

The Effects of Gender and Marital Status on Burnout of English Teachers in Iran

Azadeh Asgari

Department of Language and Humanities, Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Teacher burnout is a world-wide phenomenon that draws the attention of educational psychologists and stimulates efforts in construct elaboration and measurement. Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishments are three dimensions that constitute the burnout syndrome. The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of gender and marital status on burnout of English teacher among 100 English teachers in Tehran, Iran. This paper describes the quantitative data obtained from the study. All the participants of the study were Iranian citizens who were working at secondary schools in Tehran. In order to determine the level of burnout experienced by English teachers, the Maslach Burnout Inventory test (MBI) was conducted. Based on the findings, the gender of English teacher seemed to have influenced the teacher's responses on each of the sub-scales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory so there was a significant difference between the gender and burnout. The study also found that there was no significant difference between marital status and the English teacher's score on the MBI.

Keywords: Gender, marital status, burnout, English teachers

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a very stressful occupation with negative aspects such as unmotivated and difficult students, decreasing resources, large class sizes, and rigid administration

practices which can sometimes lead to teacher burnout. Teacher burnout has long been understood to have significant negative effects on teaching efficacy. Avoiding teacher burnout is one of the biggest concerns among all educators while there have not been many studies conducted on this particular phenomenon, especially in Iran. Whether a teacher is teaching elementary, secondary or tertiary students,

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 26 March 2010

Accepted: 14 March 2012

E-mail address:

Azia.Asgari@gmail.com (Azadeh Asgari)

in one way or another, it will hunt him/her down. The only thing any teacher can do is to prevent and stop teacher burnout. As stated earlier on, teaching is a stressful task in which its activities add up every day. The main component in carrying out learning and teaching processes is the teacher and there is a general view that teacher burnout may have a negative impact on the teachers themselves which will consequently lead to emotional and physical ill-health and on the students as burnout teachers may relatively be impaired in terms of their quality of teaching and commitment, may give less information and less praises and interact less work for their students. Teacher burnout is something that is becoming more common as school budgets get tighter. Teachers are asked to do more tasks every single day. With these added responsibilities, many teachers find by themselves tired and burned out.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Much of the research in the area of burnout can be traced to Herbert Freudenberger,

a psychologist practicing in New York during the 1960's and 70's. Freudenberger employed the term 'burnout' to describe the effects of overwork, exhaustion and frustration that he experienced while operating a free clinic for drug users and indigent persons. Freudenberger first introduced this concept in 1974, and he defined the problem as one of chronic exhaustions and frustrations resulting from continued devotion to a goal or a principle that had failed to produce a corresponding reward. It was defined as wearing down or wearing out of energy (Freudenberger & North, 1985). Some other views can be added to Freudenberger's to give an exact meaning to the concept of burnout. According to Pines and Aronson (1988), burnout is formally clarified and subjectively experienced as a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion which is caused by long-term involvement in situation that are emotionally demanding. The term "burnout" originated during the 1960's as a description of the effect of drug abuse on an individual (Capel, 1993, as cited in Landeche, 2009).

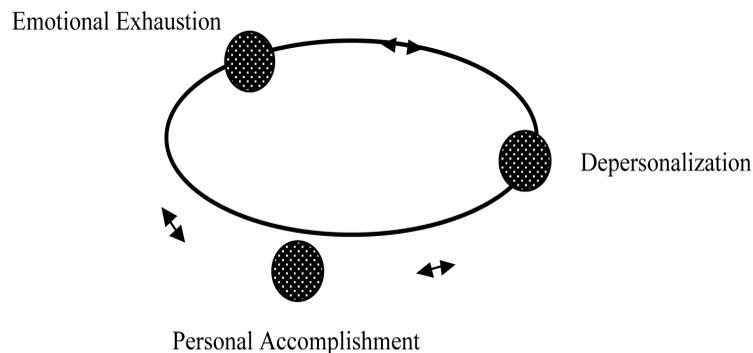


Fig. 1: The Dimensions of Burnout (Sedgwick, 1998)

Maslach is one of the pioneers in the study of teacher burnout. In 1981, Maslach defined burnout as a syndrome that characterized with disturbing physical and emotional characteristics. She further pointed out burnout as a condition that is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and loss of a sense of personal accomplishment. This condition is developed primarily in individuals who work in human services or occupations such as education, social work, police and emergency services. Burnout is manifested in the following ways: work overload, lack of control over one's work environment, lack of community among teachers in the school, lack of fairness in work assignments and uneven distribution or absence of rewards (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

According to Sedgwick (1998), burnout is formally clarified and subjectively experienced as a state of physical, emotional, and personal caused. Emotional Exhaustion (EE) shows the feelings of over extension and exhaustion which is caused by daily work pressures and conflicts with the colleagues.

