

A Comparative Study of Professional Development and Burnout Processes between Iranian EFL Teachers Pursuing and Non-pursuing Post-graduation Degree

Masoumeh Moghimi¹

1. MA Alumnus of Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Iran

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between the teachers pursuing and non-pursuing post-graduation and burnout processes. To do this, 80 Iranian EFL teachers (male and female) from Tehran Universities, Schools and Institutes were selected. Before the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher gave the necessary information about the purpose of the study and how to complete the questionnaire. To address the relationship between the professional development and burnout factors, individual factors of burnout were going to be identified through Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The next step was the data analysis and data analyzed through SPSS (V.24). And for last step, they got feedback on what they answered. Findings led to the conclusion that there is a significant difference in point of view of teachers' non-pursuing post-graduation degree and teachers pursuing post-graduation degree in their burnout experience and there is a significant relationship between teachers' non-pursuing and pursuing post-graduation and burnout processes. The product of this study can help teachers inform the factors that lead them to burnout and help them improve their knowledge regarding burnout factors which they may experience while they are continuing their education and working then correct them or avoid them for better teaching and learning processes.

Key words: "Burnout", "Pursuing Post-graduation Degree".

Introduction

Teachers in any fields of study are expected to renew their related knowledge to improve their class performance. Guskey (1986) reiterated that in some cases, teachers' professional development is what is imposed to teachers by the educational administrators in order to renew their knowledge to have a high quality of education and for both teachers' own growth and their performance in the class and also for their ranking and salary raise. Moreover, "teachers as well as contributors to the development of new varieties of the English language, teach English for international intelligibility and communication, and not to reach native-like proficiency, this perception of professional competence and subject knowledge will influence their sense of competence and expertise, the way they teach, their commitment to their teaching role and their attitudes toward education change" (Moore & Hofman, 1988, pp. 110-120). This will redefine the professionalism of an effective English teachers and the way they look at themselves or their professional identity. Meanwhile being a consummate and perfect teacher depends on an effort which usually leads the teacher to a person who permanently seek knowledge for being the perfect one for his own ambitious and society's needs. This demanding job may push the teachers to what Maslach (1981) named Burnout.

There are many factors affecting any language programs. Roettger (2006) noted that "teachers' professional knowledge base is one of these important factors that can bring about greater performance of the teachers and as a result students' achievement". Teachers in any fields of study are expected to renew their related pedagogical knowledge to improve their performance and to meet their new teaching demands.

Burnout emerges when employers are exposed to a stressful working environment with high job demands (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 90). Maslach also states that "burnout is characterized by high levels of exhaustion and negative attitudes towards their work, loss of physical and emotional power and energy". Accordingly, teachers loss their energy and intuitiveness due to job diversities and exhaustion (Maslach, 1988).

Many studies have been done to explore the relationship between teachers' teaching styles, teachers' emotions and their relation with burnout, teachers' gender and burnout, teachers' permanent evaluation and burnout. Meanwhile some studies have focused on the relationship between teachers' styles and burnout processes and they found the relationships between these two variables such as (Akbari & Tavasoli, 2011) that focused on teachers' teaching styles and the relationships with burnout.

In Maslach's definition (Maslach, 1976, pp. 16-25) Burnout is as "an overly emotional fatigue resulting from overwork and inability to fulfill the responsibilities in the business age, marriage, family status, excessive involvement in job, being workaholic and personal expectations". The studies related to teachers' performance, feeling and involvement clarified the fact that there is relationship between teachers' styles and involvements and other factors which mentioned above around burnout. Since many studies focused on the relationships between teaching styles and burnout but very few if any has been done on the relationship between teachers' professional development and burnout processes and the comparison of two groups of teachers, that is, Iranian EFL Teachers Pursuing and Non-pursuing Post-graduation Degree point of view. In particular, in the light of all above –mentioned studies, the aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers 'Pursuing and Non-pursuing Post-graduation Degree. In particular, teachers' professional development and burnout and comparison of the both groups of teachers' perspective were going to be focused in this study.

