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<http://dergipark.ulakbim.gov.tr/eltri/>
*International Association of Research
in Foreign Language Education and Applied Linguistics*
ELT Research Journal
2019, 8(2), 105-125
ISSN: 2146-9814

Turkish EFL Instructors' Level of Burnout and the Underlying Reasons

Nur Gedik Bal¹

Social Sciences University of Ankara, Turkey

Abstract

Teaching is a profession that individuals interact and construct their identities in relation to others; therefore, the challenges are not limited to the restrictions regarding the curriculum or tests. Instructors may feel stressed and restricted when handling certain social problems in their teaching context. This can lead to undesirable attitudes towards themselves, their students and profession, and lead to eventual burnout. This study aims to identify the level of burnout English language instructors experience on different components of the burnout scale, find the possible effect of type of university (private or state) and having Master's degree on the instructors' level of burnout, and uncover possible reasons for burnout and instructors' suggestions to prevent it. The results of Maslach Burnout Inventory completed by sixty-four EFL instructors in Turkey indicated that the level of burnout of the instructors for *Emotional Exhaustion*, and *Depersonalization* was high irrespective of the type of institution. There was a significant difference between state and private university educators' burnout level for these two dimensions whereas there was no significant difference for *Personal Accomplishment*. Semi-structured interviews conducted with seven instructors provided details regarding the possible reasons for burnout subscales and ways to avoid future burnout in the EFL context.

Keywords: Burnout, EFL instructor, language teaching, emotional exhaustion

¹Corresponding author. Email: nurgedikbal.academic@gmail.com

Introduction

Considering that teaching is a profession in which people interact with one another and construct their identities in relation to others, boundaries and the challenges in the teaching profession are not limited to the restrictions regarding the curriculum, tests or materials. Instructors may feel stressed and restricted in a variety of situations when overcoming the social problems experienced at universities. Experiencing a significant level of stress in their profession, and encountering such challenges might lead to negative attitudes towards themselves, their students and their jobs; therefore, they may be vulnerable to certain feelings such as emotional exhaustion, and a lack of feeling of achievement in their job (Shukla & Trivedi, 2008). These teachers are also considered to be burnout teachers.

‘Burnout’ is defined as physical, emotional and attitudinal exhaustion which leads to a negative attitude toward clients and a decline in the quality of work by Maslach (1976). It is also referred as the incapability of dealing sufficiently with the stress in individuals’ personal or professional life (Cunningham, 1983). According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), burnout is observed primarily in individuals that are working with people. They also refer to some aspects of this burnout symptom, one of which is emotional exhaustion. Burnout may arise from excessive interaction with people, and individuals are often very involved in the physical, psychological and social problems of those with whom they are working with. Two other dimensions are also referenced in many studies of burnout. The former is the depersonalization of individual experiences and it focuses upon the development of negative attitudes towards colleagues and students, whereas the latter concerns the feeling of a lack of personal accomplishment, the tendency of assessing oneself negatively and dissatisfaction with professional achievements (Shukla & Trivedi, 2008).

The signs of burnout can be observed in people who suffer from uneasiness, tiredness, dissatisfaction and depression. In addition, as Cunningham (1983) notes, teachers who suffer from burnout are often prone to “frequent colds, headaches, dizziness, insomnia and loss of appetite” (p.40). Burnout syndrome may not only stem from individual factors but can arise from organizational structures, physical conditions in the working environment, lack of resources, workload of teachers, and the poor quality of communication between administrators and the teachers. Therefore, the symptoms of burnout can emerge from the organization itself and might be observed with the increase in absenteeism, lack of enthusiasm, decrease in the

quality of the work, great levels of complaining and deficiency of trust among the teachers in an institution (Spanoil & Caputo, as cited in Cunningham 1983, p.40).

Burnout is a topical field of study in the teaching profession recently and has been widely analyzed in the past 15 years (e.g., Bas, 2011; Chan, 2007; Chang, 2009; Güneş & Uysal, 2019; Hogan & McKnight, 2007; Karimi & Adam, 2018; Koruklu, Özenoğlu-Kiremit, Feyzioğlu & Aladağ, 2012; Lau, Yuen & Chan, 2005; Li, 2015; Lou & Chen, 2016; Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010; Nayernia & Babayan, 2019; Pillay, Goddard & Wilss, 2005; Shukla & Trivedi, 2008). Most of these studies tend to focus on the effect of demographical factors such as gender, age, marital status, and factors such as years of teaching experience, working hours, whether it is more common in secondary or tertiary level, and teachers in different branches or with different educational backgrounds.

