

THE IMPACT OF LEARNER BACKGROUND VARIABLES OF GENDER AND AGE ON EFL LEARNERS' BELIEFS REGARDING TEACHER BURNOUT

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ABSTRACT: Teachers' burnout has been recognized as a serious occupational problem in educational systems worldwide. The primary aim of the present study was to measure EFL teachers' burnout and to investigate learners' beliefs regarding the causal and preventive factors of burnout. Moreover, it aimed at examining the role of gender and age in teacher burnout and its causal and preventive factors. On the whole, 80 participants were involved in the present study. The participants consisted of language learners at the same institute. The aforementioned participants enrolled in different levels of beginner, intermediate and advanced and completed a set of questionnaires. One of the questionnaires – Maslach Burnout Inventory or MBI – showed the degree of teacher burnout, while the other one demonstrated learners' beliefs regarding the causal and preventive factors of burnout. The statistical procedures incorporated Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) and the pertinent data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The results demonstrated that the variables of the gender and age neither affected teacher burnout nor its foregoing causal and preventive factors. Therefore, based on the importance of the burnout issue which should be studied carefully, more researches in different educational contexts should be done in order to delve into the basic causes of the burnout.

Keywords- Burnout, Causal Factors, Preventive Factors, Multiple Analysis of Variance.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is known as a profession with high level of stress (Zuhaili & Ramlee, 2017). As the other jobs, it is not just a means of livelihood but also a way of influencing the individual's mental and physical health. According to world health organization (WHO) about 400 million people around the world suffer from mental disorders which were caused by lifestyles. Jobs definitely play important roles in daily life style. As mentioned above, teaching is one of the stressful jobs which can cause emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. All these terms beside dissatisfaction of the teachers can be termed as "Burnout".

A teacher cannot function effectively in his profession while he is facing burnout. Teaching like other jobs is for survival. When working condition causes difficulty, there would be no effective and usual process. Having positive and decent impacts on students' behavior and learning can give teachers a sense of fulfillment. Moreover, there are some problems regarding the students, problems in interacting with other students, etc.

Researchers have identified several factors that can lead to job burnout: the feeling of isolation, a lack of support from colleagues, the feeling of being frustrated by workload, lack of autonomy, lack of respect from managers, scant chances to be teacher leaders, classroom management drawbacks, and high achievement goals which underline high stakes testing (Leiter & Maslach, 2011; Marzano & Heflebower, 2012; Jacobson, 2016). Moreover, there are some learner background factors which may exert some roles in teacher burnout and its causal and preventive factors.

Taking this issue into account, factors such as age and gender may have significant effects. Teachers who experience burnout due to these kinds of factors become reluctant to do daily activities or to teach (Yildirim 2007). With the great impact that teachers can have on their students (Mousavi & Kashefian-Naeeni, 2011), this may lead to detrimental outcomes as attitude plays a prominent role (Sadeghi & Marzban, 2019). Therefore, the gap in teacher-student interaction should be minimized (Marzban et al., 2012) and knowing the source of this feeling and emotion is of overriding significance. This study intends to investigate the causal and preventive factors of teacher burn out. Teaching as a permanent and necessary job, which is needed by society, should be under study and control in order to be improved and enhanced day by day.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Working and being in contact with learners of different personalities has relevant challenges. Having the job as a teacher makes a heavy pressure on teachers because of some factors. Sometimes teachers feel that they are helpless and powerless; consequently, their performance will be reduced and impaired. All these feelings would lead to the burnout which is lack of eagerness and motivation regarding fulfilling their career. The term “burnout” is connected with stress, tiredness and frustration experienced at working environments especially by those who are continuously in contact with other people (Arvidsson et al., 2016; Akdemir, 2019).

Teachers and educators who experience burnout may lose their energy, commitment, and vigor to continue their work (Kyriacou, 2015). Freudenberg’s (1974) article on staff burnout investigated an individual’s ability to deal with a stressful situation based on a clinical approach. Adopting an empirical perspective to burnout, Maslach (1976) and Maslach and Leiter (2016) claimed that situational and environmental factors interact with an individual’s characteristics. Although burnout has been defined in many ways, no uniform definition has been reached. However, several common characteristics of burnout can be identified (Dale & Weinberg, 1990):

1. Whatever the approach, clinical or empirical, there is exhaustion of the physical, mental, and emotional. This exhaustion is sometimes described as a loss of concern, energy, interest, and trust.
2. A negative change in an individual’s response to others becomes apparent. This negativity is manifested in the form of cynicism and lack of feeling toward the job. As a result, one feels a sense of drudgery.
3. Feelings of low self-esteem, fear of failure, and depression become prevalent, often resulting in a lower level of productivity.
4. The syndrome is a chronic response to ongoing prolonged stress as opposed to occasional reactions to acute stressors.
5. Burnout occurs at the individual level and is unique to each person, which makes it difficult to identify because it differs for each person.

