On the Relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers' Burnout and Self-efficacy

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Abstract

In foreign language setting, social psychological variables are very important. These variables can highly influence the learners’ and consequently teachers’ performance. One of the most influential psychosocial domains in language pedagogy is Self-efficacy. Another influential factor that is of utmost importance in teaching contexts is burnout. This study has been conducted to investigate the relationship between the self-efficacy of Iranian teachers of English and their reports of burnout. The needed data were gathered through the application of two questionnaires: The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach & Jackson 1981, 1986) and the researcher made questionnaire of self-efficacy. The participants were 200 experienced teachers having university education from one of the big provinces of Iran, Khorasan Razavi. They were both males and females and from different age groups. After obtaining the raw data, the SPSS software (version 16) was used to change the data into numerical interpretable form. To determine the relationship between self-efficacy and teachers' burnout, correlational analysis was employed. The result showed that the participants’ self-efficacy has a reverse relationship with their burnout. In addition, a significant relationship was observed between teachers' age, gender, and their reports of burnout.

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1. Introduction

The current century seems to be the century of stress and intension. People from different age group and social statuses seem to be stricken by the stress. Researchers’ experiences show that Stress is a ubiquitous affective factor
that is present in all contexts and in work places. It is assumed that if people do not feel stressed for a few days or weeks, they suffer from a chronic stress condition that causes a feel of frustration and fatigue. They come across not only with emotional but also with physical problems. This condition has been called burnout by psychologists.

As cited in Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2010), burnout is defined as a result of long term occupational stress, especially among human service workers such as teachers (Jennett, Harris, Mesibov, 2003). Many teachers around the world may experience stress in their work (Jennett et al., 2003). Although most teachers cope successfully with such stress, burnout may be the endpoint of coping unsuccessfully with stress (Jennett et al., 2003).

Another important factor in life success is said to be self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, as cited in Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2010), could be defined as people’s beliefs about their own abilities to think, plan, monitor, organize, and perform activities needed in educational settings (Bandura 1997, 2006). It is explained in the theoretical framework of cognitive psychology.

To better understand teacher burnout, it is necessary to know about the relationship between burnout and other important consequences for individuals (e.g., teachers’ ill being; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006), and school missions (e.g., quality of teaching; Cherniss, 1980).

The purpose of the present study is to discover the extent to which teachers engaging in their teaching classes results in teacher burnout. Moreover, it is going to examine the development of this phenomenon in individual (i.e., teacher efficacy) constructs that have been found to be related with burnout among teachers.

Researchers in this study try to investigate how Iranian EFL teachers’ self-efficacy is related to their burnout. Consequently, this study addresses the following research questions:

1) Is there any significant relationship between teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs and reports of burnout?
2) Is there any significant relationship between teachers’ report of burnout to their age?

2. Literature Review

Usually student – teachers enter in classroom settings that may or may not give support, encouragement, and opportunities to improve their knowledge and experience achievement. Moreover, many student–teachers see the teaching class as the final test of their teaching abilities and, as a test of themselves as human beings (Sinclair & Nicoll, 1980). Consequently, it is essential that we study the extent to which these individuals experience stress or burnout, as well as how personal beliefs (teacher efficacy) may serve to improve their stress.

2.1. Teachers’ burnout

Freudenberger (1974) coined the term ‘‘burnout’’, and defined it as: ‘‘the state of physical and emotional depletion resulting from conditions of work’’ (p. 160). This definition of burnout formulated by Freudenberger (1974) emphasized emotional exhaustion as the result of prolonged overwork and overextension. Maslach and Jackson (1981) completed this early understanding of burnout by adding three unique symptoms considered to be the result of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. For teachers, emotional exhaustion refers to state that the teacher has put all of his or her energy for teaching and has finally run out of resources. Depersonalization occurs when the teacher develops negative feelings towards his or her students and even the school community. And the last one, reduced personal accomplishment, refers to a negative self-evaluation and not being happy with teaching as a profession (Anderson & Iwanicki, 1984). The result of this negative self-evaluation is a sense of sorrow and breakdown in the pursuit of ideals (Friesen, Prokop, & Sarros, 1988).
Hakanen, Bakker, and Schaufeli (2006) showed that both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization interrelated negatively with self-rated health as well as work ability among Finnish teachers. Research also shows a negative relation between burnout and motivation (Hakanen et al., 2006; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). Furthermore, Leung and Lee (2006) showed, in a study of teachers in Hong Kong, that burnout predicted teachers' intentions of leaving the profession. Teacher burnout has been shown to be connected to teacher self-efficacy (Chwalisz, Altmaier, & Russell, 1992; Friedman & Farber, 1992). And Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) found a strong relation between teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout.

Chan (2003) found out that stress, resiliency, and helplessness all had important and independent effects on the burnout factors of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. In Canada, current data suggest that from 12% to 20% of teachers state burnout symptoms at least once a week (Fernet, 2003; Houlifort& Sauvé, 2010).