Lau, Yuen and Chan (2005) implemented the burnout scale on secondary school teachers in Hong Kong with the primary aim of identifying whether demographic characteristics factored into cases of burnout and possible differences in the burnout level of teachers in Hong Kong and North America. Their findings indicated that teachers in Hong Kong and North America showed similar levels of *Emotional Exhaustion* and lack of *Personal Accomplishment*; however, Hong Kong teachers reported lower scores in *Depersonalization*. Moreover, female teachers were significantly more prone to burnout *Emotional Exhaustion* and *Personal Accomplishment* than their male counterparts; however, they were also shown to suffer less from *Depersonalization*. Pillay, Goddard and Wilss (2005) also found a negative correlation between the competence and *Depersonalization* of primary and secondary school teachers in their study. A further study included both pre-service and in-service teachers, and three different measurement scales, self-efficacy, burnout, and successful intelligence test, were used. The results indicated that *Depersonalization* and *Emotional Exhaustion* correlated and gender had a significant effect on burnout, successful intelligence, and perceived self-efficacy (Chan, 2007).

Hogan and McKnight (2007) conducted a study on online university educators' burnout level and the effect of gender. The findings indicated online instructors' *Emotional Exhaustion* subscale had an average score; however, teachers had low degree of *Personal Accomplishment* and high degree of *Depersonalization*. Moreover, females reported higher scores for each component of burnout. In Shukla and Trivedi's study (2008), both male and female teachers displayed similar levels of burnout as it was in the case of Hindi medium and

English medium teachers. Teachers of science subjects were more depersonalized than arts teachers while secondary school teachers indicated moderate burnout levels in *Emotional Exhaustion* and lack of *Personal Accomplishment* dimensions and low burnout in *Depersonalization*. Mukundan and Khandehroo (2010) studied English teachers' burnout in Malaysia and included age and workload in their criteria. Burnout was observed at high levels in all three aspects. Furthermore, some age and workload categories indicated significant correlations with *Emotional Exhaustion*, *Depersonalization* and reduced *Personal Accomplishment*. Although the three younger groups proved to be emotionally exhausted, participants over the age of 45 were not. Li's (2015) study, which was carried out in a medical university in China, on the other hand, revealed that older English teachers had more reduced *Personal Accomplishment* and only slightly more than the quarter of the participants had burnout. The study also classified the factors that had impact on burnout, which were factors related to job, students, management and teacher training. Lou and Chen (2016) also investigated the burnout level of English teachers in a local university in China and the results indicated that teachers had a low to moderate level of burnout. The factors that were influential in their burnout were relevant to their profession, in-service training needs, students, administration, and family, which were similar to Li's (2015) findings. Karimi and Adam (2018) conducted a study with Iranian EFL teachers to find out the inter correlations of teaching context, perceived job related stress, and burnout. Lack of managerial support dimension was more influential than the other dimensions on teachers' burnout level. Another study in Iranian context was on the relationship between EFL teachers' self-assessed language proficiency and their burnout level. The findings of the study revealed that 'language proficiency had a significant negative relationship with the *Emotional Exhaustion* and *Depersonalization* dimensions and a significant positive relationship with the *Personal Accomplishment* dimension of burnout' (Nayernia & Babayan, p.1).

There are also studies conducted in Turkish context. Özkanal and Arıkan (2010) investigated the contributors of burnout, and teachers' perceived level of stress at the workplace was the only significant effect of burnout among the instructors even though 'demographic characteristics, educational background and other work-related factors proved to have low or no significant effect on instructors' burnout levels' (p.166). Bas (2011) also found a negative correlation between control ideologies and burnout levels, and teachers' student control ideologies were found to be significant predictors of their burnout levels. Another study was conducted with the secondary school teachers which also aimed to

examine the burnout level in terms of certain variables. The findings of the study indicated that there were significant differences in terms of such variables as age, sex, relationships with colleagues and administrators whereas there was no significant difference found for some variables like the faculty they graduated and type of school they work (Koruklu et al, 2012). Güneş and Uysal (2019) investigated the relationship between EFL teachers' burnout and organization and socialization level and the findings indicated a negative correlation between these two dimensions. The interviews conducted also revealed factors affecting burnout such as learners' restricted level of motivation and misdemeanor, limited administrative and collegial support, and work overload.

