

Well-being, Burnout, and Anxiety among EFL Teachers: Does Gender Matter?

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Introduction

Well-being, burnout, and teaching anxiety seem significant in the EFL teaching process. First, it is critical for teachers to be pleased and satisfied so that they will be able to handle their obligations and have a beneficial impact on students' attitudes and enthusiasm to learn (Dewaele et al., 2020). By encouraging a positive sense of identity, ongoing professional growth contributes to the maintenance of this well-being. Second, emotional exhaustion, a common sign of burnout, can reduce job satisfaction and innovative teaching, which can have a detrimental effect on student and teacher performance as well as the overall quality of learning (Martínez et al., 2020). Third, an unfavorable learning environment is created when teaching anxiety leads to unproductive classroom performance and abandonment of creative strategies (Aydın, 2021). Additionally, nervous instructors may unintentionally cause stress in their students, which could hinder their ability to learn (Austin et al., 2005).

Gender is also an essential variable in the mentioned process. First, men and women behave and communicate differently in various contexts in life. Unsurprisingly, they are treated differently as well. Brass (1985) states that these differences can be observed in workgroup composition, closeness, status, numerical balance, job function, and hierarchical levels. Second, considering the effect of gender on language teaching, how male and female teachers react to stressful conditions differs because of their biological, psychological, physiological, and emotional differences. (Aslrasouli & Vahid, 2014). To illustrate, while a teacher can easily manage a particular situation, another cannot accomplish it and does not maintain their well-being.

In conclusion, gender is a significant factor in the EFL teaching process, along with other vital elements such as teaching anxiety, burnout, and overall well-being. However,

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the gender disparities in these domains remain underexplored in current research. This gap highlights the need for further research that explores how gender affects EFL teachers' experiences. Such studies may result in gender-sensitive, more efficacious interventions that enhance teachers' performance and overall well-being. Closing this gap will help us gain a more profound understanding of the difficulties faced by EFL teachers and build supportive learning environments that meet each teacher's unique needs.

Literature review

While there has been increasing literature on well-being in recent years, research on the relationship between well-being and gender remains limited. Among one of those studies, Matud. et al. (2019) found that men scored higher on self-acceptance, but women performed better on personal progress. Klassen et al. (2010) explored how teachers' experience, gender, and teaching level relate to self-efficacy, job stress, and job satisfaction among 1,430 teachers and concluded that teachers' self-efficacy peaked in mid-career but declined later. Female teachers faced more stress and had lower classroom management self-efficacy. Higher self-efficacy was linked to greater job satisfaction, while more stress led to lower self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Recently, Erden et al. (2023) investigated the effects of gender and marital status on 82 Turkish teachers's well-being. They found significant and weak impacts for both marital status and gender. The results of moderator studies indicated that variables such as grade level, publication type, and researcher characteristics had no discernible impact. Overall, teachers' well-being was not significantly impacted by their gender or marital status.

The results of a limited number of studies indicate that burnout is another indicator of the teachers' emotional state. For instance, Comerchero (2008) found that although gender was linked to higher levels of emotional tiredness and teacher efficacy in females, it was a poor predictor of teacher burnout. Similarly, gender differences in typically male or female vocations were not significant, according to the results of a meta-analysis study by Purvanova and Muros (2010). These consistent findings implied that a teacher's gender had no bearing on how likely they were to experience burnout because burnout was not a trait that was exclusive to either gender. Jamshidirad et al.(2012) explored the impact of gender on burnout dimensions among 28 English language teachers in Malaysia. They concluded that gender was not a predictor of burnout. Likewise, Atmaca's study (2017), which involved 42 Turkish EFL teachers teaching at primary schools, yielded similar results.

A variety of studies have been done on the disparities in anxiety levels between genders among teachers. However, some studies find no substantial divergence in anxiety levels; others suggest that gender can have an impact on these levels. Putter (2003) attempted to reveal the reasons for stress among teachers. The study involved 106 teachers, and the findings did not show any significant difference in the severity of stress between gender, age, or years of experience. Aslrasoulia and Vahid (2014) focused on the relationship between gender and teacher anxiety among 114 novices and experienced EFL

teachers in the Iranian context. According to the results, approximately 57.65% of teachers experienced teaching anxiety in different forms, but there was not any meaningful correlation between gender and occupational anxiety. Mishra's (1996) study demonstrated that female teachers were likely to experience more stress in job-related areas such as workload, role conflict, or interpersonal communication than male teachers regarding occupational stress and job satisfaction. In the Turkish context, Aydın and Ustuk (2020) conducted a study, and they noted that male teachers were more anxious than females. Similarly, İskender and Savaşçı (2023) examined whether foreign language teaching anxiety differed according to gender, years of experience, and type of school. The findings demonstrated a significant difference between male and female teachers, and male teachers tend to experience anxiety more than females.