The three main dimensions of burnout encompass emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of low accomplishment stemmed from a loss of idealism and enthusiasm for work (Parker, Martin, Colmar & Liem, 2012; Maslach, 2015). Basically, burnout is conceptualized as a lack of balance between resources and demands perceived by an individual. The consequence of this imbalance will be a high level of stress. Extreme work-related stress leads to physical and emotion exhaustion which preclude teachers from career progression (Zuhaili & Ramlee, 2017). When there is no tendency toward improvement among educators, accomplishment or achievement would not occur (Marzban & Ashraafi, 2016); thus, maintaining the discipline in the classroom, meeting the needs of the learners and finally succeeding in the career would be really out of reach.

Burnout across professions seems to occur most often among individuals engaged in the human services or helping professions, possibly because of the “stresses associated with the social interaction between helper and recipient” (Capel, Sisley, & Desert rain, 1987, p. 106). In the physical education (sport realm), common sources of stress and burnout for coaches include work overload, time demands, low support, low control, and a lack of success/wins (Capel et al., 1987; Kelly, 1994; Vealey, Udry, Zimmerman, & Soliday, 1992). Unfair reward systems, low status of the coaching role, and little personal accomplishment have also been found to contribute to burnout among coaches (Vealey et al., 1992). A number of cognitive and affective factors also play a role. For example, attitudinal

issues including beliefs about language learning/teaching are a metacognitive influence on student teachers' coping strategies (Ayatollahi et al., 2012). Thus, attitudinal fix through [persuasion](#), [mediation](#), and consciousness raising could be employed to resolve attitudinal issues (Brannon et al, 2007).

Burnout can be connected with different aspects of the working environment. These factors include excessive hours and lack of satisfaction with salary and promotions (Bataineh & Alsagheer, 2012). As for teacher/coaches, time demands, limited support, role conflicts, and limited resources (Figone, 1986; Kelly & Gill, 1993; Perry, 1989) are identified as sources of burnout. Austin (1981), Danylchuk (1993a, 1993b), and Williamson (1993) cited factors such as too much work, time pressures, politics, unfair reward systems, organizational structure, isolation, lack of support, and poor personal development as burnout risks. Gender discrimination, inadequate work (Danylchuk, 1993a), repetitive work (Danylchuk, 1993b), lack of job security (Austin, 1981) and unsatisfactory work evaluations (Wendt & Bain, 1989) are also reported to be sources of burnout. Lack of training programs for teachers for the promotion of their abilities is another causational factor that may lead to burnout (Howson, 2016). Excessive workload also precipitates heightened levels of teacher burnout (Paquette & Rieg, 2016).

Social support can alleviate burnout among those practicing different professions in general and among teachers in particular. Teachers who had more social support demonstrated less burnout and revealed more personal accomplishment" (Bataineh & Alsagheer, 2012). By the same token, receiving social support, especially emotional and informational support such as getting constructive feedback, advice, encouragement and care from peers and teacher educators are associated with decreased levels of stress and lesser vulnerability of developing burnout (Le Cornu, 2009; Rieg, Paquette & Chen, 2007; Väisänen, Pietarinen, Pyhältö, Toom & Soini, 2017; 2018).

A. Research Questions

This study aims to find answer to the following question:

- a. Do students of different age have different beliefs regarding factors causing teacher burnout and factors preventing it?
- b. Do students of different gender have different beliefs regarding factors causing teacher burnout and factors preventing it?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The research intends to study Iranian EFL teachers and learners in a language institutes in Shiraz. The total number of participants were 80 learners and the method of sampling which was used for this study was cluster sampling through which some of the classes were randomly selected. The researchers used different groups within the population and also randomly selected 3 groups of beginner, intermediate and advanced to be included as the sample of the study. The composition of subjects is depicted in the following figures.

