A Study of the Relationship Between Demographic Factors and Elementary School Teacher Burnout : The Iranian Case

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The aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship between certain demographic factors and elementary school teachers` burnout. The sample consisted of 144 elementary school teachers (98 male and 76 women) selected through cluster random sampling. Data were collected by: 1- Personal Information Form developed by the researchers, and 2- Dworkin Burnout Inventory (1981). The validity and reliability of the Inventory were confirmed. The results revealed a significant difference between teachers` sense of powerlessness (one of the burnout dimensions) and their marital status and gender. Also a significant relationship was found between meaninglessness (another dimension of burnout) and teachers` number of children.

Introduction

The term Burnout was recognized as an important phenomena in 1970_s in the US. At the time, burnout referred to the work-related depression experienced by the customer service workers (Maslach, Schaufell, Leiter; 2001).

Burnout has been discussed by both psychologists and sociologists (Dworkin,2001). Hebert Ferudenberger, a clinical psychologist defined burnout for the first time in 1974. In Freudenbergrs` view, burnout, is an uneasiness of human service professionals, such as social workers, mental health workers, nurses, and teachers, that is characterized by feeling of "wearing out" (Dworkin, 2001). Psychologists, such as Maslach and Jackson (1986) defined Burnout as a three dimensional concept: Emotional exhaustion, Loss of a

sense of personal accomplishment, and Depersonalization. Emotional exhaustion includes teachers` tiredness. When teachers` emotional resources are drained, tiredness develops. Depersonalization occurs when teacher has a cynical attitude toward students, parents and the workplace. Personal accomplishment refers to teachers` beliefs that their efforts don`t have any effect on students` development (Grayson and Alvarez, 2007). The emergence and spread of teacher burnout may also result from teachers` demographic variables. Johnson, Gold and Knepper, (1984; Qtd. in Ozan, 2009), showed that burnout was affected by teacher's age, gender, marital status, education level, job duration, time spent in the last workplace experience, whether teaching is perceived as a rewarding job, and attitude toward the effectiveness of one's teaching.

Sabanci (2009) in his study of primary school teachers` burnout found that teachers` level of burnout was low in emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment and high in depersonalization. Also, he showed that teachers with master degrees had higher emotional exhaustion than teacher with bachelor's and pre-bachelor's degrees. Teachers with master's degrees had higher depersonalization than teachers with pre-bachelors degrees. Furthermore, teachers with pre-bachelors degrees had lower levels of accomplishment than master teachers. In general, teachers with master's degrees reported higher levels of burnout than those with Bachelors (BA or BS) degrees. In Sabanci`s study, managers and teachers with one to five years of work experience reported lower levels of depersonalization than those with 16–20 years of experience. Managers and teachers with one to five years of experience reported higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment than those with 21 or more years. Also, women reported higher levels of burnout than men.

Ozan (2009) in his study of primary school teacher burnout levels reported no meaningful difference between teachers` (male and female) view of emotional exhaustion, apathy and personal success (dimensions of burnout). Furthermore, he showed that single and married teachers had similar attitudes toward Emotional Exhaustion, apathy and personal success and no meaningful difference was seen between their attitudes.

Grayson and Alvarez (2008) showed that women displayed higher level of burnout than men. They found no significant difference in burnout by age, degree level, teaching experience or marital status. On the other hand Kokkinos (2006) reported a significant difference between male and female Primary school teachers` levels of burnout.

Evaluating the level of teachers` burnout in elementary school can potentially introduce the appropriate methods of improving teachers` health and students` performance. As such, the main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the elementary school teachers` burnout and some of their personal variables in Iran. To achieve the goals of this study an attempt has been made to answer the following question:

> *Is there any significant relationship between primary school teachers` levels of burnout in regard to their gender, marital status, number of children, academic background, grades of teaching, job duties, and years of experience?*

Method

A descriptive approach with survey method was applied to determine the relationship between the levels of primary school teachers' burnout and their demographic variables.

Participants:
The sample consisted of 144 male (98) and female (78) elementary school teachers selected by a cluster random sampling procedure in the city of Shiraz.

