

Burnout Among Female Teachers In Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to survey the burnout level of female teachers in Malaysia and determine the likely factors that are associated with this phenomenon. The subjects of the study were 437 female teachers from primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. A demographic questionnaire was used to collect the data regarding the individual characteristics (e.g., marital status, number of children, age, and teaching experience) and organizational factors (e.g., teaching level and workload). The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey (MBI-ES) (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986) was also employed to collect the data concerning the burnout levels of the teachers in the three dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Descriptive and univariate statistics were used in the data analysis. It was found that the number of children, level of teaching, age, and years of teaching experience were significant indicators of burnout among the female teachers, while marital status and workload were not significantly related to their burnout syndrome. The implications and recommendations are also presented.

Keywords: burnout; female teachers; individual characteristics; organizational factors; MBI-ES

INTRODUCTION

Teacher burnout can lead to students' negative reactions and attitudes toward the teacher in particular and the learning situation in general. Negative reactions are connected with reduced quality in teaching, less flexibility to accept various student needs, and 'poor teacher-student interactions' (Capel, 1991). Lack of interest in teaching, communicating, and conveying the lesson of the day might be warning symptoms of the burned out teachers. Low achievements of the students (Dworkin, 1985); high teacher absenteeism, turnover, career change, mental health, deteriorating performance and early retirement (Burke, Greenglass, & Schwarzer, 1996; and Leithwood, Menzies, Jantzi, & Leithwood, 1999); low self esteem and depressive symptoms (Schonfeld, 2001); resentment, anger and helplessness (Blasé, 1982); headache, frequent colds, flu, and cardiovascular symptoms (Hock, 1988, and Schonfeld, 2001), and the like are among the negative consequences of the chronically burned out teachers. The result would further lead to the deterioration in social and family relations (Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Munoz, & Carrasco-Ortiz, 2005).

Despite a substantial number of studies in the area of teacher burnout, the problem persists (Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2009, 2010). Leiter and Maslach (2004) consider this a social problem and the need for solving it as a pragmatic conceptual framework for the research in the area of burnout. It is generally regarded in most parts of the world that females are the majority in the population of teachers, hence the need for an investigation such as this. The conceptual framework of the present study was set to find the likely indicators of female teachers' burnout in terms of some demographic variables, which might be helpful in controlling or reducing the effects of the phenomenon.

Phenomenology Of Burnout

Burnout has been defined as a syndrome with three dimensions - emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and reduced personal accomplishment (PA) - that usually occurs among those who work

with people (Maslach, 1982). Emotional exhaustion, in the teaching profession, happens when the teacher has a feeling of tiredness and fatigue that develops when emotional energies are drained. As a result, the teachers find that they cannot give their best to students as they once could. Teachers experience depersonalization or cynicism when they do not have positive feelings about their students. For example, they show cold, callous, negative, and indifferent attitudes toward them and sometimes resort to physically distancing themselves from the students. Depersonalization usually develops in response to the overload exhaustion (Leiter & Maslach, 2004). The reduced personal accomplishment or inefficacy occurs when teachers feel that they can no longer help the students to learn and grow. In other words, their feelings of competence and successful achievement in relation to the students decrease. Among the three dimensions, emotional exhaustion represents the basic experience of an individual stress (Malach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).