Significance of the Study

In this study, the researcher hoped to find a way to help teachers inform the factors that lead them to burnout and help them improve their knowledge regarding burnout factors which they may experience while they are continuing their education and working then correct them or avoid them for better teaching and learning processes. This study strongly believed that still there was an untouched area in this field that was investigating the relationship between the teachers pursuing and non-pursuing post-graduation and burnout processes in Iranian EFL teachers in Iran.

Research Hypothesis

H01: There is no significant relationship between teachers pursuing and non-pursuing post-graduation and burnout processes.

H02: There is no any significant difference in point of view of teachers pursuing post-graduation degree and teachers non-pursuing post-graduation degree in their burnout experience.

Method

EFL Teachers at Universities and Institutions were the participants who would participate in current study. The participants of the study consisted of 80 Iranian EFL teachers (male and female), that is, 40 Pursuing post-graduation degree and 40 non-pursuing post-graduation degree teachers. Their age range was from 26-45 and they selected from Tehran Universities, Schools and Institutes. The instrument which utilized by the study was namely Maslach questionnaire. First all participants received an invitation to participate by an E-mail, furthermore, it mentioned in the E-mail that the participation would be on a voluntary basis. Secondly, teachers took the test in the universities within the normal hours of their educational program, moreover, the ones who would not have time, the researcher sent them via E-mail. Thirdly, before the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher gave the necessary information about the purpose of the study and how to complete the questionnaire. It discussed for the participants that the data would be used for the research purpose. Forth step was the complete elaboration of what they were going to do and what was going to be the goal of the current study, furthermore, they were informed that they can stop their participation and collaboration with this study with no consequences. For the next step to address the relationship between the professional development and burnout factors, individual factors of burnout were going to be identified through Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The instructions were clear enough in order to assure that they know how to answer the items. The next step was the data analysis and data analyzed through SPSS (V.24). And for last step, they got feedback on what they answered.

Results Discussion

Bryman and Cramer (2009) state that the internal reliability of the questionnaire is estimated using Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha reliability indices, as appeared in Table 4.1, for its components, i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were 0.82, 0.77, and 0.79 respectively in a pilot study conducted with 35 EFL teachers sharing almost similar features with the main sample of this study. "Considering that reliability coefficient of .70 or above is acceptable in research on social sciences, all instruments of this study have good indicators of internal reliability".

Table 1- Reliability Statistics for Components of Teachers' Burnout Questionnaire

Test	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Exhaustion	9	.823
Depersonalization	6	.774
Personal Accomplishment	7	.792

A factor analysis through varimax rotation was conducted to the underlying construct of the teachers' burnout questionnaire consisting of 22 items (Table 4.2) in the pilot study. To confirm that our data was suitable for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) value and Bartlett's test were checked. KMO value turned out to be .826, which was beyond .70. And Bartlett's test was significant ($p = .000$, $p < .05$). Therefore, factor analysis was appropriate.

The SPSS extracted three factors and explained 42.37 of variance: F1: Exhaustion (9 items, $\alpha = 0.823$), F2: Depersonalization (6 items, $\alpha = 0.774$), and F3: Personal Accomplishment (7 items, $\alpha = 0.792$). Seven-point Likert scales were used for each statement, ranging from "1" (Never) to "7" (Every day).

Table 2-Total Variance Explained (Teachers' Burnout Questionnaire)

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums
	Total	of Variance	Cumulative	Total	of Variance	Cumulative	Total
Exhaustion	5.814	26.428	26.429	5.814	26.428	26.429	4.428
Depersonalization	1.890	8.592	35.021	1.890	8.592	35.021	2.696
Personal Accomplishment	1.618	7.354	42.375	1.618	7.354	42.375	4.204

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Investigation of the First Research Question

The first research question examined whether there is a significant difference among teachers' non-pursuing and pursuing post-graduation with respect to their burnout experience. A one-way multivariate ANOVA (1-way MANOVA) was performed to answer this research question. Before discussing the results of inferential statistics, the descriptive statistics were computed "Table 3". A quick look at "Table 3" reveals that the means of "Exhaustion" ($\bar{x} = 31.60$, $SD = 10.03$) and "Personal Accomplishment" ($\bar{x} = 38.30$, $SD = 8.64$) for the pursuing group are higher than the means of "Exhaustion" ($\bar{x} = 26.58$, $SD = 6.29$) and "Personal Accomplishment" ($\bar{x} = 32.18$, $SD = 5.82$) in non-pursuing one. But, "Table 3" reflects that the mean of "Depersonalization" for the non-pursuing group ($\bar{x} = 18.03$, $SD = 5.63$) is greater than the pursuing one ($\bar{x} = 14.20$, $SD = 5.79$).