Overview of the study

Well-being, burnout, and teaching anxiety are significant factors in the EFL teaching process. Gender, on the other hand, may constitute a significant variable that may related to well-being, burnout, and teaching anxiety. However, the gender disparities in the mentioned domains remain underexplored in the context of EFL research. With these concerns in mind, the current study aims to examine gender differences regarding well-being, burnout, and teaching anxiety in the EFL teaching process and asks one research question:

- Does the level of well-being, burnout, and teaching anxiety among EFL teachers differ in accordance with gender?

Method

Research Context

The current study that aims to examine whether the level of well-being, burnout, and teaching anxiety among EFL teachers differ in accordance with gender uses an analytic approach and deductive purpose. A descriptive and correlational research design was used since it was necessary to understand whether gender was a considerable variable regarding well-being, burnout, and anxiety. From this perspective, descriptive research refers to examining data with preconceived research questions. Since the nature of well-being, burnout, and anxiety within the scope of gender scales used were used from the participants' perspectives without any intervention within a natural context for obtaining data (Selinger & Shohamy, 1989).

Participants

The study sample consisted of 313 lecturers, 257 females and 56 males (82.1%), teaching in elementary, high school, and university preparatory programs. The participants who were randomly selected ranged in age from 22 to 70, with a mean score of 37.9. Regarding educational background, 167 (53.4%) of them have master's degrees, 92 (29.4%) of them have bachelor's degrees, and 52 (16.6%) have doctorates. With an average of 14.1 years, their teaching experience spanned from less than a year to 42 years. They worked 21 hours a week, ranging from 3 to 42 hours. 199 (66 %) of professors are employed by public institutions, and 114 (34 %) work for private ones. In addition, 252 (80.5%) do not perform administrative tasks.

Tools

The study utilized four tools to gather data on demographic information and scales to measure teachers' well-being, burnout, and anxiety. Teaching. First, the background

questionnaire collected data on participants' age, gender, education, teaching experience, and school type. Second, the AHI measured happiness through 24 self-reported items, revealing a strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha=.93$). Third, the TBS, with 21 items across four subscales, assessed burnout levels, demonstrating high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha= .70$). Fourth and last, the TAS, developed by Aydın and Uştuk (2020), was used to evaluate teaching anxiety levels using 27 items rated on a Likert scale, showing excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha= .95$).

Procedure

After receiving approval from the ethics committee of Istanbul Medeniyet University's Faculty of Education Sciences, the background questionnaires and scales were converted to a Google Form and sent to English teachers via email and social media. Participants received guarantees of anonymity along with information regarding the purpose, significance, and methods of the study. Voluntary participation was also guaranteed via a consent form at the outset. The survey was kept online for one month after completing the four-month data collection period.

Analysis

The data collected from teachers using the AHI, TBS, and FLTA scales were transferred to SPSS 25.0 for statistical analysis. Errors and missing data were checked before the analysis. The frequency, percentage distributions, and means were calculated to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants. The means and standard deviation values were computed to assess teachers' well-being, professional burnout, and teaching anxiety levels. An independent samples t-test was used to see the differences regarding gender.

Results

According to the values indicated in Table 1, while the levels of well-being and burnout among EFL teachers do not show significant differences regarding gender, their levels of teaching anxiety significantly change by gender. To begin with, the level of well-being among EFL teachers did not show a significant difference in terms of gender ($p=.98$). In a similar way. In contrast, female teachers suffered from burnout more than male teachers did; the difference between the burnout levels and their gender was not found to be statistically significant ($p=.07$). However, the levels of teaching anxiety significantly changed by their genders ($p=.00$). In other words, female teachers seemed more anxious than male teachers.

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F	Sig.
Well-being	Female	257	71.39	14.43	.90	.71	.98
	Male	56	71.45	14.31	1.91		
Burnout	Female	257	59.56	5.73	.36	.48	.07
	Male	56	58.02	5.64	1.75		
Teaching anxiety	Female	257	51.70	14.31	.89	.71	.00
	Male	56	46.50	0.72	1.30		

Table 1. Gender differences regarding well-being, burnout, and teaching anxiety (n=313)

Conclusions and Discussion

The study's data reached three main conclusions. First, EFL teachers' well-being levels do not change in accordance with their genders. Second, teachers' burnout levels do

not show a significant difference regarding their genders. Third, female teachers suffer more from teaching anxiety than male teachers.