Different sources have been associated with the phenomenon of burnout. Background (e.g., educational level, type of graduation school, etc.), individual attributes (e.g., age, gender, number of children, etc), and organizational factors (e.g., class size, work environment, workload, etc.) are involved in the burnout occurrence (Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). The consequences of burnout can be of somatic (biological, physiological, medical) or psychological (cognitive, emotional, behavioral) orders (Rascle, 2001a). Maslach's (1999) definition also incorporates consequences of burnout as "an emotional state in which the worker loses his beliefs and positive feelings (optimism), his sympathy and his respect for the clientele. This moral exhaustion is often accompanied by physical exhaustion, illness or disorders evolving in a psychosomatic mode" (p. 212).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The pioneering works on burnout are related to Maslach (1976) and Freudenberger (1974). Since then, a considerable number of studies have been conducted on burnout among various professions in human service sectors in different countries (e.g., Maslach & Jackson, 1982). Teacher burnout, in particular, has received a high amount of attention for being an extremely stressful profession (Friedman, 2000; Howard & Johnson, 2004; and Young & Yue, 2007). The stress levels of teachers are also found to exceed the average stress levels of individuals working in other client-related occupations (Travers & Cooper, 1993). In some studies (Cunningham 1983; Kyriacou 1987, 2001; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1977; Salo 1995; and Seidman & Zager, 1991), a high level of burnout has been found among the teachers. In this respect, different negative effects of teacher burnout involving the decrease in workplace motivation, increase in probability of personnel turnover, and impact on the schooling climate have been reported. Workplace stress, in turn, can lead to physiological, psychological and behavioral changes (Young & Yue, 2007). Most of the studies on teacher burnout have explored the correlations or significant effects of demographic variables on the three dimensions of burnout experienced by teachers. In their study, Bibou-Nakou, Stogiannidou, and Kiosseoglou (1999), and Croom (2003) found moderate, low, and high levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, respectively, among the teachers. Similar findings were reported for the levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization by Kirilmaz, Celen, and Sarp (2003) in Turkey. Kirilmaz et al. found that factors of age, gender, tenure, and number of children did not have any effect on the burnout level of 43 primary school teachers, while their marital status did. In the study of Byrne (1991, 1999) among the elementary, intermediate, secondary, and university educators, female teachers expressed greater burnout in emotional exhaustion compared to male teachers among the elementary and university educators. Evers, Tomic, and Brouwers (2004) revealed a significant relationship between age and personal accomplishment of the teachers. Inconsistent results have also been found in different studies (e.g., Anderson & Iwanicki, 1984; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; and Schwab, Jackson, & Schuler, 1986) concerning the relationship between age and burnout levels among public school teachers in the United States. Croom (2003) found significantly small negative correlations between age, teaching experience and depersonalization of agriculture teachers in three states in the southeastern area of the United States. Croom did not find significant associations between these variables and the emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment of the teachers. In a recent study in Hong Kong (Lau, Yuen, & Chan, 2005) it was also found that teachers in the youngest age group were significantly more burned out than teachers in the older groups.

Gavrilovici (2009) studied the burnout level of 178 teachers in primary, secondary, high schools, and special schools in Iasi County of Romania during the period 2007-2009. The results showed that emotional exhaustion of teachers with work experience of more than 17 years was significantly higher than teachers with less work experience. In contrast, no significant differences were found between the teachers' work experience and their

levels of depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Likewise, gender and marital status did not show any effect on any dimension of the burnout. In the case of gender, mixed results have been reported. For instance, Lau et al. (2005) and Timms, Graham, and Caltabiano (2006) indicated that female teachers experience more burnout, while Bauer, Unterbrink, Hack, Pfeifer, Buhl-Griesshaber, Muller, et al. (2007) showed the reverse.

According to Maslach et al. (1996), studies that have examined the relationships between demographic variables of the teachers and their burnout levels, using MBI-ES, have revealed small but a significant amount of variance in the dimensions of burnout. In addition, age has been predicted as the significant factor for emotional exhaustion, mainly for the younger teachers compared to the older ones. For the variable of gender, males have shown higher depersonalization than females. In the case of teaching level, high school and junior high school teachers have expressed lower feelings of personal accomplishment compared to elementary school teachers; while high school teachers have shown higher feelings of depersonalization compared to elementary or junior high school teachers.

The study of Dupatepe and Akkus-Cikla (2004a), among 100 primary school teachers in one of the Turkish cities, revealed low levels of teachers' emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Zhao and Bi's (2003) study on a sample of 190 secondary school teachers on the Chinese mainland revealed no significant difference among the three dimensions of burnout in relation to the variable of gender. In a same line, Holloman (1999), in the study on burnout of 383 first-year school teachers, found that there were no significant differences between gender, age, and marital status and three burnout levels.

One part of a recent study by Luk, Chan, Cheong, & Ko (2010) was related to the relation between demographic variables and burnout conducted among 138 teachers of two primary and secondary schools in Macau. They used the Chinese version of MBI. The results revealed that, in general, Macau school teachers had moderate levels of emotional exhaustion and low levels of depersonalization. They found that age, marital status, and teaching experience significantly affected the burnout levels of teachers in their categories. Younger and single teachers had significantly higher emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than older and married teachers. Similarly, teachers with less years of experience had significantly higher emotional exhaustion than teachers with more than 20 years of experience.

The study of Mukundan and Khanderoo (2009) among 120 English language teachers in Malaysia revealed that emotional exhaustion of female teachers and depersonalization of male teachers were significantly high, while both had significantly a high level of reduced personal accomplishment. English teachers with less than 26 years of teaching experience revealed a significantly high level of emotional exhaustion. Teachers with more than five years of teaching experience had significantly high depersonalization, while teachers with less than five and more than 25 years of teaching experience showed significantly high reduced personal accomplishment.