Many researchers study burnout in different professions, and the teaching profession is a popular field from which to look into the burnout phenomenon. However, as can be seen from the studies in the literature, the findings make a number of claims which occasionally lead to contradictory conclusions, even in the same country. Therefore, considering the context of schools in a particular country further burnout studies are still necessary. Moreover, considering the studies carried out in the Turkish context, there are a limited number of studies that have been conducted on the burnout levels of university teachers, especially EFL instructors in Turkey. Consequently, this study aims to investigate the level of burnout that Turkish EFL instructors experience in Turkey, and the reasons for burnout and possible ways in which burnout in the profession can be avoided. Another aim of the study is also to identify whether there is an effect on the burnout level from the type of university (state or private) and the degree (BA or MA) that the instructors possess. Consequently, the research questions of the study include:

1. Is there any effect of the type of university on the burnout level of the EFL instructors working in universities in Turkey?
2. Is there any effect of having a Master's degree on EFL instructors' burnout level?
3. Is there any effect of the burnout components on the burnout level of the EFL instructors?
4. What is the burnout level of the EFL instructors working in private and state universities in Turkey?
5. What are the EFL instructors' perceptions of the possible reasons for burnout and the ways in which burnout can be avoided?

Methodology

Participants

Participants of the questionnaire included 64 English language instructors working at universities in Turkey. Their ages ranged between 21 and 39 ($M=26.8, SD= 2.97$). For more information, Table 1 can be examined.

Table 1

Demographic information about the questionnaire participants

Type Of university	English Language Teaching (ELT)	American Culture and Literature (ACL)	Major		Translation and Interpreting	Degree		Gender		Total
			English Language and Literature	English Linguistics		BA	MA	male	female	
state	27	2	1	0	1	20	11	5	26	31
private	27	3	2	1	0	23	10	5	28	33
Total	54	5	3	1	1	43	21	10	54	64

Table 1 indicated that the participants of the study included 31 state university teachers and 33 instructors working at a private university. The majority of the instructors ($N=54$) graduated from the English Language Teaching department. The others were the graduates of American Culture and Literature ($N=5$), English Language and Literature ($N=3$), English Linguistics ($N=1$) and Translation and Interpreting ($N=1$). The number of male instructors was low in this study ($N=10$) as opposed to female participants ($N=54$).

Table 2

Demographic information of the interview participants

Participant No	Gender	Type of university	Degree in progress
P1	Female	Private	MA
P2	Female	State	PhD
P3	Female	Private	MA
P4	Female	State	PhD
P5	Female	State	MA
P6	Female	State	PhD
P7	Female	Private	MA

As can be seen in Table 2, interview participants were all female EFL instructors working in preparatory school of state and private universities. Three of them work at a private university while four of them teach at a state university. P5 also has previous experience working at a private university. They continue their education either in Master's or PhD programs.

Measurement

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) measurement, which has gained widespread acceptance in studies of burnout, was utilized in this study. This measurement identifies different categories including *Emotional Exhaustion* (EE), *Personal Accomplishment* (PA) and *Depersonalization* (DP). One further category included is involvement. However, as the literature suggests, the first three categories are considered in the study as components of burnout. A seven-point frequency rating scale, ranging from "never" (0) to "every day" (6) was provided to participants of the study.

Participants were also asked to provide some demographic information such as age, gender and some details regarding their educational background such as their degrees and the department from which they graduated. In addition, they were asked to respond to certain questions about their current work including how many hours of a week they taught and the type of institution they were working at.

A semi-structured interview guideline, which was in line with the MBI and included a few questions regarding each sub-scale which were *Emotional Exhaustion*, *Depersonalization* and *Personal Accomplishment* in MBI, was designed in order to explore the possible reasons behind EFL instructors' burnout or lack of burnout. A final question was asked to discover their own recommendations regarding how to take the necessary precautions against possible burnout.

Procedure

Random sampling was chosen and the questionnaires were given to EFL instructors at different institutions who voluntarily participated in the study. No specific state or private universities were identified from which to base the research. The only criterion was to work at a preparatory program in universities in Turkey. Therefore, questionnaires were filled out

by instructors from a variety of universities. Questionnaires for instructors who were out of the city were collected via e-mails. When the quantitative findings were revealed, a general message looking for volunteers for semi structured interviews was sent to the instructors in order to reveal possible reasons of EFL instructors' emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and feeling of personal accomplishment. Interviews were conducted with seven volunteer English language instructors via phone calls. The duration of the interviews ranged from 11 to 27 minutes.

Data analysis

For the analysis, SPSS PASW20 was utilized. As there were two different between groups independent variables (type of university and last completed degree) and one within group independent variable (components of burnout), a Mixed Repeated Measures ANOVA was run. In view of the findings, another parametric test, Independent Samples T-Test was run to identify the significant differences between the two groups. Moreover, to identify the level of burnout that the instructors experienced, Descriptive Statistics was used to obtain the total scores of each component for two types of university teachers. Maslach classification of levels of psychological burning was also used to interpret the results as illustrated in Table 3. High scores on the *Emotional Exhaustion* and *Depersonalization* subscales and low scores on the *Personal Accomplishment* subscale were characteristic of burnout (Burnout Self-Test, Maslach Burnout Inventory).

