THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EFL TEACHERS' BURNOUT AND THEIR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

(Research article)

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' burnout and their classroom management. The study adopted mixed methods research design. The participants comprised randomly selected 43 English language teachers from different foundation universities at different ages and with different teaching experiences in Turkey. The data of this descriptive survey study was collected via the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator's survey developed by Maslach et al. (1996) and a semi- structured interview questions as a qualitative tool were used in order to gain deeper insights. The obtained data were measured by statistics program (SPSS). The findings were discussed in the light of the relevant literature and research findings offered some implications for EFL teachers. The results have implied a positive correlation between burnout among EFL teachers and their efficacy in classroom management. As burnout levels rise, the challenges associate with classroom management also increase. The stressful situations highlighted by teachers are likely to complicate the teaching process, particularly in terms of classroom management, as they embark on their teaching duties.

Keywords: Teacher burnout, classroom management, EFL teachers, efficacy

1. Introduction

The occurrence of educator burnout represents a prevailing global concern, indicating a persistent state marked by sustained physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion resulting from prolonged stress intrinsic to the teaching profession. The challenging aspects of teaching, such as heavy workloads, time constraints, administrative pressures, difficult student behaviors, and limited resources, contribute significantly to this phenomenon.

Manifesting through symptoms like fatigue, irritability, cynicism, diminished job satisfaction, feelings of helplessness, and reduced classroom effectiveness, burnout poses a substantial threat to teachers' passion and enthusiasm, ultimately affecting their overall well-being and professional performance. Various factors contribute to teacher burnout, including overwhelming workloads, extensive time spent on lesson preparation, grading, and administrative duties. The emotional labor involved in addressing diverse student needs, managing challenging behaviors, and meeting parental expectations further intensifies the toll. Inadequate resources, insufficient support from administrators, and a sense of undervaluation compound the issue, with consequences extending beyond individual educators to impact teacher-student relationships, instructional quality, and classroom engagement.

Addressing teacher burnout necessitates a comprehensive approach. Educational institutions should prioritize strategies that include promoting work-life balance, providing professional development opportunities, cultivating a positive and supportive school culture,

and offering resources dedicated to stress management and self-care. Creating an environment where teachers feel valued and respected is crucial in mitigating burnout's effects. Additionally, teachers themselves can take proactive measures by practicing self-care, establishing boundaries, seeking social support, and participating in activities that renew their energy and passion for teaching. Recognizing burnout signs and seeking assistance when needed are essential for maintaining overall well-being. Ongoing collaborative efforts between educators, administrators, policymakers, and the education community are imperative to effectively address teacher burnout. Prioritizing teacher well-being is key to establishing healthier, more sustainable teaching environments that foster student success and flourishing educators.

The phenomenon of teacher burnout is characterized by a persistent, multidimensional, negative attitude towards the teaching profession within a school environment, affecting a significant number of educators (Fernet, Guay, Senécal, & Austin, 2012). The association between individuals and their professional involvement may at times deviate, culminating in what is termed as "burnout" (Maslach et al., 2001).

The term "burnout", being a syndrome, has been defined by Maslach in 1982, as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal achievement. Many research points out that burnout causes fatigue and negatively influenced working attitude, which reduces the quality of education. Among many other factors, burnout is also a crucial one in deteriorating language teachers' practice. (Javadi, Khatib 2014). Furthermore, Azeem (2010) considers burnout as an essential factor that impedes instructors' efficacy, efficiency, and job involvement. We look at the data supporting the idea that not having an effective classroom management might predict teacher burnout.

Another crucial factor that frequently contributes to successful teaching and learning is the proficiency in classroom management (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). This skill encompasses activities designed to structure and lead classes towards the attainment of significant objectives. Barton et al. (1998) similarly emphasized the necessity of classroom discipline to render the class conducive to active learning. Failure to establish effective classroom management may compromise the learning and teaching processes, undermining the efficacy of meticulously planned lessons due to students' misbehavior.

2. Literature Review

The connection between teacher burnout and classroom management efficacy holds significant implications for a teacher's ability to successfully oversee their classroom. When teachers experience burnout, characterized by emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion, it can diminish their overall job satisfaction and engagement, consequently affecting their proficiency in classroom management. Teacher burnout typically stems from a combination of factors, including excessive workloads, inadequate resources, high student demands, and limited support. In the face of overwhelming stress and emotional fatigue, maintaining a positive and structured learning environment becomes challenging. This challenge manifests

in difficulties implementing consistent rules, routines, and consequences, leading to disruptions and decreased student engagement.