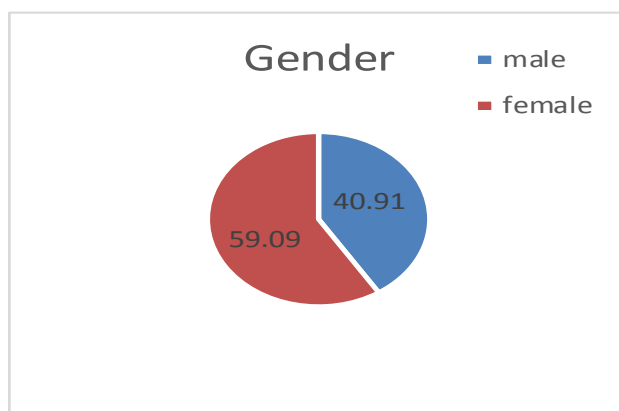


Figure 1 Percentage of Participants with Different Gender

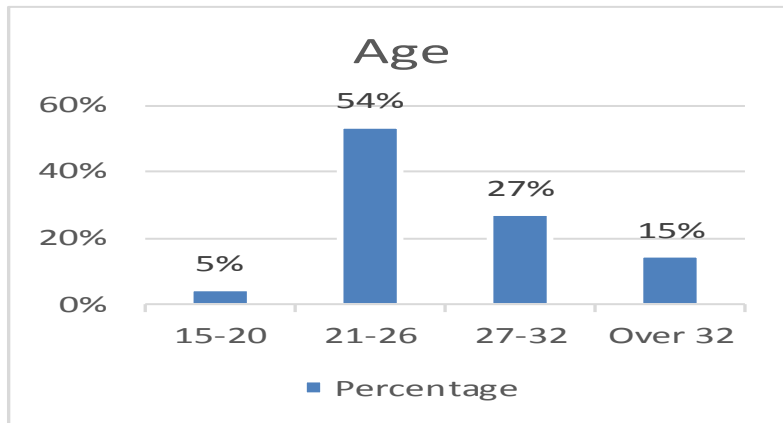


Figure 2 Percentage of Participants with Different Age

B. Instruments

To do the research, Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was used with some adaptations. This inventory was designed by Maslach and Jackson (1981). Inventory approaches burnout through three different sub-dimensions: emotional burnout, depersonalization and personal achievement. The dimension of emotional burnout defines emotions of being exhausted by the work. Depersonalization defines the condition of being insensible towards people getting service and inappropriate behavior towards other regardless of their personal differences. The dimension of personal accomplishment defines emotions about the ability of coping with problems related to accomplishment and performance. High scores in emotional burnout and the depersonalization dimension and low scores in the personal accomplishment dimension mean burnout.

The original inventory (MBI) consisted of 22 items but some items were added to it. In addition, a questionnaire was constructed by the researcher which investigated teachers’ and learner’s beliefs regarding causal and preventive factors of teacher burnout.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With the principals’ and teachers’ co-operation, the researchers took the aforementioned questionnaires to the classes, distributed them among the learners and provided the correct and exact instruction on how to fill the questionnaires. The researchers also clarified the aim and importance of the research to the teachers and learners.

To analyze the different beliefs of students of different gender regarding teacher burnout and its causal and preventive factors, the means and standard deviations of participants were estimated. The means of all the three dependent variables were almost the same. Table 1 represents the data.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics regarding Learners’ Gender

Gender		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Student causal preventive	Male	4.0484	.23973	34
	Female	4.0290	.16876	46
	Total	4.0372	.20081	80
Student preventive	Male	4.0483	.35299	34
	Female	3.9845	.20779	46
	Total	4.0116	.27866	80
Student causal	Male	4.0485	.18929	34
	Female	4.0913	.20229	46
	Total	4.0731	.19680	80

Data obtained from the learners of different gender revealed that the error variances of the variables were equal across groups and the assumption of homogeneity of error variances were not violated among different groups. The results are presented in the Table 2 below.

Table 2: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances of Gender among Learners

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Student causal preventive	.655	1	78	.421
Student preventive	.288	1	78	.593
Student causal	.159	1	78	.691

As it can be seen from the table below, the multivariate test yielded a Wilks' lambda=.966, $F(2, 77) = 1.345$, $p = .267$ ($p > .05$). It seems that gender did not have any influence on any of the dependent variables of the study. The results are illustrated in table 3.