2.2. Teachers' self-efficacy

It is not easy to keep talented teachers. In the United States, up to 25% of beginning teachers do not come back for their third year and almost 40% leave the profession within the first five years of teaching (Gold, 1996; Harris & Associates, 1993).

In Britain, some teachers leave their job before the time of retirement (Macdonald, 1999). Research showed that many teachers leave the job because of burnout that is linked to teachers’ self-efficacy in classroom (Brouwers&Tomic, 2000; Chwalisz, Altmaier& Russell, 1992; Emmer & Hickman, 1991).

There is evidence that those teachers who leave their job have significantly lower self-efficacy than teachers who remain in teaching (Glickman &Tamashiro, 1982). Definitely, teacher self-efficacy is linked to level of stress experienced in teaching (Smylie, 1988).

In a study of teacher burnout, Fernet, Guay, Senécal, & Austin (2012) stated that:

“Changes in teachers’ perceptions of classroom overload and students’ disruptive behavior are negatively related to changes in autonomous motivation, which in turn negatively predict changes in emotional exhaustion. Results also indicate that changes in teachers’ perceptions of students’ disruptive behaviors and school principal’s leadership behaviors are related to changes in self-efficacy, which in turn negatively predict changes in three burnout components.” (p.514)

Thirty seven years ago teacher self-efficacy was recognized as one of the teacher characteristics related to student success (Armor et al., 1976). Teachers’ efficacy is related to student performances and achievement (Armor et al., 1976; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Moore & Esselman, 1992; Ross, 1992; Saklofske, Michayluk, &Randhawa, 1988), motivation (Midgley, Feldlaufer, &Eccles, 1989), and sense of efficacy (Anderson, Greene, &Loewen, 1988). Self-efficacy Influences on the effort teachers spend in teaching, and their goals. Moreover, teachers with a high efficacy have new ideas and are more willing to use new methods (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, &Zellman, 1977; Ghaith&Yaghi, 1997; Guskey, 1988; Milner, 2002; Stein & Wang, 1988).

Self-efficacy that is considered as a motivational factor and reflects teachers’ beliefs for teaching tasks could be related to a number of significant factors related to education, including student achievement (e.g., McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978;Muijs& Reynolds, 2002), student motivation (e.g., Midgley, Feldlaufer, &Eccles, 1989), educational innovations (e.g., Cousins & Walker, 2000), classroom management skills (Wool-folk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990), and teacher stress (Greenwood, Olejnik, &Parkay, 1990).
Bandura (2006) states that people are self-regulating and self-organizing. By considering this perspective, self-efficacy affects person’s behavior and purposes and is affected by the environment and other peoples.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 200 EFL teachers from Khorasan Razavi, Iran (152 females and 48 males) aged between 20 and +40 years old with a range of between -1 and +10 years of teaching experience. The participants were selected from available subjects who were considered as professional experienced teachers having university education (Bachelor: 27 males and 116 females; Master: 18 males and 35 females and PhD: 3 males and 1 female). They were from different age groups and different years of experiences. Their field of study was TEFL (36 males and 105 females), English Translation (5 males and 31 females), and English literature (7 males and 16 females). All of them were supposed to pass TTC whether in University or Institute.

3.2. Instruments

Two questionnaires of Burnout and Self-efficacy were used in this study, and the demographic form asked about the participants demographic information including age, gender, province, and years of teaching experience.

3.2.1. Teacher's burnout scale

Teacher burnout was measured using Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator’s Survey (MBIES) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, 1986). The scale is a 22-item consisted of three sub-dimensions; emotional exhaustion sub-dimension (EE), desensitization sub-dimension (D), and personal accomplishment sub dimension (PA). Participants respond on a seven-point frequency rating scale, ranging from “never” (0) to “every day” (6). Higher emotional exhaustion and desensitization sub-dimensions and lower personal accomplishment sub-dimensions cause high burnout status (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). The Cronbach Alpha values of dimensions: emotional exhaustion .90; depersonalization .79; personal accomplishment .71.

3.2.2. Teacher's self-efficacy scale

Teachers’ self-efficacy was measured by a researcher made questionnaire that was designed based on the (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy 2001) and (Bandura, 1997) Instrument Teacher Self-efficacy Scale, and (Murdoch, 1997) Good Teacher’s questionnaire. Two experts in the area of ELT validated the questionnaire and the reliability was estimated using Cronbach’s Alpha .9.

This 30-item researcher made questionnaire was conducted according to the following 5 subscales: efficacy to influence decision making, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental and community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school climate. Each item is measured on a 5-point scale: nothing, very little, some influence, quite a bit, a great deal.

3.3. Procedure

Participants of this study were 200 ELT teachers of different language institutes from Khorasan Razavi, Iran. They were from both genders and from different ages with different years of experiences. Surveys are usually conducted by using interviews or questionnaires or both. In this study, for collecting the data, questionnaires in the form of emails (using Google drive) were sent to different English language teachers to answer the questions. Collecting data started on February 2013 and lasted for about 2 weeks. The approximate time needed to complete the questionnaires was 10 minutes. Finally, in order to answer the research inquiry, the responses obtained from the
questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed using SPSS software. Then, the correlation between these two variables was calculated.