A substantial number of studies on teacher burnout indicates the employment of male and female teachers together as their samples to investigate the effect of gender on the level of burnout as one of their demographic variables. These kinds of studies may not thoroughly demonstrate the gender-specific effects of burnout factors. Scarcity of studies on samples of all-female teachers was motivation for the present study. This is an attempt to survey the burnout level of women in the teaching profession in Malaysia and to possibly find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the burnout levels of female teachers?
2. To what extent do married and single female teachers differ in the three dimensions of burnout?
3. Is there any relationship between the number of children and the burnout level of married female teachers?
4. Does the level of teaching affect the burnout level of female teachers?
5. To what extent do age, teaching experience, and workload of married, single, primary, secondary, tertiary level female teachers correlate to the three dimensions of burnout?

METHOD

The present study was conducted as a survey among females teaching in primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in various parts of the vast area of Klang Valley in Malaysia.

Subjects

Out of about 644 distributed questionnaires among female teachers, 437 (67.86%) were returned. These teachers were from different ethnicities, including Malay (69.86%), Chinese (13%), Indians (15.1%), and others (2.1%). Their age range was from 20 to 72 with the average of about 35 years ($M=34.59$, $SD=8.79$). Of the total female respondents, 328 (75.1%) were married and 109 (24.9%) were single (unmarried). They were teaching in the primary ($n=129$, 29.5%), secondary ($n=148$, 33.9%), and tertiary ($n=160$, 36.9%) levels.

Instruments

Two questionnaires were distributed among the subjects. One was aimed to get the demographic information, including the teachers' gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, teaching level, and teaching experience. The other questionnaire was the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES) (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986). It is a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0-6 (where 0 = never and 6 = every day). It includes 22 items that asked the respondents how often they experience feelings that relate to burnout. These items are related to the three dimensions of burnout (i.e., Emotional Exhaustion (EE) = 9 items; Depersonalization (DP) = 5 items; and Personal Accomplishment (PA) = 8 items). The Emotional Exhaustion subscale assesses the feelings of being emotionally exhausted or overextended (e.g., "I feel used up at the end of the workday"). The Depersonalization subscale evaluates the feelings of impersonal response toward people (e.g., "I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects"). The Personal Accomplishment subscale measures the feelings of successful achievement (e.g., "I feel very energetic"). High internal consistency (EE=.90; DP=.79; PA=.71) and test-retest (EE=.82; DP=.60; PA=.80) reliability values (Cronbach's Alphas) have been reported for this scale (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1996). However, the reliability of these items was checked in this study and a high Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = .77$) was obtained for the average of EE ($\alpha = .86$), DP ($\alpha = .69$), and PA ($\alpha = .77$) subscales. This indicates that all the items of the scoring scale are measuring the same construct.

Data Analysis

The collected data were entered into the SPSS 15 for further analysis. The demographic variables were the independent variables and the three burnout levels (i.e., EE, DP, and PA) were the dependent variables of the study. For each level of burnout, the sum of the related items were computed in order to be compared with the response category of Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) for the high (EE = 27 or over; DP = 13 or over; PA = 0-31), moderate (EE = 17-26; DP = 7-12; PA = 32-38), and low (EE = 0-16; DP = 0-6; PA = 39 or over) levels of burnout. Based on Maslach et al. (1996), higher scores in EE and DP represent higher degrees of experienced burnout. In contrast, because PA subscale assesses the successful achievement of the respondents with people (in this study, the teachers in relation with their students), lower scores in PA demonstrate higher degrees of experienced burnout. Descriptive and univariate statistics, including frequency, percentage, means, standard deviations, t-test, one-way ANOVA, Chi-square, and Pearson correlation coefficient, were used in the analysis. The results are presented for each question and the significant findings are discussed.

RESULTS

The Burnout Levels Of Female Teachers

The burnout level of female teachers as a whole ($N = 437$) was estimated in terms of the high, moderate, and low response categories of Maslach et al. (1996). Table 1 indicates the frequency and percentage of the female teachers, as well as the means and standard deviations for the three dimensions of the Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and reduced Personal Accomplishment (PA).