Table 3-Descriptive Statistics of Burnout Factors for the Pursuing and Non-Pursuing Teacher Groups

Factor	Teacher Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Exhaustion	Non-Pursuing	26.58	6.295	40
	Pursuing	31.60	10.028	40
	Total	29.09	8.695	80
Depersonalization	Non-Pursuing	18.03	5.627	40
	Pursuing	14.20	5.792	40
	Total	16.11	5.992	80

	Non-Pursuing	32.18	5.825	40
Personal Accomplishment	Pursuing	38.30	8.642	40
	Total	35.24	7.945	80

As laid out in “Table 4”, the assumptions of homogeneity of variances are met ($p > .05$) for “Depersonalization” and “Personal accomplishment” factors, however, it is violated ($p < .05$) for “Exhaustion” factor.

Table 4-Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

Factor	<i>F</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Exhaustion	8.705	1	78	.004
Depersonalization	.127	1	78	.723
Personal accomplishment	2.848	1	78	.096

“Table 5”below manifests that the assumption of homogeneity of covariance is not violated (Box’s $M = 19.20$, $F = 3.06$, $p < .05$). As Pallant (2010) points out, when you have violated the homogeneity of covariance assumption, it is recommended that you set a more stringent significance level (e.g., .01) for evaluating the results. Hence, the results of this study were analyzed at (0.1) level of significance.

Table 5-Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

Box's M	19.198
F	3.065
df1	6
df2	44080.302
Sig.	.005

According to the results given in “Table 6”below, multivariate tests showed that there is a statistically significant difference in teacher burnout between the two pursuing and non-pursuing *Groups* (Wilks' Lambda = .65; $F(3, 76) = 13.61$; $p = .000$; $p < .01$; Partial $\eta^2 = .35$ representing a moderate effect size based on Cohen’s guidelines (1988, pp. 284-7)).

Table 6-Multivariate Tests (One-way MANOVA) for Burnout in the Pursuing and Non-Pursuing Teacher Groups

	Effect	Value	<i>F</i>	Hypothesis <i>df</i>	Error <i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.981	1276.254 ^a	3.000	76.000	.000	.981
	Wilks' Lambda	.019	1276.254 ^a	3.000	76.000	.000	.981
	Hotelling's Trace	50.378	1276.254 ^a	3.000	76.000	.000	.981
	Roy's Largest Root	50.378	1276.254 ^a	3.000	76.000	.000	.981
Group	Pillai's Trace	.349	13.608 ^a	3.000	76.000	.000	.349
	Wilks' Lambda	.651	13.608 ^a	3.000	76.000	.000	.349
	Hotelling's Trace	.537	13.608 ^a	3.000	76.000	.000	.349
	Roy's Largest Root	.537	13.608 ^a	3.000	76.000	.000	.349

“Table 7” below further explores each factor individually (Tests of between-subjects effects).

Table 7-Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Burnout Factors for the Pursuing and Non-Pursuing Teacher Groups

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Group	Exhaustion	505.013	1	505.013	7.205	.009	.085
	Depersonalization	292.613	1	292.613	8.974	.004	.103
	Personal accomplishment	750.313	1	750.313	13.815	.000	.150
Error	Exhaustion	5467.375	78	70.095			
	Depersonalization	2543.375	78	32.607			
	Personal accomplishment	4236.175	78	54.310			
Total	Exhaustion	73659.000	80				
	Depersonalization	23605.000	80				
	Personal accomplishment	104321.000	80				

As evident from “Table 7”, tests of between-subjects effects indicated teachers in all three factor of burnout i.e., “Exhaustion” ($p = .009, p < .01$), “Depersonalization” ($p = .004, p < .01$), and Personal accomplishment ($p = .000, p < .01$) differ significantly considering pursuing and non-pursuing post-graduation ($p < .01$). As a result, the first null hypothesis of the current study that states, “There is no significant difference in point of view of teachers’ non-pursuing post-graduation degree and teachers pursuing post-graduation degree in their burnout experience.” Is rejected and claimed that there is a significant difference in point of view of teachers’ non-pursuing post-graduation degree and teachers pursuing post-graduation degree in their burnout experience. In order to display the results graphically, a Bar Graph “Figure 1” was drawn. “Figure 1” shows that the means of “Exhaustion” and “Personal Accomplishment” for the pursuing teachers are greater than the non-pursuing one, nonetheless, the mean of “Depersonalization” for the non-pursuing teachers is higher than the pursuing ones.