Table 3

The classification of levels of psychological burning

Components of Burnout	<u>Degree of Burnout</u>		
	Low	Moderate	High
1. Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	0-17	18-29	30-more
2. Depersonalization (DP)	0-5	6-11	12-more
3. Personal Accomplishment (PA)	40-more	34-39	33-less

For the analysis of qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews, Corbin and Strauss's (2008) coding procedure was followed. Firstly, interviews were transcribed verbatim. In open coding, a list of codes and categories were identified. The list was revised with the merging of certain categories and establishing connections between the categories.

Results

All participants were surveyed on three different components of the burnout scale consisting of *Emotional Exhaustion* (EE), *Personal Accomplishment*(PA) and *Depersonalization* (DP). The mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD) for each component can be seen in Table 4. There were two between-group variables which were the type of university and degree. The assumption of normality was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality which indicated that the data sample for the level of *Emotional Exhaustion* and *Personal Accomplishment* scores for both private and state university was normal ($p > .05$). Considering the level of *Depersonalization*, the sample for private university instructors was normal ($p = .131$) whereas the sample for state university was shown to not be normal ($p < .0001$). Moreover, Mauchly's Test of Sphericity was not violated ($p > .05$).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics

	Emotional Exhaustion		Personal Accomplishment		Depersonalization	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Type Of university						
State	3.28	1.42	5.44	.89	2.14	1.19
Private	4.21	1.39	5.24	.76	2.92	1.09
Degree						
BA	3.76	1.46	5.25	.81	2.47	.99
MA	3.76	1.52	5.51	.84	2.69	1.56

With regard to the assumption of equal variances, Levene's Test of Equality was not violated for each component of burnout which consisted of *Emotional Exhaustion*, ($F(3,60) = 962, p > .05$), *Personal Accomplishment*($F(3, 60) = .381, p > .05$) and *Depersonalization* ($F(3, 60) = 1.057, p > .05$).

Question 1: Is there any effect of the type of university on the burnout level of the EFL instructors working in universities in Turkey?

Mixed Repeated Measures ANOVA findings indicated that an effect of the type of university did arise ($F(1, 60) = 7.900, p = .007$), and an interaction effect of components of burnout and type of university was also observed. To identify the differences between private and state university instructors' level of burnout, an Independent Samples T-Test was run.

Table 5

Differences between state and private university instructors' burnout level for the different components of burnout

<u>Group Statistics</u>					
	Type Of university	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1. Emotional Exhaustion	state	31	3.2832	1.42	0.26
	private	33	4.2121	1.39	0.24
2. Personal Accomplishment	state	31	5.4476	0.89	0.16
	private	33	5.2462	0.77	0.13
3. Depersonalization	state	31	2.1484	1.20	0.22
	private	33	2.9273	1.10	0.19

In Table 5 Independent Samples T-Test findings demonstrated that there was a significant difference between private and state university teachers in terms of their perceptions of the level of emotional exhaustion they had experienced ($t(62)=-2.638, p=.011$).

		<u>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</u>		<u>t-test for Equality of Means</u>				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
EE overall	Equal variances assumed	.015	.904	-2.638	62	.011	-0.93	0.35
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.636	61.569	.011	-0.93	0.35
PA overall	Equal variances assumed	.954	.333	.969	62	.336	0.20	0.21
	Equal variances not assumed			.965	59.220	.339	0.20	0.21
D overall	Equal variances assumed	.022	.883	-2.716	62	.009	-0.78	0.29
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.708	60.575	.009	-0.78	0.29

Private university instructors ($M=4.21, SD= 1.39$) indicated higher levels of *Emotional Exhaustion* than state university teachers ($M=3.28, SD= 1.42$). In addition, a significant difference was apparent between the private and state university teachers' level of *Depersonalization* ($t(62) = -2.716, p=.009$) and instructors working at private universities ($M= 2.92, SD=1.10$) had higher scores for *Depersonalization* than instructors at state universities ($M=2.14, SD=1.14$). There was, however, no significant difference between state and private university teachers when looking at their *Personal Accomplishment* scores ($t(62) = .969, p > .05$)

Question 2:1. Is there any effect of having a Master's degree on EFL instructors' burnout level?

Mixed Repeated Measures ANOVA results suggested that the qualification level of the instructor did not impact on the level of burnout ($F(1, 60) = 1.037, p > .05$) and no interaction effect from the type of university and the degree obtained was found.