Table 1: Frequency And Percentage Of Female Teachers In Terms Of High, Moderate, And Low Levels Of Burnout Dimensions And Their Means And Standard Deviations

	EE F (%)	DP F (%)	PA F (%)
High (H)	142 (32.5)	117 (26.8)	184 (42.1)
Moderate (M)	152 (34.8)	128 (29.3)	151 (34.6)
Low (L)	143 (32.7)	192 (43.9)	102 (23.3)
Total	437 (100)	437 (100)	437 (100)
M	21.85 (M)	8.42 (M)	32.48 (M)
SD	10.10	5.47	7.41

Note. EE= Emotional Exhaustion (high ≥ 27 , moderate= 17-26, low ≤ 16); DP= Depersonalization (high ≥ 13 , moderate= 7-12, low ≤ 6); PA= reduced Personal Accomplishment (high ≤ 31 , moderate= 32-38, low ≥ 39)

Based on the frequency of each dimension, the teachers have expressed different levels of feelings. The highest frequencies are related to the low level of DP (43.9%) followed by high level of reduced PA (42.1%) and moderate level of EE (34.8%), respectively. However, the lowest frequencies are related to the low level of reduced PA followed by high level of DP (26.8%) and high level of EE (32.5%), respectively. In this regard, the patterns of experienced burnout for the dimensions of the EE, DP, and reduced PA, from the highest to the lowest frequency, are M-L-H, L-M-H, and H-M-L, respectively. Overall, the mean scores of the teachers for the three dimensions indicate that they suffer from the moderate level of burnout.

Burnout Levels Of Married And Single Female Teachers

High, moderate, and low frequency of married ($n = 328$) and single ($n = 109$) teachers, as well as the means and standard deviations for the three dimensions of EE, DP, and PA, are presented in the Table 2. As it is seen, the majority (36.7%) of single teachers has expressed a high level of emotional exhaustion while a high number (35.4%) of married teachers showed a moderate level of emotional exhaustion. With regard to the dimension of depersonalization, a substantial number of the married (42.7%) and single (47.7%) teachers indicated low levels of burnout. Likewise, a considerable number of the married (39%) and single (51.4%) teachers expressed feelings of high reduced personal accomplishment.

Table 2: Frequency And Percentage Of The Three Burnout Levels For Married And Single Female Teachers

	EE		DP		PA	
	Married F (%)	Single F (%)	Married F (%)	Single F (%)	Married F (%)	Single F (%)
High	102 (31.1)	40 (36.7)	85 (25.9)	32 (29.4)	128 (39)	56 (51.4)
Moderate	116 (35.4)	36 (33)	103 (31.4)	25 (22.9)	121 (36.9)	30 (27.5)
Low	110 (33.5)	33 (30)	140 (42.7)	52 (47.7)	79 (24.1)	23 (21.1)
Total	328 (100)	109 (100)	328 (100)	109 (100)	328 (100)	109 (100)
M	21.64	22.50	8.46	8.33	32.90	31.23
SD	9.92	10.66	5.40	5.70	7.03	8.36
t-test	ns		ns		ns	

Note. EE= Emotional Exhaustion; DP= Depersonalization; PA= Personal Accomplishment; F= Frequency; ns=nonsignificant

The pattern of burnout for the experienced EE, DP, and PA for the high frequency of married female teachers is M-L-H, while it is H-L-H for single female teachers, respectively. This implies that single teachers suffer more from the burnout syndrome compared to the married teachers. However, the results of the Independent

Samples *t*-test revealed that there were statistically no significant differences in the mean burnout scores of married and single female teachers for the dimensions of EE, $t(435) = -.776, p = .44$; DP, $t(435) = .210, p = .83$; and reduced PA, $t(161.694) = 1.88, p = .06$.

Relationship Between Number Of Children And The Burnout Level Of Married Female Teachers

A 2x3 chi-square test of independence was conducted to assess whether the three dimensions of burnout - Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and reduced Personal Accomplishment (PA) - are related to number of children. For each dimension, a separate chi-square test was carried out in terms of the high, moderate, and low levels of burnout (Table 3). The results of the crosstabs analysis for the burnout and number of children was found to be significantly related to the dimension of reduced Personal Accomplishment, Pearson $\chi^2(2, 328) = 18.910, p = .0001$, while it was nonsignificant for the dimensions of Emotional Exhaustion, Pearson $\chi^2(2, 328) = 4.205, p = .122$, and Depersonalization, Pearson $\chi^2(2, 328) = 2.009, p = .336$.