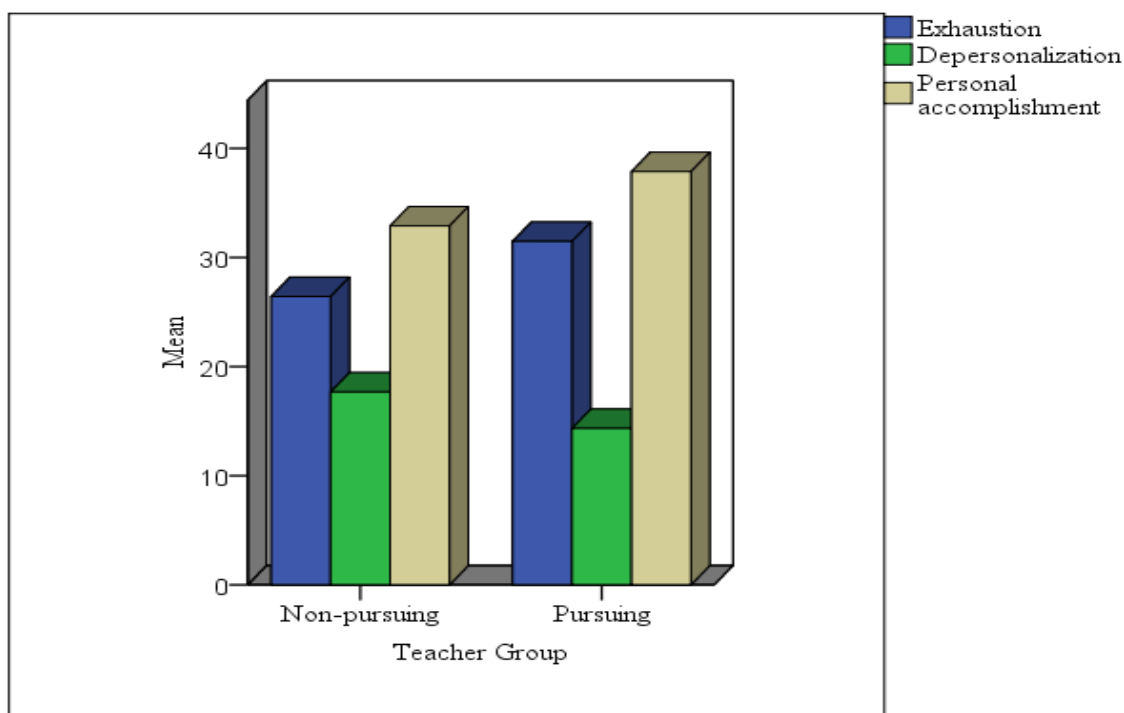


Figure (1) Bar Graph of Burnout Factors for the Pursuing and Non-Pursuing Teacher Groups

Investigation of the Second Research Question

The second research question of this study concerned with the relationship between the teachers’ non-pursuing and pursuing post-graduation and burnout processes. Spearman correlation coefficient was conducted to investigate the second research question. “Table 8” summarizes the results of this analysis.

Table 8-Spearman Correlation between Non-Pursuing and Pursuing Post-Graduation and Burnout Processes

		Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal accomplishment
Non-pursuing & pursuing post-graduation	Correlation Coefficient	.239*	-.296*	.383**
	Spearman's rho			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	.010	.000

N 80 80 80

Spearman correlation “Table 8” found a positive significant relationship between non-pursuing and pursuing and post-graduation and teachers' burnout at the significance level of $.000 < .05$, with high levels of pursuing post-graduation correlated with high levels of exhaustion ($r = .24, n = 80$) and personal accomplishment ($r = .38, n = 80$), and low level of depersonalization ($r = -.30, n = 80$). Also, the correlation coefficient were beyond the Critical values of Correlation Coefficient ($r = .22, n = 80$); accordingly, the second null hypothesis of the current study stating that “There is no significant relationship between teachers' non-pursuing and pursuing post-graduation and burnout processes” is rejected. Thus we could claim that there is a significant relationship between teachers' non-pursuing and pursuing post-graduation and burnout processes. Different authors interpret the value of correlation differently; nonetheless, Cohen (1998, pp.79-81) suggests the following guidelines “Table 9”.