Depersonalization (DP) indicates the development of negative attitude and impersonal responses towards the people with whom one works. Meanwhile, Personal Accomplishment (PA) refers to the sense of personal achievement that is accompanied by self-esteem. It is inversely related with burnout.

Burnout can be a fundamental cause of an endless list of bad side-effects, not only on the person who is suffering from

this particular syndrome, but also all the people around him/her (Landeche, 2009). As mentioned earlier, a teacher is the main component of teaching process; hence, when the teacher has this syndrome, it will cause him/ her to treat the students irrespectively and he/she will not be able to perform a day-by-day duty supposedly.

A variety of studies have been conducted to identify the causes associated with stress and burnout among teachers. For instance, studies carried out in Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States have found similar causes of burnout in professional educators (Coulter & Abney, 2009). There are a number of studies dealing with the burnout issue which have included many variables that may affect teachers' level of burnout such as age, gender, marital status, as well as level of education, teaching level, teaching experience, and job satisfaction. Nonetheless, the focus of this study was only on the effects of gender and marital status on burnout.

Besides large volume of studies on the aetiology of stress, there are also many studies conducted on demographic data related to stress. The most common variables for these studies are gender, marital status, teaching experiences, educational level, as well as professional and religious backgrounds. The findings of Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) on service professionals including teachers indicated that female staff had higher emotional exhaustion than their male colleagues. In 2003, Mendes investigated

the relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher burnout among 49 credentialed secondary teachers and found that with more experiences, teachers were better at identifying emotions. Similarity, Lau, Yuen, and Chan (2005) explored the relationship between teachers' demographic variables and burnout by using the C-MBI questionnaire among 1797 participants from 45 secondary schools in Hong Kong. Gender differences were found in all three burnout syndromes, and teachers who were younger, unmarried, without religious beliefs, less experienced, without professional training and of junior rank were more consistently burned-out. Meanwhile, the strongest predictor for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization was age, and teachers' rank was found to be the best predictor for personal accomplishment.

In addition, Li, Yang and Shen (2007) examined the relationship between teachers' sense of teaching efficacy and job burnout. Li employed the Teachers' Sense of Teaching Efficacy Scale and the C-MBI questionnaire, as well. These instruments were administered among 247 secondary school teachers. The teachers' performance revealed that their length of teaching and marital status had significant effects on their personal teaching efficacy, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment.

However, there were also some inconsistent findings in relation to the relationship between demographic variables and teachers' level of burnout. For instance, Holloman (1999) explored if personal and

school-related variables were associated with 383 first-year school teacher burnout. Based on the Holloman's findings, no statically significant differences were found between areas of burnout and the variables of gender, age and marital status. Likewise, the study administrated by Zhao and Bi (2003) in a sample of 190 secondary school teachers in Chinese Mainland concluded that there was no difference between the genders in three burnout syndromes.

A meta-analysis by Weng (2005) in 35 US research studies with K-12 teacher populations indicated that all of the variables of human characteristics included in the demographics of the selected studies did not have very strong predictive correlations with burnout. This means a single factor, such as gender, cannot be used to predict if a person is more susceptible to three dimensions of burnout.

A similar study was carried out among special head teachers and teachers in Turkey (entitled an analysis of burnout and job satisfaction among Turkish special school head-teachers and teachers, and the factors effecting their burnout and job satisfaction) by Sari in 2004. Sari reported that female teachers scored high emotional exhaustion than their male counterparts. On the other hand, male teachers scored high depersonalization than their female colleagues (2004). In addition, the study elaborated that there was no significant difference between the two genders in terms of personal accomplishment. The results of this study are supported by the findings of Dali's who did a study among

primary school teachers in Turkey in 2004. Dali (2004) reported that there was no significant difference between male and female primary school teachers in terms of all burnout dimensions. Lance Hogan and McKnight (2007) conducted the same study on university online instructors in which the female instructors revealed higher levels for the three burnout dimensions compared to their male counterparts.