Moreover, burnout can impede a teacher's capacity to establish robust teacher-student relationships, a pivotal aspect of effective classroom management. These relationships cultivate trust and respect between teachers and students, contributing to a smoother flow of instruction and discipline. When teachers are burnt out, establishing and sustaining these connections becomes arduous, further compromising their effectiveness in managing the classroom.

Conversely, when teachers feel energized, motivated, and supported, their proficiency in classroom management tends to excel. They can adeptly employ strategies to engage students, establish clear expectations, and foster a positive learning atmosphere. Addressing burnout and prioritizing self-care can empower teachers to enhance their well-being, subsequently improving their classroom management skills. Recognizing the significance of teacher well-being and implementing resources and support systems to address burnout is crucial for ensuring effective classroom management. Schools and educational institutions play a pivotal role in creating an environment conducive to supporting teachers' mental health, providing professional development opportunities, and promoting a healthy work-life balance.

Teachers engage in daily interactions with students, their parents, and administration. According to Wood and McCarthy (2002), dealing with children, their parents, administrators, and difficulties on a regular basis can make teachers fatigued and burn out. Therefore, Maslach et al. (2001) state that the center of caregiving and service jobs, where the roots of burnout study can be found, is the interaction between provider and recipient. Brophy (1998) points out that effective teaching requires strong classroom management abilities. Maintaining a learning environment that promotes constructive interaction, access to instruction, and improved student accomplishment is the aim of classroom management.

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' burnout and their classroom management efficacy. Based on this aim, the research questions have been formulated as in the following;

- Do participants feel burnout and how is the level of burnout?

- Are there any significant relationships between three dimensions of burnout?

- Is there any relationship between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' burnout and their classroom management efficacy?

3. Methodology

The study adopted mixed methods research design based on both quantitative and qualitative data. Other details of the study are as in the following.

3.1.Participants

This study includes randomly selected 43 English language teachers who have different experiences and different ages at different foundation universities in Turkey.

3.2.Data Collection

It consists of the mixed type of research including the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator's Survey developed by Maslach et al. (1996) as a quantitative tool and a semi-structured interview as a qualitative tool. The findings of quantitative data are measured by SPSS program and the findings of qualitative data are elicited through using semi-structured questions to help the researchers in order to gain deeper insights.

4. Findings

4.1. Quantitative

In this study a total of 43 participants were observed. 86% of the sample is female and 14% is male. The mean age is 39,7 with a standard deviation of 9,7. They have been surveyed by using the Maslach Burnout Inventory as 7-point scale. There are a total of 22 items in the scale measure three dimensions: EE, DP and PA. Each dimension constitutes the total score of the related items. Descriptive statistics for each dimension are given in the table below.

Table 1. Scores of EE, DP and PA

Dimensions	Number of items	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional- exhaustion	9	22,00	45,00	29,8140	4,17621
Depersonalization	5	4,00	19,00	10,8372	4,95182
Personal accomplishment assignment	8	22,00	49,00	34,6744	6,55279

EE includes 9 items and the least and highest possible total scores are respectively 9 (1*9) and 63 (7*9). The mean score of participants is approximately 30 ±4,2 and represents a moderate EE level.

DP includes 5 items and the least and highest possible total scores are respectively 5 (1*5) and 35 (7*5). The mean score of participants is approximately 11 ±5,0 which was considered low. PA includes 8 items and the least and highest possible total scores are respectively 8 (1*8) and 56 (7*8). The mean score of participants is approximately 35 ±6,6 and also represents a moderate PA level.

*To see the relationship between three dimensions, a Pearson correlation analysis is used and the results are given in the table below.

Table 2. The relationship between three dimensions

Correlations

		emotional_ exhaustion	Depersonal- ization	Personal accomplish- ment assignment
Emotional- exhaustion	Pearson Correlation	1	,308[*]	,347[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,044	,022
	N	43	43	43
Depersonalization	Pearson Correlation	,308[*]	1	-,400[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,044		,008
	N	43	43	43
Personal accomplishment assignment	Pearson Correlation	,347[*]	-,400[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,022	,008	
	N	43	43	43

There is a positive and significant relationship between EE and DP (r=0,31, p=0,044<0,05). EE and DP increase together. There is a positive and significant relationship between EE and PA (r=0,35, p=0,022<0,05). EE and PA increase together. There is a negative and significant relationship between DP and PA (r=-0,40, p=0,008<0,05). When DP increases, PA decreases.