Measure:
Two instruments were administered to collect the data: 1- Personal Information Form, and 2- Dworkin Burnout Inventory (DBI). The former was designed by the researchers and considered teachers personal information such as: gender, marital status, academic background, grade of teaching, job duty, years of experience, and number of children. The latter, (*DBI*), was developed by Dworkin (1986), and translated into Persian by Mazidi, Alborzi and khoshbakht in 2010. The back translation procedure (Brislin, 1980) was used to assure that the content of the scale remained the same in the English and Persian languages. DBI scale consisted of 10 items and assesses *burnout* in four dimensions. In this study, due to some Iranian national educational regulations and provincial requirements, Mazidi added two items into DBI and named it DBIP (Dowrkin Burnout Inventory for Persian). The new items were: 1- I believe that no bias or discriminatory act is done in the allocation of the teachers; and 2- I believe that most of the educational and procedural policies are organized under the temporary political climate of the society.

Reliability and Validity:
The data analysis for this part involved four primary components: an analysis of the internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's alpha) of the DBIP; an analysis of the proposed measurement model of the DBIP by factor analysis. The means, standard deviations, internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's alpha), and scale inter-correlations are presented in Table I and 2.

Internal consistency:
In general, the internal consistency of the DBIP, with scores ranging from .50-.80 (Table 2), and the Cronbach's alpha with scores over .25 (Table 1) was acceptable.

Factorial validity:
To provide evidence for the validity of the DBIP, the factorial validity of the scale was tested. Items the questionnaire were analyzed using principal component analysis procedure to determine their structure. Factor scores were computed to create scale based on the individual items to make the latent constructs. Factor analyses revealed that instead of the original one-factor model (Dworkin, 1987), a four-factor model (meaninglessness, Powerlessness, Isolation, Normlessness), in which items load on four factors, was more appropriate for the data. Dowrkin developed the scale, fundamentally, to assess one component of the burnout. His analyses supported the one-factor measurement model. The analysis was replicated in this sample, comparing the proposed one-factor model with the four-factor model. Item loading for the DBIP measurement model across the sample is displayed in Table 3. Comparing models across the sample provides evidence to suggest that the proposed four-factor model is the most appropriate model for these data.

Results and Discussion

This study aimed to examine whether any significant differences existed between Iranian (male and female) primary school teachers level of burnout. Also, we assessed the relationship between teachers` burnout and their gender, marital status, academic background, grade of teaching, task and job duties, years of experience and number of children. Analysis of the subjects` self-report showed that 47.2% of the participants were females, 52.8% males; 56.9% married and 41.7% single; 38.3 % aged between 20 to 25, 14.2 between 25

to 30, 19.1 between 30 to 35, 14.9 between 35 to 40, and 13.50 more than 40 years old; 17.5% of teachers with no teaching experience, 33.6% with some teaching experiences ranging from 5 to 10 years, 18.2 with 10 to 15 years, 23.8% with 15 to 20 years, and 7% with more than 20 years of teaching experiences; 69.5% had associate degree, 30.6 % bachelor degree; 56.2% worked at cities, 17.4% at town or village centers and 26.4% at villages. Teachers who taught in first grade were 18.9%, second grade 16.7%, third grade 12.2, fourth grade 7.8% and fifth grade 10%; school principal 3.3%, assistant principal 5.6%, and 25.6% were trainers.

Results of the relationship between teachers` levels of Burnout and their demographic information are presented as follows:

Gender:

Results of the t-test for independent groups are presented in table 4 (Appendix A).

As it shows: male (X= 7.4) reported higher level of powerlessness (t=3.3, p> 0.05) than women (X=6.6).

Variable	Group	Mean	Std	
Meaninglessness	Single	7.8	.21	
	Married	7.8	.18	
Powerlessness	Single	7.3	.20	2.1*
	Married	6.7	.17	
Isolation	Single	8.1	.28	
	Married	8.1	.28	
Normlessness	Single	11.6	.35	1.1
	Married	11.1	.30	

Marital status:
A t-test procedure was applied to achieve the level of burnout among the participants in regard to their marital status.

As indicated in table 5(Appendix A), a meaningful difference was reported between married and single teachers in powerlessness ($t=2.1$, $p<0.05$). Singles reported higher level of burnout in this dimension ($X=7.3$) than married ($x=6.7$).

Level of teacher education:
Results of t-test showed that no significant difference between teachers` level of burnout in respect to their academic background.

Task or Duty:
Results of ANOVA procedure indicated no significant difference in subjects` level of burnout regarding their type of duties.

Teaching experience:
Results of ANOVA confirms that no significant difference was seen in teachers` levels of burnout regarding their length of teaching experiences (5-10 years, 10-15 years, 15-20 years and over 20 years).