4. Results

Table (1) presents categorization of sub-scales of burnout and self-efficacy scales and their related Cronbach Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients based on the data collected from the 200 participants of the study.

Table 1. Classification of different items of burnout and self-efficacy scales, Cronbach Alpha coefficients (α)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales/sub-scales</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>(α)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Burnout</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>1, 4, 9, 10, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced Personal Accomplishment</td>
<td>3*, 6*, 7*, 12*, 13*, 17*, 19*, 21*</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depersonalization</td>
<td>2, 5, 8, 11, 14</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-efficacy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy to Influence Decision Making</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Efficacy</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary Efficacy</td>
<td>18, 19</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy to Enlist Parental and Community Involvement</td>
<td>20, 21, 22</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy to Create a Positive School Climate</td>
<td>23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Scored in reverse order

To examine the role of teachers’ self-efficacy in their burnout, Pearson product–moment correlation was conducted. The results revealed significant negative correlations between self-efficacy and burnout (r = - 0.58, p < 0.01). It was also found that all components of teacher self-efficacy, namely efficacy to influence decision making, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental / community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school climate, were negatively correlated with teachers’ burnout as follows: burnout and (1) efficacy to influence decision making (r = - 0.58, p < 0.00), and (2) instructional efficacy (r = - 0.26, p < 0.01), (3) disciplinary efficacy (r = - 0.60, p < 0.01), (4) efficacy to enlist parental and community involvement, (r = - 0.46, p < 0.01) and (5) efficacy to create a positive school climate (r = - 0.43, p < 0.01) (Table 2).

Table 2. Correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and burnout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burnout</th>
<th>(r)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Self-efficacy</td>
<td>- 0.58**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy to Influence Decision Making</td>
<td>- 0.26**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Efficacy</td>
<td>- 0.60**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary Efficacy</td>
<td>- 0.46**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy to Enlist Parental and Community Involvement</td>
<td>- 0.34**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy to Create a Positive School Climate</td>
<td>- 0.43**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
5. Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout among EFL teachers in private language institutes. The results indicated significant negative relationship between teacher self-efficacy and burnout that is in agreement with previous theoretical studies on the role of self-efficacy in burnout. The size of this correlation indicates that the higher the teachers’ self-efficacy, the less likely they are to experience burnout. According to Bandura (1997), a strong sense of self-efficacy improves human achievement and personal well-being in many ways including the ability to handle stress. Similarly, in the case of teaching in private language institutes, teachers who feel more successful in their profession are more likely to cope with different source of stresses (e.g., job insecurity, work overload, student’s low motivation). Further, in a cross-sectional study among teachers, Brouwers and Tomic (2000) confirmed that teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs about classroom management were significantly related to their burnout level.

The results also revealed that all five constructs of self-efficacy were reversely correlated with teacher burnout. A positive school climate, one that is supportive, helpful, cooperative and respectful of teachers, was negatively related to teacher stress and burnout. On the other hand, preventing teachers from participating in decisions on teacher-related issues will result in higher level of self-efficacy. Moreover, teachers with a low sense of classroom efficacy, and instruction efficacy, are stressed and angered by student misbehavior, pessimistic about student ability to improve, and focus more on subject matter than student development (Friedman, 1992).

The results also indicated a negative correlation between EFL teachers’ self-efficacy and their age. In other words, teachers’ self-efficacy tends to decrease over time and with every year of teaching.

Further, findings of the present study indicated a significant positive correlation between EFL teachers’ age and their burnout. In other words, teachers’ burnout tends to increase overtime. This is consistent with previous research that demonstrated that age is an important factor in predicting teacher burnout. It was also found that there was no significant difference in the teachers’ self-efficacy with respect to gender. Moreover, the results of the present study indicated that there were significant burnout differences among EFL teachers with respect to gender. In other words, male teachers’ burnout level was significantly higher than that of the females. This finding is in contrast with Anderson and Iwanichi’s (1984) but in accordance with that of Borg and Riding (1991) result which revealed significantly higher levels of burnout among male teachers.

6. Conclusion

The findings propose that some EFL teachers, mainly young ones feel more successful in their profession, and they could be more successful at reducing the level of burnout. This may have suggestions for teachers’ well-being, motivation and teaching efficiency and accordingly students’ achievement. Consequently, the findings highlight the importance of establishing some courses for EFL teachers to increase efficacy.

To efficiently deal with teacher burnout, EFL teachers should expand skills in controlling their stress levels. Also the role of language institute administrators is to discuss the sources and side-effects of teacher stress and the solutions in addition to providing assistance and support from others (e.g., colleagues, supervisors, and chancellor) are of utmost importance. A positive and supportive school setting helps teachers’ success.

Further research is needed to incorporate a link of teachers in private and public settings. The teachers studied in this research were from private institutes.

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References