Al-Qaryoti and Al-Khateeb (2006) carried out a study among 447 teachers (129 males, 318 females) in Jordan and revealed that there was no significant difference between the teachers in term of their burnout level according to the gender, whereas there was a relationship between teaching salary satisfaction and their burnout. In terms of the marital status, the results indicated that being married or not did not affect on these teachers' level of burnout.

In his study among teachers of two schools in Macau, Luk (2009) found that the teachers experienced relatively average burnout which coincided with the findings of a study carried out in Hong Kong. Luk reported that female teachers scored high on emotional exhaustion compared to male teachers; on the other hand, the male teachers were shown to score high on depersonalization than their female colleagues (2009). These findings added on to the database for comparison of the Chinese population internationally. The findings also identified those with greater degree of burnout, to whom more attention should be paid.

As previously mentioned, burnout can be a fundamental cause of an endless list of bad side-effects; on the other hand, a teacher is the main component of teaching process. Gender, marital status, teaching experiences, educational level, professional and religious backgrounds are the most common variables for burnout study. Nonetheless, there have been not many studies dealing with this phenomenon especially among English teachers in Iran. In accordance with the researcher's specialization, the main purpose of the current study was to investigate the effects of gender and marital status on the levels of burnout among English teachers in Iran. The specific objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To determine gender differences in terms of the level of burnout among English teachers.
2. To determine the differences in term of marital status on the level of burnout among English teachers.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

Participants

The population for this descriptive study comprised of English teachers in Tehran, Iran, who had randomly been selected among 50 secondary schools. All the English teachers who were employed at the secondary schools were contacted via e-mail and invited to participate in this study. The researcher explained the research instrument to the participants and how to fill the items properly. The data were collected

by distributing the self-administered MBI questionnaire among the participants and these were collected back by the respective school general offices in January 2010. In total, 100 English teachers participated in the study. All the participants are Iranian citizens, with the majority of them (83%) holding bachelor degree from university and the rest were with master degree. Of the 100 English teachers who completed the inventory filled in the inventory correctly. Fifty percent of participants were females and 50% were males. Eighty two percent of the whole population are married and 18 percent are single. The participants' age ranged from 25 to over 40 years with a mean age of 33 years. These teachers have been in the teaching profession for an average of 9 years. In this study, all the English teachers were employed at secondary schools in Tehran, Iran.

Research Instrument

Burnout in respondents was measured on one occasion using the Educator Survey version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is a predominant instrument used to assess burnout in teachers and educational administrators (Maslach, Jackson & Schwab, 1986). The MBI consists of 22 item self-report instrument describing the feelings an individual might have as a result of being over-stressed or burned out. This instrument consists of three subscales, namely, Emotional Exhaustion (EE with nine items), Depersonalization (DP with five

items), and Personal Accomplishment (PA with eight items).

The participants responded on a seven-point frequency rating scale, and their numerical values are as follows: 0 = Never; 1 = A few times a year or less; 2 = Once a month or less; 3 = A few times a month; 4 = Once a week; to 5 = A few times a week; and 6 = Everyday. High scores on the EE and DP subscales and low scores on the PA subscale are the characteristics of burnout. The feelings of low personal achievement can lead to burnout. Reliability coefficients for the Educator Survey version of the MBI have been reported by Pierce and Molloy (1990) as .89 for EE, .71 for DP, and .81 for PA for a large sample of Australian secondary school teachers ($N=750$). In the present study, the corresponding coefficient alpha scores were .87 for EE, .79 for DP, and .71 for PA.

The demographic information of the English teachers was provided by a demographic questionnaire which derived the participant's age, gender, marital status, educational level, teacher experience and so on.

Meanwhile, SPSS Statistics software version 16.0 was used to analyze the data which were interpreted according to the variables. Since the main purpose of the study was to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between gender and marital status and the overall burnout level among English teachers, descriptive statistics, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were performed on the collected data.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In order to study the level of the participants' different burnout syndromes, the means and standard deviations of the three burnout syndromes were calculated. The mean scores for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment were found to be 15.71 (SD = 14.84), 3.58 (SD = 5.93) and 35.11 (SD = 13.54), respectively. The dimension of burnout, as displayed in following table, is significantly high since the significant ($p .000$) is less than 0.05 among all the participants who were in the high level intervals.