A close inspection of Table 3 for the pattern of relationship between the dimension of reduced Personal Accomplishment (PA) and the number of children revealed that a significantly high level of reduced PA was related to teachers with more than two children (44.8%), and a significantly moderate level of RPA was related to the teachers with two or less children (47.0%). Overall, the total high percentage (39.0%) was related to the high level of reduced PA. The Cramer’s V value obtained ($V = .240$), compared to Guilford and Fruchter (1973), indicated a small or low correlation between the reduced Personal Accomplishment and the number of children. The results revealed that teachers with more than two children suffer more from burnout compared to teachers with two or less children.

Table 3: Chi-square Test Of Independence For The Three Burnout Levels By Number Of Children

Variable	EE			DP			PA		
	H ≥27	M 17-26	L ≤16	H ≥13	M 7-12	L ≤6	H ≤31	M 32-38	L ≥39
Number of Children									
≤ 2	60 a	56	67	49	62	72	63	86	34
(n= 183) (55.8%)	32.8% b	30.6%	36.6%	26.8%	33.9%	39.3%	34.4%	47.0%	18.6%
> 2	42	60	43	36	41	68	65	35	45
(n= 145) (44.2%)	29.0%	41.4%	29.7%	24.8%	28.3%	46.9%	44.8%	24.1%	31.0%
Total	102	116	110	85	103	140	128	121	79
(N= 328) (100%)	31.1%	35.4%	33.5%	25.9%	31.4%	42.7%	39.0%	36.9%	24.1%
Chi-square	4.205			2.009			18.910		
df	2			2			2		
P	.122			.336			.0001		
Cramer’s V	.113			.078			.240		

Note. EE= Emotional Exhaustion, DP= Depersonalization, PA= Personal Accomplishment; H= High, M= Moderate, L= Low; a= count/frequency, b= % within number of children

Effect Of The Teaching Level (Primary/Secondary/Tertiary) On Burnout Of Female Teachers

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference between the burnout levels of teachers in the primary ($n = 129$), secondary ($n = 148$), and tertiary ($n = 160$) levels. Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations for the three dimensions of burnout of the teachers in three levels. The comparison of the means with Maslach et al. (1996) revealed that all the primary, secondary, and tertiary level teachers of the study suffer from the moderate emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Likewise, primary and tertiary level teachers showed a moderate level ($M = 32.74, SD = 6.71$), ($M = 33.21, SD = 7.31$) of reduced personal accomplishment, respectively, whereas, secondary school teachers had a high level ($M = 31.48, SD = 8.00$) of reduced personal accomplishment.

Table 4: Means And Standard Deviations For The Three Dimensions Of Burnout And Teaching Level

Variable	N	M	SD
Emotional Exhaustion			
Primary	129	22.46	8.50
Secondary	148	21.99	10.53
Tertiary	160	21.24	10.87
Depersonalization			
Primary	129	8.91	5.17
Secondary	148	9.07	5.75
Tertiary	160	7.44	5.33
Personal Accomplishment			
Primary	129	32.74	6.71
Secondary	148	31.48	8.00
Tertiary	160	33.21	7.31

Based on the ANOVA results, there were no statistically significant differences between the emotional exhaustion, $F(2, 434) = .54, p < .05$, and reduced personal accomplishment, $F(2, 434) = 2.21, p < .05$, among the primary, secondary, and tertiary level teachers. On the other hand, a statistically significant difference, $F(2, 434) = 4.21, p = .015$, was found in the depersonalization of the teachers among the three levels. The pairwise comparisons (see Table 5) between the three teaching levels for the dimension of depersonalization revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean depersonalization of teachers in the secondary ($M = 9.07, SD = 5.75$) and tertiary ($M = 7.44, SD = 5.33$) levels. In this respect, a higher burnout level was found for the secondary school teachers.

Table 5: Pairwise Comparisons Between The Teachers' Depersonalization Among The Three Teaching Levels

Variable	MD	SE	p	95% CI
Primary vs. Secondary	-.17	.65	.96	(-1.71, 1.37)
Primary vs. Tertiary	1.47	.64	.06	(-.04, 2.98)
Secondary vs. Tertiary	1.64*	.62	.02	(.18, 3.09)

Note. MD= mean difference; * $p < .05$

Correlation Between Age, Teaching Experience, Workload And The Three Dimensions Of Burnout Among Female Teachers In Terms Of Marital Status (Married/Single) And Teaching Level (Primary/Secondary/Tertiary)

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was conducted to determine to what extent the variables of age, teaching experience, and work load are correlated with the three dimensions of burnout for the married and single teachers as well as the teachers who teach in the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. The means and standard deviations for the age, teaching experience (in years), workload (teaching hours per week), emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment for the groups of the study are presented in the Table 6. Compared to the response category of Maslach et al. (1996), the mean scores of the single teachers and secondary school teachers are close to high for the dimension of reduced personal accomplishment, while the mean scores of the married teachers, as well as primary and tertiary level teachers are at the moderate level for this dimension. The mean scores for the dimensions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are all moderate in terms of marital status and teaching level.