Question 3: Is there any effect of the burnout components on the burnout level of the EFL instructors?

Mixed Repeated Measures ANOVA indicated that there was a significant effect from the components of burnout ($F(2,120) = 84.57, \text{Partial Eta Square: } .585$) Pairwise Comparisons indicated that *Personal Accomplishment* scores ($M = 5.39, SD = .191$) were higher than *Emotional Exhaustion* scores ($M = 3.75, SD = .111, p < .05$) and *Depersonalization* scores ($MD = -2806, SD = 200, p < .05$). In addition, *Emotional Exhaustion* scores were higher than *Depersonalization* scores ($M = 2.58, SD = .154, p < .05$).

Question 4: What is the burnout level of the EFL instructors working in private and state universities in Turkey??

It might be concluded from Table 6 that English language teachers at private university experienced high levels of burnout at the *Emotional Exhaustion* level ($M = 37.91, SD = 12.55$) and *Depersonalization* level ($M = 14.64, SD = 5.48$); however, *Personal Accomplishment* scores were also high ($M = 41.97, SD = 6.13$). On the other hand, state university English language teachers suffered from moderate burnout considering their *Emotional Exhaustion* level ($M = 29.55, SD = 12.80$) and *Depersonalization* level ($M = 10.74, SD = 5.99$).

Table 6

State and private university instructors' burnout level

Type Of university		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of Burnout
State	EE total	31	29.55	12.80	Moderate
	PA total	31	43.58	7.15	Low
	DP total	31	10.74	5.99	Moderate
Private	EE total	33	37.91	12.55	High

	PA total	33	41.97	6.13	Low
	DP total	33	14.64	5.48	High
	EE total	64	33.86	13.26	High
Total	PA total	64	42.75	6.64	Low
	DP total	64	12.75	6.02	High

However, just as with private university teachers, the *Personal Accomplishment* scores of state university instructors are also seen to be high ($M= 43.58$, $SD=7.15$). Considering all of the participants regardless of the institution in which they are working, EFL instructors in Turkey are shown to have high level of burnout for *Emotional Exhaustion* ($M= 33.86$, $SD=13, 26$) and *Depersonalization*, ($M= 12.75$, $SD=6.02$) whereas they have high scores for *Personal Accomplishment* ($M=42.75$, $SD=6.02$) which implies that the burnout level for lack of *Personal Accomplishment* was low.

Question 5: What are the EFL instructors' perceptions for the reasons for burnout and the ways in which burnout can be avoided?

Semi-structured interviews revealed certain perceived symptoms of burnout and the reasons why instructors experience emotional exhaustion. First of all, the experienced symptoms mentioned were sleeping disorder (i.e. lack of sleep, need for more sleep) (P2, P6, P3), forgetfulness (P1, P2), problems concentrating (P2, P6), high blood pressure and anger (upon intensive meetings) (P6), and feeling tired and uneasy (P1, P6, P7).

Instructors also provided some reasons as to why they experienced emotional exhaustion. For instance, P2 primarily referred to the human impact of working in the EFL environment and acknowledged that she at times experiences emotional exhaustion for a variety of reasons stemming from administrative issues, students' reactions and tension among colleagues. P1 also indicated that;

There is not simply one reason for experiencing this kind of exhaustion. Our working hours might be one reason. We have 20 hours of teaching and this is far too much. We have courses in two different classes. The weekly schedule is intensive and the students are challenging. When all these are combined, I feel too tired and exhausted (Interview Participant 1).

As P1 and P2 acknowledged, emotional exhaustion does not derive from one cause in the EFL setting. Various reasons such as, the psychological toll from intensive work among people, the feeling of disappointment, student and administration related issues were

indicated to be the common causes of emotional exhaustion. The details of each category can be further examined in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Reasons for emotional exhaustion