Working place:
Results of ANOVA procedure for the participants' levels of burnout in regard to their place of work revealed no significant difference.

Furthermore, results of ANOVA showed no significant difference between teachers burnout in regard to their place of work.

Number of children:
To achieve any possible correlation between the teachers` levels of burnout and their number of children, the Pearson Correlation Test was applied. The result confirmed a significant correlation between meaninglessness and teachers` number of children ($r=-0.21$, $p> 0.05$).

Discussion

Findings of this study show a significant difference between male and female levels of burnout in regard to their degrees of powerlessness (men gained higher level of burnout than female). This finding was supported by Grayson and Alvarez (2008) who had reported a significant difference in burnout between male and female teachers, but opposed the findings of Kokkinos (2006) and Ozan (2009), who showed no meaningful difference.

In this study male teachers displayed significantly higher burnout rate with regards to Powerlessness than their female counterpart. Furthermore, more males than their female counterpart expressed that they did not have any effect on the school's decision making process or its rules. It may be concluded that in Iran, the decision-making in education is centralized, and as such individual schools are incapable of changing the rules and regulations. Since in the Iranian culture, male teachers are historically responsible for the majority of their families' financial needs such as the cost of daily living, educational, and health care costs, etc., they may face more social and psychological pressure than their female counterparts. Also, for most women, being a teacher does not receive the first priority as responsibilities at home are seen to be more important. However for male teachers, teaching is considered the primary job. Therefore it seems that males pay closer attention to the rules and the regulations of the school system and are more aware of the rigidity and

the lack of the possibility for change in the rules and regulations in their respective schools.

There was also a significant difference in the level of burnout in relations to teachers` marital status. Single teachers showed a higher burnout on the issue of powerlessness than their married counterparts. It may be concluded that married teachers are further compounded with their extra responsibilities at home. However, since the job is the main responsibility for the single teachers, and takes a central role in their life, naturally more attention is given to the quality and the state of their occupation and therefore they more readily recognize their lack of power in the decision making process of their school due to the centralized nature of the educational system, and therefore they feel more Powerlessness.

It was also shown that teachers who displayed high level of burnout have more children. Teachers who had more children expressed a high level of meaninglessness. It may be concluded that there is a third variable, such as salary that affects the relationship between burnout and the number of children. With an increase in the number of children, the family expenses naturally increases. Since the salaries of the teachers with more children are insufficient to cover their life expenses, they more readily express the feeling that their job is meaningless. The results of this study may be generalized to elementary school teachers (both male and female) in the city of Shiraz. Applying the results to teachers at other educational levels should be done with care.

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Appendix A

Table 1. Mean, Standard deviation subscales and total score

	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Meaninglessness	3/8	1/7	.49
Powerlessness	12/7	2/9	.46
Isolation	8/02	2/4	.39
Normlessness	6/9	1/7	.25
Total	31/41	5/7	.61

Table 2. Correlation Matrix of Observational Variables (subscales and total score in Sample)

Subscales	Meaninglessness	Powerlessness	Isolation	Normlessness	Total
Meaninglessness	1				
Powerlessness	.21*	1			
Isolation	.21*	.29**	1		
Normlessness	.05	.38**	.19*	1	
Total	.50**	.80**	.68**	.59**	1

Table3: Factor Analysis by Principal Components Analysis

Items	one- factor	Two-factor	Three- factor	Four-factor
1		.58		
3		.72		
4		.54		
5		.65		
2				.58
6				.70
8	.72			
9	.76			
10			.64	
11			.65	
12			.74	

Table 4. Burnout according to Gender

Variable	Group	Mean	Std	t
Meaninglessness	Male	7.9	1.7	.434
	Female	7.8	1.6	
Powerlessness	Male	7.4	1.4	3.3**
	Female	6.6	1.7	
Isolation	Male	8.3	2.5	.830
	Female	8	2.4	
Normlessness	Male	11.5	2.7	.769
	Female	11.2	2.8	

Table 5. Burnout according to marital status 1

Variable	Group	Mean	Std	T
Meaninglessness	Single	7.8	.21	.15
	Married	7.8	.18	
Powerlessness	Single	7.3	.20	2.1*
	Married	6.7	.17	
Isolation	Single	8.1	.28	.01
	Married	8.1	.28	
Normlessness	Single	11.6	.35	1.1