Table 7 shows the results of the correlation coefficient between the variables. Significantly small negative correlations that were found for the both married and single teachers were between the variables of Age-EE, Age-DP, Teaching experience-EE, and Teaching experience- DP. For the primary school teachers, significant correlations were between the variables of Age-DP, Age-PA, Teaching experience-DP, and Teaching experience-PA, which negatively and positively correlated to the DP and PA, respectively. With regard to the secondary school teachers only, a significantly slight negative correlation was found between the variables of Age-DP. Concerning the tertiary level teachers, significantly small negative correlations were found between the variables of Age-EE, Age-

DP, Teaching experience-EE, and Teaching experience-DP. Overall, the female teachers' age and teaching experience showed significantly slight to small negative correlations with their feeling of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The negative correlations indicate that as the age and years of teaching experience of the female teachers increase, the feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment decrease. The positive correlations reveal the reverse. All the correlations for the variable of workload were nonsignificant. Although the mean score of the single teachers and secondary school teachers showed a high level of reduced personal accomplishment (see Table 6), none of the variables of age, teaching experience, and workload were significantly related to their feelings of reduced PA. This implies that other mediating factors might be responsible for this result, which then requires more investigation.

DISCUSSION

Studies that use all female teachers as subjects are few in the literature of teacher burnout. Most of the studies have employed both males and females in their samples. The aim of these studies was to compare gender effect on the burnout dimensions. Some studies have reported a greater level of burnout for female teachers in different countries (e.g., Byrne, 1991, in Canada, and Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2009, in Malaysia). In this regard, the phenomenon of burnout among Malaysian teachers requires more attention, especially toward female teachers as being found more susceptible to emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment compared to male teachers (Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2009). Therefore, this study sought to explore the female teachers' burnout levels and determine the likely factors that are associated with this problem.

A high frequency of the female teachers in this study showed moderate, low, and high levels of emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DR), and reduced personal accomplishment (PA), respectively. Mean scores in the three dimensions of burnout indicated that, overall, female teachers suffer from a moderate level of burnout. In order to have an in-depth view of the issue, we examined the relation between some demographic variables, including individual attributes (e.g., marital status, number of children, age, and teaching experience), organizational factors (e.g., teaching level and workload) and the burnout levels of female teachers in Malaysia.

Consistent with the results of Gavrilovici (2009) in Romania and inconsistent with the results of Kirilmaz et al. (2003) in Turkey, the present study in Malaysia showed that marital status was not a significant factor in the development of the burnout level of female teachers in all levels. However, in the present study, a large number of single teachers expressed a high level of EE compared to the high number of married teachers who expressed a moderate level of EE. A high number of female teachers in both groups shows a low level of DP and a high level of reduced PA. Overall, compared to Maslach et al.'s (1996) response category, the single teachers revealed to be more burned out in EE than married teachers. Similarly, Luk et al.'s (2010) study in Macau revealed that single teachers are more burned out in EE and DP than married teachers.

In this study, it was also found that the number of children is a possible cause of burnout among married teachers. A significant small correlation in the reduced PA showed that teachers with more than two children suffer more from burnout compared to teachers with two or less children. In contrast, Kirilmaz et al. (2003) in Turkey found that the number of children did not have an effect on the burnout level of teachers.

The level of teaching was also revealed to be an effective factor in the burnout level of female teachers in the present study. A significant difference was found between the DP of teachers who teach in the secondary and tertiary levels. Secondary school teachers were shown to be more burned out at this level. One reason might be related to their workload. The secondary school teachers, on average, reported more teaching hours per week than tertiary level teachers. This may provide higher personal and emotional involvement of secondary school teachers with their teenager students who might bring about poor teacher-student interactions. A similar pattern was reported by Malach et al. (1996) who found that high school teachers had greater DP than elementary and junior high school teachers, while high school and junior high school teachers had lower PA than elementary school teachers. Our study also showed nonsignificant but moderate levels of EE and DP for teachers in the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, while it indicated moderate, high, and moderate levels of reduced PA for the primary, secondary, and tertiary teachers, respectively. In this regard, Luk et al. (2010) found no difference in the burnout level between primary and secondary school teachers.