Reasons for emotional exhaustion / codes and categories	
1. Workload	
a. Teaching hours/working hours	P1,P6,P7
b. Exam duties/invigilation /marking/checking homework	P1, P3,P5
c. Intensive curriculum	P4
d. Studying MA/PhD at the same time	P3
e. Working in an office (i.e. testing, curriculum etc.)	P5
f. Intensive meetings	P6
g. Teaching a different department/intensity of departmental courses	P4
2. Psychological pressure when working with people	
a. Difficulty of working with people	P2,P3,P6,P7
b. Feeling of pressure due to peers and admins	P3,P4
c. Students' attitude problems (e.g. disrupting the lessons, concentration problems)	P1,P3
d. Having students who have a low level of English	P6
e. Teaching students who lack the necessary study discipline.	P6
f. Others' not fulfilling their duties-which hinders the teacher's plans.	P6
g. Feeling the need to make everyone happy	P3
h. Feeling angry and sad because of students' attitudes or behaviors	P3
i. Feeling pressure because of mobbing	P4
j. Feeling restrained	P4
k. Disharmonious relationships/having more responsibility than others	P7
3. Feeling of disappointment	
a. Students' behaviors and attitudes (accusing manner, indifference to the lessons, psychologically damaging behaviors, lack of students' efforts, students' disregard for teachers' efforts)	P1,P4
b. Administrative issues (not being transparent, not being fair and objective, not acquiring the info through the right methods)	P2
c. Tension among colleagues (not being open to feedback or criticism, over personalizing the feedback, not reaching vocational maturity, reacting negatively to the feedback)	P2
d. Not being valued by the admins enough/being underestimated	P6
4. Administrative issues	
a. Inequality in the distribution of the tasks	P2
b. Not identifying the workload of an instructor specifically	P2
c. Lack of encouragement by peers and admins	P3
d. Not being valued	P3
e. Delay in payment	P3
5. Personal characteristics	
a. Being perfectionist /Sparing more time for work	P2

Interview participants also provided reasons for why they feel that they have achieved success in their jobs or to what extent they are able to effectively address problems at school. These can be seen in Table 8below.

Table 8

Personal Accomplishment

Personal Accomplishment /codes and categories	Participants
1. Feeling of lack of personal accomplishment	
a. Not feeling that they achieve success in their jobs	P2,P3,P6,P7
b. Having difficulty in dealing with emotional problems at school	P2,P4,P6,P7
c. Giving the impression of being energetic	P1,P4,P6
d. Feeling the need to do something else as a profession	P3,P7
e. Not being provided with consistent positive feedback	P2
f. Not feeling that they are reaching their full potential	P6
g. Not being appreciated by admins-assuming that the teacher does not do their job well	P3
h. Lack of motivation for the profession	P7
i. Lack of job satisfaction	P3
2. Feeling of personal accomplishment	
a. Ability to deal with student related problems	P1,P4,P6,P7
b. Affecting people positively to some extent	P2,P5,P6,P7
c. Being aware of producing more work	P2
d. Contributing to learning	P1
e. Having good communication skills	P1
f. Feeling successful at their profession	P5
g. Getting positive outcomes like students' success	P3
h. Positive feedback from students	P5
i. Feeling energetic	P5

When instructors were asked about the items of *Depersonalization*, some expressed that they did not feel detached from the social interaction at work; other instructors, however, admitted that they had certain reasons for their desensitization such as an excessive number of students in the classroom, the size of their workload, or the behavior of their colleagues, which can be seen in Table 9 below.

Table 9

Depersonalization

Depersonalization/ codes and categories	
1. Caring	
a. Not neglecting people in general	P1, P3
b. No feeling of being accused	P3, P6
c. Caring colleagues and their problems	P2
d. Strong sense of judgment	P2
e. Caring about students' lives and problems	P5
f. Giving importance to human interaction	P1
g. Seeing students as individuals	P4
2. Seeing students and colleagues as objects or work to do	
a. When the workload is high	P2, P4
b. When there are too many students	P4
c. When there is an exhausting class or difficulty in reaching students	P5
d. Neglecting colleagues when she felt mobbing	P4
e. When students showed a lack of concern in developing	P7

3. Feeling of being accused	
a. Because of students' failure, low scores, motivation and attitude	P2,P5
b. Because of decisions taken during the meetings	P6
c. Because of unfair grading	P6

Instructors were also asked about the ways by which to prevent instructors' burnout in the EFL context and they responded by indicating a number of issues such as working conditions, administrative and affective issues which can be seen in Table 10. The majority of the interview participants pointed to the workload and the need for greater appreciation of EFL teachers. Participant 5, who has experience in both state and private university, expressed her feelings about the workload:

Working hours should be humane. In state universities, the case is better but when there are more than 16 hours of teaching in private universities, I believe that instructors do not have the ability to effectively communicate with students much of the time due to fatigue. Moreover, instructors do have work to do outside of teaching hours and this only adds to the workload. I believe administrative units should be more attentive with regards to the distribution of the duties (Interview Participant 5)