In order to determine whether gender and marital status represented the significance of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment, the one-sample t-test was employed. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2 below:

The scores obtained from each gender are elaborated with references to the burnout dimensions as presented in Table 2. The mean of the female teacher performance decreased in two out of three subscales of burnout (EE and DP), whereas the mean of this particular group increased in the personal accomplishment subscale compared to the male group. Meanwhile, the one-way ANOVA test was used to study the effects of demographic variables with teacher's burnout. The demographic variables included the participants' gender and marital status and regarded as independent variables while the three burnout syndromes were taken as dependent variables. The one-way ANOVA procedure was employed to find out any significant difference between gender and the teachers' level of burnout.

With reference to Table 4, the results of the gender and the levels of burnout

TABLE 1
Statistics and one-sample t-test for the burnout dimension

Burnout	N	Mean	SD	t	df	sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower	Upper
Emotional Exhaustion	100	15.71	14.84	-56.77	99	.000	-87.23	-81.34
Depersonalization	100	3.85	5.93	-162.01	99	.000	-97.32	-94.97
Personal Accomplishment	100	35.11	13.54	-47.89	99	.000	-67.57	-62.2

TABLE 2
The relationships between gender and marital status with the level of burnout among English teachers

Gender	Emotional Exhaustion			Depersonalization			Personal Accomplishment		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Female	50	9.46	11.12	50	1.72	4.69	50	39.46	9.92
Male	50	21.96	15.54	50	5.98	6.31	50	30.76	15.28
Married	82	16.01	16.15	82	4.34	6.38	82	34.56	14.58
Single	18	14.33	6.11	18	1.61	2.11	18	37.61	6.86

indicated that there are significant effects for two groups of gender across the three dimension levels of burnout ($F = 21.371$, $p < .05$), ($F = 14.659$, $p < .05$) and ($F = 11.392$, $p < .05$). Finally, both females and males showed that they have been suffering from burnout.

The same analytic tool was used on marital status and the levels of burnout. The results showed that teachers who are married have the same feelings with those who are single. On the other hand, Table 4 illustrates that there is no main effect of being married or single on the teachers' performance and their levels of burnout ($F = .187$, $p > .05$), ($F = 3.193$, $p > .05$) and ($F = .746$, $p > .05$).

Based on the results presented above, it is noticed that there is no significant difference between married and single teachers in terms of their emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment levels.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Male and female teachers indicated the levels of burnout and this was perhaps because they had other responsibilities towards their families (children, husband and housework). In addition, they probably care too much about their students and want everything to be perfect which will eventually stress them out. The finding indicated that there is a significant difference between the male and female teachers and this finding is supported by Coulter and Abney (2009), who have also reported that there is a significant difference between the two genders and the rate of burnout. Similarly, the finding of this study is in line with that of Comber and Cormack's (2007) research. Comber and Cormack (2007) stated that gender did not affect on the level of burnout among teachers. On the contrary, the finding of this study does not support those of Capel (1992), Formanuk (1995) and Davis and

TABLE 3
The ANOVA results on the effects of gender on burnout dimensions

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Emotional Exhaustion					
Between Groups	3906.250	1	3906.250	21.371	.000
Within Groups	17912.340	98	182.779		
Depersonalization					
Between Groups	453.690	1	453.690	14.659	.000
Within Groups	3033.060	98	30.950		
Personal Accomplishment					
Between Groups	1892.250	1	1892.250	11.392	.001
Within Groups	18169.790	98	166.097		

TABLE 4
The ANOVA results on the effects of marital status on burnout dimensions

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Emotional Exhaustion					
Between Groups	41.602	1	41.602	.187	.666
Within Groups	21776.988	98	222.214		
Depersonalization					
Between Groups	110.033	1	110.033	3.193	.077
Within Groups	3376.717	98	34.456		
Personal Accomplishment					
Between Groups	137.317	1	137.317	.746	.390
Within Groups	18032.473	98	184.005		

Wilson (2000), who reported that the level of stress led to burnout among female teachers more than among male teachers because the latter seemed to experience less stress than female teachers did and they also tended to have less teaching responsibilities. Similarly, the result does not concur with that Byrne (1998) who emphasizes that the causes leading to burnout affect male teachers more than the female teachers with higher motivation. However, there was no significant difference between the males and females in terms of their gender on their burnout levels.