Table 6: Means And Standard Deviations For The Age, Teaching Experience, Work Load, And The Three Burnout Dimensions For Married, Single, Primary, Secondary, And Tertiary Level Teachers

Variable	Married Teachers (n=328)		Single Teachers (n=109)		Primary Teachers (n=129)		Secondary Teachers (n=148)		Tertiary Teachers (n=160)		Total Female Teachers (n=437)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
	Age	36.45	8.29	28.98	7.86	34.95	8.47	35.57	7.89	33.38	9.72	34.59
Experience	11.40	8.53	4.90	7.21	10.55	9.09	10.93	7.37	8.09	9.24	9.78	8.68
Workload	17.14	6.32	16.67	6.15	16.97	6.96	17.51	5.85	16.61	6.07	17.02	6.27
EE	21.64 (M)	9.92	22.50 (M)	10.66	22.46 (M)	8.50	21.99 (M)	10.53	21.24 (M)	10.87	21.85 (M)	10.10
DP	8.46 (M)	5.40	8.33 (M)	5.70	8.91 (M)	5.17	9.07 (M)	5.75	7.44 (M)	5.33	8.42 (M)	5.47
PA	32.90 (M)	7.03	31.23 (H)	8.36	32.74 (M)	6.71	31.48 (H)	8.00	33.21 (M)	7.31	32.48 (M)	7.41

Note. EE= Emotional Exhaustion, DP= Depersonalization, PA= Personal Accomplishment; M= Moderate, H= High

Table 7: Pearson Correlation Between Age, Teaching Experience, Work Load And The Three Dimensions Of Burnout For Married, Single, Primary, Secondary, And Tertiary Level Teachers

Variable	Married Teachers			Single Teachers			Primary School			Secondary School			Tertiary School			Total Female Teachers		
	EE	DP	PA	EE	DP	PA	EE	DP	PA	EE	DP	PA	EE	DP	PA	EE	DP	PA
Age																		
r	-.141*	-.201**	.087	-.294**	-.277**	-.067	-.122	-.326**	.248**	-.158	-.167*	-.009	-.243**	-.191	.066	-.180**	-.201**	.077
p	.011	.000	.117	.002	.004	.486	.168	.000	.005	.054	.042	.915	.002	.016	.407	.000	.000	.107
Experience																		
r	-.111	-.188**	.054	-.291**	-.234*	-.098	-.109	-.342**	.213*	-.148	-.140	-.039	-.214**	-.165*	.032	-.155**	-.183**	.047
p	.045	.001	.327	.002	.014	.313	.218	.000	.016	.073	.089	.634	.007	.037	.692	.001	.000	.327
Work Load																		
r	.002	-.001	.003	.145	.084	-.147	-.156	-.067	-.030	.133	.061	-.009	.092	.040	-.050	.037	.021	-.035
p	.972	.981	.958	.132	.385	.126	.078	.449	.738	.108	.462	.915	.248	.612	.531	.435	.668	.463
EE																		
r		.667**	-.206**		.613**	-.122		.602**	-.203*		.728**	-.226**		.616**	-.128		.651**	-.183**
p		.000	.000		.000	.207		.000	.021		.000	.006		.000	.106		.000	.000
DP																		
r			-.215**			-.299**			-.288**			-.197*			-.223**			-.237**
p			.000			.002			.001			.016			.005			.000

Note. EE= Emotional Exhaustion, DP= Depersonalization, PA= Personal Accomplishment

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Contrary to Kirilmaz et al. (2003), which indicated that age and teaching experience did not have an effect on the burnout level of teachers, the results of our study in Malaysia revealed that these factors had significant negative correlations with the EE and DP of both married and single teachers. This implies that the younger and less experienced teachers experience more burnout than their older and experienced colleagues. In this respect, similar findings were reported for the EE and/or DP of teachers' burnout (Croom, 2003; Lau et al., 2005; Luk et al., 2010; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 1996; and Mo, 1991). It might be that younger teachers have less life experience in dealing with other people, including students, parents, and colleagues that makes them more susceptible to burnout (Luk et al., 2010). In addition, younger teachers are exposed to a number of stress-inducing factors, such as adjusting to a new environment, polishing their teaching practice, preparing curriculum for the first time, involvement with extra-curricular programs, and the like (Altemaier, Russell, & Van Velzen, 1987). In contrast, Gavrilovici (2009) found that teachers with more than 17 years of teaching experience had significantly higher EE than teachers with less work experience.

