

Burnout among High School Teachers in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of the present study was (a) to examine the burnout in a sample of Turkish high school teachers and (b) to test the hypothesis that Turkish teachers suffer from burnout more than the teachers in the developed countries.

Methods: All of the high schools in the city Centrum of Sivas, Turkey were contacted for this study. Turkish version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory was used in this study. Six hundred and ten questionnaires were distributed to the teachers, and 520 questionnaires were returned. The 48 questionnaires were excluded in the final analysis, because of including inconclusive and/or incomplete data.

Result: There was no statistically significant difference between the scores of sub samples according (emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation) to the gender ($p>0,05$). There was an insignificant negative correlation ($p=0,08$) between the depersonalisation and personal accomplishment in the group of female teachers. Drinking, smoking and marital status had no effect on burnout in this study sample ($p>0,05$). Less experienced Turkish teachers reported higher scores on depersonalisation ($p=0,001$).

Conclusion: Turkish teachers suffer from burnout less than that of the teachers in many developed countries.

INTRODUCTION

The most widely accepted conceptualisation of burnout

was found in the work of Maslach and Jackson (1). They defined burnout as three-dimensional syndrome consisting of emotional exhaustion, low personal accomplishment, and depersonalisation. Particularly, professionals working in human services e.g. teachers, physicians, social workers and nurses are vulnerable to burnout (2). Specifically, emotional exhaustion refers to the feelings of being emotionally drained by intense contact with other people; depersonalisation refers to the negative attitude or callous responses toward people; and reduced personal accomplishment refers to decline in one's sense of competence and of successful achievement in working with people (1, 3). In recent years, teacher's burnout has increasingly received recognition as a widespread problem (4-6) and the term has come to be used in conjunction with teachers far more often than any other occupational group. Farber (7) estimated that 30 to 35% of American teachers are dissatisfied strongly with their profession and 5 to 20% truly are burned out. Research findings suggest that, burnout and dissatisfaction with job are linked, but they are not identical constructs. Maslach and Schaufeli (8) used three hypotheses to explain the nature of that relationship; (a) burnout is associated with decreased job satisfaction (b) job dissatisfaction is associated with burnout and (c) burnout and job dissatisfaction both may be related to a third variable, such as poor working conditions. In a literature review, Kyriacou (9) pointed out the major sources of stress for teachers; poor pupil motivation in school performance, undisciplined behaviour of pupils, poor career opportunities; low income and shortage of teaching equipment, poor facilities and large classes; time pressures and short deadlines; low societal recognition of profession; conflicts with colleagues and supervisors; rapid changes in curricular demands and adaptation of scholastic programs to changes in a rapidly changing society. All of these factors are valid in the working conditions of Turkish teachers. Thus, it should be expected that Turkish teachers suffer from burnout more than the teachers in the western-developed countries. However, no research relevant to teacher's burnout in Turkey exists in the literature on burnout. The purpose of the present study was (a) to examine the burnout in a sample of Turkish high school teachers and (b) to test the hypothesis that Turkish teachers suffer from burnout more than the teachers in the developed countries.

METHOD

All of the high schools in the city Centrum of SIVAS, TURKEY were contacted for this study. Six hundred and ten questionnaires were distributed to the teachers, and 520 questionnaires were returned. The 48 questionnaires were excluded in the final analysis, because of including inconclusive and/or incomplete data. Further descriptive information about our study sample is given in Table 1. Participants were asked to fill out a background information sheet and respond to

the intensity dimension of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (22 items) (1, 10). Turkish version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was used in this study (11). Participants were requested to evaluate each item in terms of the frequency of their feelings ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (every day). The items are scored into the three components of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment. High scores of the first two scales and low scores of the last scale are indicative of burnout. Quantitative data were analysed by using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and Student- t test on Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (ver.10.0).