The present study has also shown that there is no significant difference between married and single teachers, and this finding is in accordance with the findings of Al-Qaryooti and Al-Khadeeb (2006) also who reported that being married and unmarried does not affect on the level of burnout among Arab teachers even though the study involved teachers teaching handicapped students.

For future studies, it is recommended to investigate the effects on the level of

burnout among teachers with different years of teaching experiences, educational levels or job satisfaction. Moreover, studies on the level of burnout can be carried out on a large sampling size that includes teachers who are teaching other subjects or living in other cities, countries or teachers with children and with or without babysitter so as to determine whether or not this particular factor will affect the results.

REFERENCES

- Al-Qaryoti, & Al-Khateeb (2006). Jamming visual culture. *Literacy Learning in the Middle Years*, 11(2), 15–21.
- Byrne, J. J. (1998). Burnout: Its Causes, Effects and Remedies. *Contemporary Education*, 69(2), 86–91.
- Capel, S. A. (1993). Stress and burnout in teachers. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 15(3), 197–211.
- Comber, B., & P. Cormack. (2007). Constituting the teacher of reading in contemporary Australian literacy debates. In P. Openshaw and J. Soler. Charlotte (eds.), *Reading Across International Boundaries: History, Policy and Politics*. NC: Information Age.

- Coulter, M. A., & Abney, P. C. (2009). A Study of Burnout in International and Country. *International Review of Education*, 105-121.
- Dali, T. (2004). Psychosocial work characteristics as predictors for burnout: findings from 3-year follow up of the PUMA study. *Journal of Occupational and environmental Medicine*, 47, 1015–1025.
- Davis, J., & Wilson, S. M. (2000). Principals' efforts to empower teachers: effects on teacher motivation and job satisfaction and stress, *Clearing House*, 73(6), 349–353.
- Evans, L. (2001). Delving deeper into morale, job satisfaction and motivation among education professionals: examining the leadership dimension. *Educational Management and Administration*, 29(3), 291–306.
- Formanuk, T. V. (1995). The emotional burnout syndrome as an indicator of the teachers' professional disadaptation. *Russian Education and Society*, 37(9), 78–92.
- Freudenberger, H. J., & North, G. (1985). *Women's burnout: How to spot it, how to reverse it and how to prevent it*. Virginia, USA: R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company.
- Holloman, H. L. (1999). Factors related to burnout in first-year teachers in South Carolina. Dissertation, University of South Carolina.
- Lance Hogan, J. A., & McKnight, J. D. (2007). Depression, burnout, and perceptions of control in hospital nurses. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 61, 147–155.
- Landeché, P. (2009). The correlation between creativity and burnout in public school classroom teachers.
- Lau, P. S. Y., Yuen, M. T., & Chan, R. M. C. (2005). Do demographic characteristics make a difference to burnout among Hong Kong secondary school teachers? *Social Indicators Research*, 71, 491–516.
- Li, Y. X., Yang, X., & Shen, J. L. (2007). The relationship between teachers' sense of teaching efficacy and job burnout. *Psychological Science (China)*, 30, 952–954.
- Luk, A. L. (2009). *An Exploration of the Burnout Situation on Teachers in Two Schools in Macau*. Springer.
- Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout, *Journal of Occupational Behavior*, 2(1), 99–113.
- Maslach, C., Jackson, S. E., & Schwab, R. L. (1986). *Maslach burnout inventory: Educators survey*. Palo Alto, CA: Counselling Psychologists Press.
- Maslach, C., Jackson, S. E., & Leiter, M. (1996). *Maslach burnout inventory manual* (3rd Ed.). CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Pierce, C. M. B., & Molloy, G. N. (1990). Psychological and biographical differences between secondary school teachers experiencing high and low levels of burnout. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 60, 37-51.
- Pines, A., & Aronson, E. (1988). *Career burnout: Causes and cures*. London: Collier MacMilla Publishers.
- Sari, H. (2004). An analysis of burnout and job satisfaction among Turkish special school headteachers and teachers, and the factors effecting their burnout and job satisfaction. *Educational Studies*, 30.
- Weng, C. H. (2005). Meta-analysis of teacher burnout in public schools in the United States. Dissertation, University of South Dakota.
- Zhao, Y., & Bi, C. (2003). Job burnout and the factors related to it among middle school teachers. *Psychological Development and Education*, 1, 80–84 (in Chinese).