Table 9-Value of Correlation (Cohen, 1998)

Value of Correlation	Correlation Coefficient
Small	$r = .10$ to $.29$
Medium	$r = .30$ to $.49$
Large	$r = .50$ to 1.0

In this study, the correlations between teachers' non-pursuing and pursuing post-graduation and depersonalization ($r = -.30$) and personal accomplishment ($r = .38$) are medium, but the correlation between teachers' non-pursuing and pursuing post-graduation and exhaustion ($r = .24$) is weak.

The current study aimed at investigating the relationship between the teachers pursuing and non-pursuing post-graduation and burnout processes. To do so, two null hypotheses were stated. The first null hypothesis of the study proposed that there is no significant difference in point of view of teachers' non-pursuing post-graduation degree and teachers pursuing post-graduation degree in their burnout experience. Tests of between-subjects effects of MANOVA revealed that teachers in all three factor of burnout i.e., “Exhaustion” ($p = .009, p < .01$), “Depersonalization” ($p = .004, p < .01$), and Personal accomplishment ($p = .000, p < .01$) differ significantly regarding pursuing and non-pursuing post-graduation ($p < .01$). Accordingly, the first null hypothesis was rejected.

The second null hypothesis predicted that there is no significant relationship between teachers' non-pursuing and pursuing post-graduation and burnout processes. Spearman correlation detected a positive significant relationship between non-pursuing and pursuing and post-graduation and teachers' burnout at the significance level of $.000 < .05$, with high levels of pursuing post-graduation correlated with high levels of exhaustion ($r = .24, n = 80$) and personal accomplishment ($r = .38, n = 80$), and low level of depersonalization ($r = -.30, n = 80$); thus, the researcher could reject the second null hypothesis as well. In fact it was uncovered that here is a significant positive relationship between teachers' non-pursuing and pursuing post-graduation and burnout processes.

Our results are in line with Wang and Guo's (2010) study in which they found significant correlation between occupational stress, teacher burnout and mental health. Burned-out teachers tend to be irritable at home and in class, suffering from anxiety and feelings of powerlessness, accompanied by physical discomfort such as chronic fatigue, headaches, insomnia, shingles and heart palpitations (Howard & Johnson, 2004, p.400). They feel cynical and adopt a cold, distant, depersonalized attitude towards their job and the students, tending to

minimize their involvement at work and abandon their ideals, losing the confidence to make a difference professionally (Freeman, 2000, p.605). They are prone to lose their goals, will and energy, to have less enthusiasm for their work and to exhibit a decreased level of teaching performance (Kim et al., 2009, p.476).

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between the teachers' professional development and burnout processes according to Iranian EFL Teachers' perspective Pursuing and Non-pursuing Post-graduation Degree. 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.

Results from the present study were consistent and with some previous research findings (Komba&Nkumbi, 2008; Lier, 2002; Wharton, 2003; Yadav, 2011) which showed that teachers benefited from professional development activities both as educators and as individuals.

And also results were in contrast with some research findings such as Cihan (2011) and Kale (2007) that stated depending on the status of education a significant difference has not been detected in subscales of "emotional exhaustion", "depersonalization" and "personal accomplishment". Physical education teachers are willing to improve themselves apart from their academic life, and many of them attend to coaching courses, refereeing courses and various seminars so these may be the reasons why they do not experience burnout.

Kurtlar (2009), in his study, has not detected a significant difference in the burnout levels of physical education teachers according to the age in terms of each of the three subscales. Baysal (1995), based on the results of his research in which he analyses the factors that affect burnout in profession among high school and equivalent school teachers; has identified a significant relationship between age and burnout. He has detected that teachers are more risky especially for the first five years of the profession for burnout.

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