Table 3: Multivariate Tests of Gender among Learners

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power ^c
Gender	Wilks' Lambda	.966	1.345 ^b	2.000	77.000	.267	.034	.282

Another factor of the study which could be influential in burnout and its causal and preventive factors was the variable of age. To examine the age differences among learners, with different beliefs about the causal and preventive factors of burnout, descriptive statistics were calculated to illustrate the means and standard deviations. Different means can be observed from the related table.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Age among Learners

Age		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Student causal preventive	15-20	4.0333	.18257	5
	21-26	4.0616	.21820	48
	27-32	4.0313	.17710	18
	Over 32	3.9213	.12791	9
	Total	4.0372	.20081	80
Student preventive	15-20	3.9643	.26486	5
	21-26	4.0417	.30433	48
	27-32	4.0020	.26287	18
	Over 32	3.8968	.13768	9
	Total	4.0116	.27866	80
Student causal	15-20	4.1300	.10368	5
	21-26	4.0896	.20105	48
	27-32	4.0722	.18489	18
	Over 32	3.9556	.21858	9

	Total	4.0731	.19680	80
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Levene’s test was not significant for the variable of age. Therefore, there were equal-error variance among groups and assumption of homogeneity of error variance was not violated. Table 5 below shows the results clearly.

Table 5: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances of age among Learners

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Student causal preventive	.297	3	76	.827
Student preventive	.503	3	76	.681
Student causal	1.329	3	76	.271

As the multivariate test was performed, it yielded a non-significant Wilks’=.933, $F(6, 150) = .877, p = .513 (p > .05)$. Therefore, it was found that the variable of age did not influence learners’ beliefs regarding the causal and preventive factors of burnout. Table 6 below shows the results.

Table 6: Multivariate Tests of Age among Learners

Effect		Value	F	Hypo df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
age	Wilks' Lambda	.933	.877	6	150	.513	.034	.681

This study sought to examine the role of causal and preventive factors of burnout. In particular, it explored the manifestations of different factors in different milieus of language. To reduce the probability of Type I error, multiple analysis of variance was used in the present study. It came to light that male learners obtained higher means in the beliefs regarding the causal and preventive factors of burnout. However, the results of multiple analysis of variance were not statistically significant. It can be maintained that the gender variable did not influence burnout nor the beliefs regarding the causal and preventive factors of burnout among the selected male and female students.

Learners of 20 and below 20, obtained higher means in the beliefs regarding the causal factors of burnout. The results of multiple analysis of variance showed no significance of the age variable. Thus, it was concluded that the age variable did not influence burnout and its causal and preventive factors among learners. The reason may be due to the fact that learning and teaching English in institutes is not based on age limitation therefore, different learners of different ages interact with each other easily.

It was shown that age was not an important factor in burnout and this result was in line with those of Bayani, Bagheri & Bayani (2013) which showed that age differences do not lead to teacher burnout. Gender as another factor also played a non-significant role in the issue of burnout. This finding was in line with the outcomes of Omranzade (2014), which revealed that there were no significant effects for two groups of gender across burnout. Moreover, it is in line with the study carried out by Kafipour, et al. (2011) who believed gender does not have any effect on some individual differences. It shows that the type of individual differences and variables determines if it has any connection with gender or not while it even differs based on different participants.

Determining factors which influence teacher burnout is of overriding importance as it facilitates and accelerates further steps which are to be taken. Similarly, Roohani and Dayeri (2019) emphasized that there should be a pressing concern to identify the factors which can predict EFL teachers’ burnout as this identification can speed up the improvement of teacher quality. Moreover, it can lay the cornerstone for preventive measures against learners’ academic failure. In line with Scott’s (2019) assertions, the next step would be holding some training sessions which can mitigate burnout symptoms for teachers. These programs help to foster the professional development of educators and teach them to deal with stressful situations.

V. CONCLUSION

Findings of the research provided a deeper understanding on burnout and its causal and preventive factors among EFL teachers and learners in general and learner and teachers of language institutes in particular. Burnout is observed among the people whose job require direct service and aim to help people such as doctors, police officers and teachers. Purpose of this research was to illuminate more about teacher burnout and its causal and preventive factors. Teaching as a job which is in strong and permanent need by society should be under control and study to be improved and enhanced day by day. Teaching is also an active job which needs social relationships, group working and interacting with students and needs lots of circumstances to be fulfilled successfully. In this study factors of age, and gender were investigated to find the effects of which on burnout and its causal and preventive factors. Age and gender did not significantly affect burnout and its pertinent factors; however, there may be some other factors which may be influential and this area of research warrants more delving. The findings of the present study can be interesting and considerable in regard to the theoretical and empirical recommendations for developing the pedagogical outcome. Therefore, the study helps the subsequent researches to be performed based on more extensive environments and context to consider more useful and precise factors of causing and preventing burnout.

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