These conclusions may relate to several factors. First, the same educational backgrounds of the men and women in the study or the comparable effort expected of male and female teachers may cause the well-being findings. Similarly, similar views of the administration and unfavorable working conditions by male and female teachers may account for a slight variation in burnout levels. However, the notable disparity favoring female teachers in the ELT field in the Turkish setting suggests that teaching is a highly demanding and anxiety-inducing career. In addition to being more susceptible to working pressures, women have to satisfy higher demands in the work environment and have fewer resources at home than males.

Several pedagogical implications can be made. First, in terms of well-being, the results of this study generally agree with those of previous investigations. The majority of the research did not find any gender differences (Lau et al., 2022). For instance, Kaur and Singh (2019) report no gender differences, while differences favoring male or female teachers (e.g., Milfont et al., 2008) or both (e.g., Liang et al., 2017) appear to have little practical value. Second, the current study reports that gender generally has minimal bearing on teachers' levels of burnout (Jamshidirad, 2012). This conclusion is consistent with several studies (e.g., Farber, 1984; Holloman, 1999), which found no noteworthy variations in burnout levels between males and females. However, recent research by Bauer et al. (2007), Haberman (2005), and Leithwood (2001) reveal that male teachers were more likely than female teachers to experience burnout, which may account for the slight difference in favor of men identified in the current study. Third, the current research reveals that women experience higher levels of FLTA, consistent with findings from other studies in the literature (e.g., Daniela, 2011; Mishra, 1996; Putter, 2003), while male teachers experience higher levels of anxiety than their female counterparts, a finding reported by Aydin and Uştuk's study (2020). In summary, by connecting well-being, burnout, and anxiety with gender in the Turkish EFL setting, this study adds to the body of literature on these three variables, which have not received enough attention.

Several practical recommendations can also be noted. First, school administrators should prioritize the mental health of their teachers. To help instructors manage and avoid burnout, they might plan conferences, seminars, workshops, professional development courses, and other events. It is critical to emphasize that school administrators bear responsibility for creating a conducive learning environment and for identifying and resolving any problems that cause teacher anxiety. For instance, schools and legislators may collaborate to establish a welcoming and encouraging work environment for English instructors. It would involve offering sufficient funding, chances for professional growth, encouragement, and acknowledgement for their efforts. Second, educators may take a few simple actions to improve their physical and emotional health. It may be possible to enhance methods and policies to improve gender equality and the general well-being of the people. Second, the goal of teacher support and training initiatives should be to lower FLTA while boosting instructors' self-assurance and productivity. Furthermore, it is essential to address any emotional experiences that educators may have in their work. Programs for in-service teacher training could also be developed and implemented to assist educators in understanding anxiety and learning proper coping mechanisms. Typically, inexperienced teachers might use more assistance because they seem more nervous than

experienced ones. Third, to make instructors feel more comfortable and confident in their instruction and reduce their anxiety, teacher support mechanisms like peer observation, feedback sessions, and mentoring programs might be implemented. Additionally, teachers should be encouraged to discuss their feelings and experiences with professional development mentors and leaders to get support and guidance on in-person and virtual sharing platforms. Furthermore, learning objectives should always be given, and instructional resources should be orientated to decrease instructor anxiety. Last, While there has not been a significant difference between males and females, one of the main problems instructors face in classrooms and schools needs to be considered teacher burnout. School administrators should look for measures to prevent and manage teacher burnout because rising demands may negatively impact both the teachers and the children's well-being.

The study is not without limitations. First, the number of participants was limited to 313 EFL teachers in Turkiye. Second, the study used quantitative data collection tools within the descriptive and correlational research design. It can be recommended that further research should focus on the effects of some other variables, such as workload, teaching experience, and support systems at schools, on well-being, burnout, and anxiety among EFL teachers. Within this scope, gender difference regarding teaching anxiety needs special attention among researchers. In addition, cultural, social, and institutional factors should also be investigated. Thus, qualitative, experimental, longitudinal, and comparative studies should be conducted to understand better emotional factors in the EFL teaching process and their relationships with certain demographic variables.

Ethical Statement

The ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethical Committee of Educational Sciences (Approval Number: 2023: 02-05 Date: 13.02.2023).

This paper that extends builds upon the data of the previously published study cited below:

Onan, A. M., & Aydın, S. (2024). Well-being, burnout, and teaching anxiety among EFL teachers. *Journal of Language Research*, 8(1), 17-35. <https://doi.org/10.51726/jlr.1376451>.

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