RESULTS

The mean burnout scores and standard deviations are shown in table 2. There was no statistically significant difference between the emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation scores of sub samples according to the gender ($p>0, 05$). In the group of male teachers; there was a statistically significant positive correlation ($p=0.00$) between the emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, a slightly negative correlation ($p=0.05$) between the emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment and a statistically significant negative correlation ($p=0.00$) between depersonalisation and personal accomplishment. In the group of female teachers; there was a positive correlation ($p=0.00$) between the emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation and a negative correlation ($p=0.019$) between the emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. However, there was an insignificant negative correlation ($p=0.08$) between the depersonalisation and personal accomplishment in the group of female teachers. Drinking, smoking and marital status had no effect on burnout in this study sample ($p>0.05$). Less experienced Turkish teachers reported higher scores on depersonalisation ($p=0.001$). The teachers who have lower income had higher scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation ($p<0.05$). However, they had similar scores on personal accomplishment ($p>0.05$) (Table 3).

DISCUSSION

This is the first study examining the burnout among a relatively large group of Turkish teachers. The mean scores and standard deviations suggest that the burnout reported by this sample of Turkish teachers was lower than the burnout of teachers in the USA (1), Italy, France (12) Netherland, Canada (13) Emirate, and Palestine (14) and in Greece (15). Thus the hypothesis of Turkish teacher suffers from burnout more than the teacher in the developed countries was rejected. We explained the low burnout scores of Turkish teachers by the on going traditional life style and cultural characteristics. There is no statistically significant difference between male and female teachers either in emotional exhaustion or in depersonalisation and

personal accomplishment. This finding is inconsistent with the finding of JE van Horn et al (13) who showed significant difference in burnout scores upon gender. For marital status, drinking alcohol and smoking; there was no statistically significant difference in burnout subscale scores ($p>0.05$). For teaching experience; no difference existed in emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment scores. However, there was statistically significant difference in depersonalisation. Opposite to Canadian and Dutch teachers (13) we found that teachers who had teaching experience more than 10 years had lower depersonalisation scores. Our hypothesis was that the teachers who had low money income they would report higher scores on burnout. This hypothesis was supported. The Turkish teachers who had low money income have high burnout scores. There is statistically significant difference in emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment and in depersonalisation scores.

In conclusion, this study produced a baseline data on burnout of Turkish teachers. Further research on teachers' burnout is required in Turkey.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of demographic variables

Measure	n	%
Min. Age; 21,		
Max. Age; 58,		
Mean Age; 34.83 ± 7.27		
Sex		
Men	321	68.0
Women	151	32.0
Total	472	100
Marital Status		
Married	395	83.7
Single	77	16.3
Total	472	100
Age Group, (years)		
20-25	37	7.8
26-30	117	24.9
31-35	126	26.7
36-40	85	18.0
41-45	59	12.1
46-50	39	8.3
51-58	9	1.9
Total	472	100
Teaching Experience, (years)		
< 3	54	11.5
4-10	176	37.5
10-15	104	22.1
16-20	62	13.2
>20	74	15.7
Total**	470	100

**As some of the participants did not answer some questions, the total number is not equal to 472.

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of Subscale Scores of Burnout Inventory

Subscale	Sex		Total
	Male n=322	Female n=150	Male+Female n=477
Emotional exhaustion	11.30±6.37	11.63±5.69	11.40±6.16
Depersonalization	4.02±3.25	3.94 ±3.68	4.0±3.38
Personal Accomplishment	22.39±4.87	21.75±4.99	22.18±4.91

Table 3: Individual Characteristics and Subscale Scores of Burnout Inventory

Individual Characteristics		n	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
Marital Status	Married	395	12.26±6.07	3.87±3.39	22.32±5.02
	Single	77	12.14±6.55	4.66±3.30	21.47±4.27
Drinking	Yes	74	11.92±7.06	4.91±3.74	22.08±5.35
	No	398	11.31±6.07	3.83±3.29	22.20±4.83
Smoking	Yes	240	10.88±5.81	4.07±3.65	22.40±4.88
	No	232	11.94±6.46	3.92±3.09	21.96±4.94
Teaching Experience, (years)	0-10	304	11.51±6.22	4.28±3.56	21.91±5.22
	10+	166	11.16±6.06	3.48±3.00*	22.65±4.27
Income	Good	32	8.88±6.39	3.09±2.25	23.47±3.85
	Moderate	239	10.76±5.74	3.75±3.12	22.30±4.86
	Low	196	12.62±6.33*	4.44±3.79*	21.80±5.09*

*p<0.05

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