Table 10

Ways to prevent EFL instructors' burnout

Suggestions to avoid EFL instructors' burnout	
1. Working conditions	Participants
a. Avoiding strict rules for working hours (i.e. 8-5 shift)	P1,P2,P5,P7
b. Avoiding too many teaching hours	P1,P4,P5
c. Decreasing the workload of teachers (i.e. invigilation, grading papers)	P3, P5,P7
d. Having a less intensive curriculum/schedule	P1,P7
e. Decreasing the number of quizzes and exams	P1
f. Not making the professional development activities obligatory	P7
2. Physical conditions	
a. Providing facilities (having private offices, providing basic needs like lunch and cleaning)	P1
b. Not having students where the system is not set	P2
c. Decreasing the number of students in the classroom	P7
3. Administrative issues	
a. Balancing the workload among teachers	P5,P6
b. Providing more opportunities to teachers volunteering for extra duties	P4,P6
c. Exchanging tasks and duties regularly among teachers	P4
d. Assigning people in some duties where they themselves feel competent and happy	P6
e. Decreasing the workload of those who work voluntarily	P6
f. Asking for teachers' ideas	P1
g. The need to receive some actions on teachers' feedback	P3
h. The need to apply the appraisal system appropriately	P3
i. Not having professional development activities when teachers are not ready for it	P7
j. Administrators' prevention of problems regarding the disorder in the system	P2
4. Affective and social issues	
a. Appreciating and praising teachers	P2,P3,P6
b. Motivating teachers	P3,P2

c. Creating a consulting unit or office for both students and teachers	P3,P4
d. Having social gatherings at school	P1,P2
e. Providing emotional support	P2
f. Distributing small prizes to the teachers improve moral and motivation	P4
g. Making teachers happy	P6
h. Having training sessions on how to deal with particular problems regarding students	P3
i. Organizing workshops to increase job satisfaction and decrease emotional exhaustion	P1
j. Administrators' avoidance of sending negative messages or implications	P2
k. Administrator's use of objective and positive language.	P2
l. The need for job satisfaction	P6
m. The need for a feeling of accomplishment	P6

Participant 2 addressed the issue of emotional support as she believed that the primary reason for burnout is the result of affective factors rather than the workload or financial issues.

When we consider that burnout is an emotional failure, the things that might help to avoid it would be emotional support. Providing teachers with more free time, (i.e. off days), and not keeping them at school unnecessarily might be some precautions. In addition, praising and positive talks may be some ways to increase motivation. Social gatherings are another part of this as I indicated earlier (Interview Participant 2)

Participant 3 also emphasized the need for a consultation office for both students and instructors in the university as she believed everybody is trying to solve their problems on their own. In conclusion, instructors' suggestions to avoid burnout largely concerned the workload and emotional support they expect from their colleagues and the managers. Each detail listed in the tables above may provide some ideas to the directors, coordinators and instructors about how burnout may be tackled in the future.

Discussion

In view of the findings of the study, it can be stated that there was a significant difference between private and state university instructors' perceptions of the burnout level for different dimensions. Private university instructors had higher levels of *Emotional Exhaustion* and *Depersonalization* than their state counterparts. There was, however, no significant difference between state and private university instructors regarding their *Personal Accomplishment* scores. Therefore, the type of the institution that an instructor is working in Turkey may be a contributor to the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization that an instructor experiences. Koruklu, et al.'s (2012) study found no significant difference in certain variables such as the faculty the teachers graduated and type of school they worked

at; however, in the present study the type of the school had a significant effect on the burnout level for at least two dimensions. The differences may stem from the variance in the secondary and tertiary context or other contextual factors. However, further studies are necessary in order to cast further light on this issue as the sample for the present study was small.

With regard to the effect of degree on the burnout level of instructors, Goddard and O'Brien (2004) identified a significant effect, that teachers with a second degree had significantly higher burnout levels on two of the three dimensions than those with a BA degree at the second time that they implemented the measure. In the present study, the participants were not surveyed on two separate occasions and participants were various in terms of their years of experience contrary to the Goddard and O'Briens's study. However, the findings of this study indicated that the degree, whether BA or MA, did not create a significant effect on the burnout scores of the EFL instructors in Turkey as was the case in the Özkanal and Arıkan's (2010) study.

Considering the effect of burnout components on the burnout level of instructors, the findings of this study indicated that instructors had higher scores for *Personal Accomplishment* despite having high scores in *Emotional Exhaustion* and *Depersonalization*. In normal cases, it is generally expected that an instructor that has high levels of *Emotional Exhaustion* and *Depersonalization* will have a low score for *Personal Accomplishment* and so be identified as a high level burnout teacher, but the findings indicate that the dimensions of burnout might cause different results while identifying the general level of the burnout a teacher experiences.