In a similar vein, age and teaching experience of primary school teachers revealed significantly negative and positive correlations with the DP and PA dimensions of burnout, respectively. It means that older teachers with more years of teaching experience show less feelings of depersonalization but more feelings of reduced personal accomplishment than younger teachers in the primary schools. Contrary to our findings, Kirilmaz et al. (2003) did not reveal any correlations between these variables for their primary school teachers. In the case of secondary school teachers, age was the only distinguisher of their DP that was negatively correlated; that is, as they grew older, their feelings of depersonalization decrease. Maslach et al. (1996) stated less feelings of personal accomplishment for high school teachers compared to primary school teachers. Regarding tertiary level teachers, age and teaching experience had significant negative correlations with both EE and DP. In other words, younger teachers and those with less years of teaching experience expressed high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. One possible reason might be related to the age of the students at the tertiary level. At this level, the students are adults who are completely mature, so dealing with these students might be more stressful to younger and less experienced teachers.

Workload revealed a nonsignificant association with the dimensions of burnout for female teachers, in general, and in relation to their marital status and teaching levels, in particular. This implies that female teachers do not suffer from burnout due to excessive work. However, Mukundan and Khandehroo (2010) reported a significantly high level of EE for teachers with more than ten hours of teaching per week and high levels of DP and RPA for the ones with less than 30 hours of teaching. Their findings are related to the total subjects of the study ($N = 120$), males ($n = 44$) and females ($n = 76$), which does not reveal the degree of burnout for females or males independently.

IMPLICATIONS

Examination of the studies on burnout shows that female teachers comprise a majority of their samples (e.g., Duatepe & Akkus-Cikla, 2004a, 64%; Luk et al., 2010, 76%; Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2009, 2010; 63%; and Sari, 2004, 52.2%). Therefore, female teachers require special attention of the researchers and administrators (school and governmental) to find the best identifiers and solutions for the occurrence and reduction of this phenomenon. Otherwise, we cannot avoid the costly consequences of chronic burnout syndrome of teachers, which would encompass the educational settings, families, and societies. The reason is that "the teaching profession has been subject to increased pressure by society to correct social problems (e.g., drugs, alcohol, and sexual abuse), educate students in academic and skill areas, provide enrichment activities, meet the individual needs of the students with a wide range of abilities, and encourage moral and ethical development" (Maslach et al., 1996, p. 205).

In the case of female teachers' burnout in Malaysia, four important factors require special attention: 1) secondary school teachers, 2) younger teachers, 3) teachers with less teaching experience, and 4) married teachers with more than two children. One possible solution to prevent or reduce burnout is to set up teacher training workshops, which can be conducted by professional psychotherapists and consultants in the area, in schools to help the teachers dealing with 1) feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and ineffectiveness; 2) adverse classroom climate; and 3) family and social expectations.

The studies that correlated demographic factors with burnout levels of teachers revealed inconsistent results inter-countries and intra-countries. This makes it difficult to judge on the reliability and/or credibility, and/or

generalizability of the findings. More in-depth studies are needed to identify other key mediating factors that might be potential sources of burnout syndrome among teachers in Malaysia and other countries with diverse cultures and social norms. Even family culture and class might intensify psychological and physiological conditions of the teacher and make him or her more vulnerable to burnout. That is why in one research, the young teachers, for example, are found to be more burned out, while in other research, older teachers are shown to be more susceptible to the burnout syndrome.

CONCLUSION

A lack of comprehensive study on female teachers' burnout provoked us to conduct the present study and determine the impact of some individual characteristics (e.g., marital status, number of children, age, and teaching experience) and organizational factors (e.g., teaching level and workload) on the burnout level of female teachers in Malaysia in the three dimensions of emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and reduced personal accomplishment (PA). Results revealed that secondary school female teachers among the other teaching levels (primary and tertiary), as well as young teachers, teachers with less teaching experience, and married teachers with more than two children, are more vulnerable to burnout syndrome in the Malaysian situation. As in the literature of teacher burnout, the present study showed both consistent and inconsistent results in some of the researched variables with the previous studies intra/inter countries. This indicates the complexity of the phenomenon of burnout and its potential causes, particularly among female teachers, that requires further investigation.

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NOTES