings of the study, there is no significant difference among different academic degrees with emotional exhausted. The result also indicated that teachers with bachelor degree qualification were more suffer in depersonalization compare to others. This result is consistent with the findings of Mukundan and Khanderoo (2009) that they reported the same pattern where teachers with bachelor degree suffered from depersonalization. However, those master degrees were reduced in personal accomplishment. These findings

were supported by previous studies (Mukundan & Khanderoo, 2009; Sezer, 2012; Soltanabadi Farshi & Omranzadeh, 2014) in that the burnout level of high-educated teachers is high compared to low-educated teachers.

The effects of burnout can be seen in English language teachers and this would cause various effects in the teaching process. Thus, it is suggested that the school administrations take various aspects into consideration when the teachers suffered from burnout because it could bring negative effects that could lead to unsuccessful classroom learning. There seems to be a necessity for future research to be conducted on a more in depth way and to look into more external factors which concerns burnout among English language teachers to determine the factors which concerns burnout among English language teachers to determine the factors that contribute to burnout among teachers.

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