With regard to the EFL instructors' perceptions of the level of burnout that they experienced, the findings of the study concluded that private university EFL instructors experienced high scores and degrees of burnout for *Emotional Exhaustion* and *Depersonalization* but high scores for *Personal Accomplishment*, which indicated low degree of burnout for the lack of *Personal Accomplishment* dimension. In both Alkhateeb, Kraishan, and Salah's (2015) and Shukla and Trivedi's (2008) studies, the level of psychological burnout of teachers was moderate on both *Emotional Exhaustion* and *Personal Accomplishment* dimensions, yet *Depersonalization* was low. The findings from this study suggest otherwise. Moreover, Mukundan, & Khandehroo's (2010) study found a high level of burnout among Malaysian English teachers in public schools; however, in the present study

the level of burnout among the state university instructors was moderate. The reason could result from different educational contexts of the countries or the difference between higher and secondary education. Furthermore, in Hogan and McKnight's (2007) study, it was stated that online instructors had high degree of *Depersonalization*, low degree of *Personal Accomplishment*; an average score on the *Emotional Exhaustion* subscale; however, it was not clarified whether they had low scores for *Personal Accomplishment* or high scores with low levels of burnout.

Regarding the reasons for teachers' burnout, Fernet, Guay, Senécal and Austin (2012) revealed that interpersonal factors such as students' and administrators' behaviors were influential in the burnout process. Present study also indicated that instructors may primarily experience burnout due to workload levels, administrative issues, students' behaviors and attitudes, and a lack of administrative and collegial support. Considering Chang's (2009) classification of burnout factors (i.e. individual, organizational and transactional), factors revealed in this study were primarily related to organizational factors such as work demands, role ambiguity, and transactional elements like students' behaviors and attitudes, and lack of collegial and administrative support. Therefore, possible factors exposed in this particular study also supported the findings of Li's (2015), Lou and Chen's (2016), and Güneş and Uysal's (2019) studies. Therefore, as Reeves (2012) suggested, teachers should be provided with time to collaborate in order to better identify ways by which to achieve job satisfaction. As an alternative to being lost in a hectic schedule in which they have up to 25 hours of teaching, are trying to catch up with an intensive curriculum, test language learners with numerous exams, and professionally develop themselves through compulsory training, they can be provided with a safe institutional environment where instructors are appreciated, the workload and ideas are shared among the instructors and administrators. In such contexts, teachers might socialize, feel attached to the institution and take precautions against unnecessary burnout. Karimi and Adam's (2018) study also revealed "negative correlations between supervisory support, relationship with colleagues, and burnout" (p.61). Therefore, if instructors are provided with support by administration and have good relationship with their colleagues; they might have a lower stress level.

Conclusion

Summary

The primary aims of this the study were to determine the level of burnout that EFL instructors in Turkey had for different components of the burnout scale, to explore the underlying reasons for EFL instructors' burnout and their recommendations regarding the means by which to avoid burnout. A further aim was to identify the possible effects that the type of university and degree held by the instructor contributed to burnout. 64 EFL instructors in Turkey responded to the MBI and semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven English language instructors. The results indicated that the level of burnout that the EFL instructors experienced from *Emotional Exhaustion* and *Depersonalization* was high irrespective of their type of institution. Moreover, there was a significant difference between state and private university educators' burnout level for two dimensions whereas there was no significant difference for the *Personal Accomplishment* dimension. As the sample was small, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to the whole population, though. Furthermore, there was no significant correlation between the degree and the burnout level of the instructors. Semi-structured interviews also uncovered underlying reasons for the EFL instructors' burnout, which were shown to be exhaustion resulting from the working conditions, and a lack of administrative and collegial support.

Implications of the study

As the burnout level of instructors in private universities is higher than those of state university instructors, private universities might reconsider the institutional context they provide for their teachers as teacher burnout might have more hazardous effects on their institutional culture and reputation in the long term. Not only private universities but also state universities should consider the needs of their staff and provide staff opportunities in which staff may raise concerns about the curriculum and their workload. Administrative issues such as assigning duties to competent and motivated staff and balancing the workload among the instructors should also be seen as priorities for stakeholders. In order to avoid the psychological pressure resulting from working with people, more social activities should be organized so that instructors socialize, share ideas and develop a friendlier atmosphere in the working context.

Limitations and further research

The study is limited in terms of the number of participants who responded to the inventory and participated in the interviews. A further limitation is that only English language instructors working at preparatory program at the university level participated in the study. Therefore, further research might be conducted with secondary and primary school EFL teachers and more case studies can be carried out with in-depth interviews in specific contexts. Furthermore, research could also be conducted on the effects of EFL teachers' burnout on their classroom practices. Although classroom observations might provide details regarding teachers' practices, stimulated recalls upon their observation sessions might also reveal teachers' perceptions and reflections on the effect of burnout on their teaching.

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