4.2.Qualitative

The data for the qualitative phase were collected through semi-structured, uninterrupted interviews. Each interview took about 30 minutes. Digital voice recording was used upon the consent of each participant and data were transcribed verbatim.

The first step in qualitative data analysis is to determine the basic concepts to obtain findings from raw data. This process is often called coding or content analysis, which is based on in-depth examination of the data.

The procedure is followed by dividing the data into meaningful parts. As qualitative analysis is often directed at achieving comprehensive and deep understanding of a phenomenon and deals with massive amounts of data, researchers need to gain familiarity by reading and rereading the whole data set (Patton, 2014). This recurrent reading of the raw data helps us to obtain the essence of the data and to move beyond superficial deductions. Then, it is applied to organize the data set based on emerging meaningful parts. Lastly, we revealed the documentation of the findings. They are as in the following.

The responses indicate the existence of diverse factors contributing to teachers' experience of burnout.

Interview content analysis- general outline

Burnout reasons;

-online courses

-other roles for example being mother, being master or Ph.D. students

-the problems having with colleagues

-teaching difficult topics

- writing courses

-reading the theses and homework of students

-long working hours

-having panic of students about passing or failing of exams

-decrease in students' motivation and concentration

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The objective of this study is to examine the correlation between burnout experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and their proficiency in classroom management. Additionally, this research makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature on teacher burnout by exploring its connection with classroom management. The findings suggest a positive relationship between burnout among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and their effectiveness in classroom management. The findings reported in the studies conducted by Brouwers and Tomic (2000) and Friedman and Farber (1992) highlight analogous issues. They assert that teachers perceiving themselves as less competent in classroom management exhibit a higher level of burnout compared to their colleagues who harbor greater confidence in their efficacy. As burnout levels rise, the challenges associated with classroom management also increase. Furthermore, a notable and positive correlation is discernible between emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and the perceived sense of personal accomplishment in teaching assignments. It states that teacher burnout can be caused by different affects such as working conditions, lack of support from environment, professional experience or number of students, lack of sources, levels of students, misbehaviors of students, and relationship with colleagues (Abel & Sewell, 1999; van Dick & Wagner, 2001). We also observed a significant and negative correlation between depersonalization and the sense of personal accomplishment in teaching assignments. According to study of Brouwers and Tomic's (2000) emotional exhaustion influenced teacher efficacy and increased their burnout while efficacy influenced depersonalization and personal accomplishment.

The present investigation conducted in Turkey has unveiled a potential correlation between the emotional burnout experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors and their effectiveness in classroom management. The findings derived from the correlational analysis indicated a statistically significant and inversely proportional relationship between instructors' proficiency in classroom management and the levels of burnout they experienced. Furthermore, the results suggested that the three constituents of burnout, namely Depersonalization (DP), reduced Personal Accomplishment (PA), and Emotional Exhaustion (EE), possess the capacity to significantly forecast the efficacy of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in classroom management

A noteworthy revelation pertains to the observed negative and statistically significant relationship between depersonalization and the attribution of personal accomplishment. As depersonalization intensifies, there is a concomitant decrease in personal accomplishment. This implies that educators may frequently encounter a perception of diminished control over their thoughts or actions, and heightened depersonalization adversely influences their capacity to achieve a sense of personal accomplishment.

Furthermore, despite the findings indicating a moderate level of burnout among teachers, insights from semi-structured interviews revealed that EFL teachers expressed concerns about various factors. These included challenges associated with online courses, additional roles such as being a mother or pursuing a master's or Ph.D., interpersonal issues with colleagues, teaching complex topics, reviewing theses and student homework, extended working hours, dealing with students' exam-related anxiety, and a decline in students' motivation and concentration—commonly recognized as triggers for burnout. Over the long term, these stressors have the potential to elevate teachers' burnout levels. The stressful situations highlighted by teachers are likely to complicate the teaching process, particularly in terms of classroom management, as they embark on their teaching duties.

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