

Job Burnout in Public and Special School Teachers

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The purpose of this research was to compare job burnout among public and special school teachers. The statistical population of this research consisted of all public and special school teachers in Jahrom, Iran. Of these teachers, 84 (42 public school teachers and 42 special school teachers) were selected as the study sample. Special school teachers and public school teachers were chosen using convenience sampling and multistage random sampling methods, respectively. The Maslach Burnout Inventory was used to measure job burnout. The collected data were analyzed by multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The results revealed that job burnout subscales (except for the Low sense of personal accomplishment), were higher among the special school teachers compared to those of the public school teachers ($p < 0,001$), but there was no significant difference between male and female in terms of job burnout subscales ($p = 0,99$). According to the findings of this study, it is suggested that the Ministry of Education take steps to prevent special schools' teachers job burnout by raising the level of services at their workplaces.

Keywords: job burnout, teachers, public schools, special schools.

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Эмоциональное выгорание на работе среди учителей государственных и специальных школ

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Целью данного исследования было сравнение эмоциональное выгорания на работе среди учителей государственных и специальных школ. В исследовании приняли участие все учителя государственных и специальных школ в Джахроне, Иран. Выборка состояла из 84 учителей (42 учителя государственных школ и 42 — специальных школ). Учителя обоих видов школ были отобраны с использованием методов удобной выборки и многоэтапной случайной выборки. Опросник выгорания К. Маслач использовался для измерения выгорания на работе. Собранные данные были проанализированы с помощью многомерного дисперсионного анализа (MANOVA). Результаты показали, что значения субшкалы выгорания на работе (за исключением Редукции профессиональных достижений) были статистически выше среди учителей специальных школ по сравнению с учителями государственных школ ($p < 0,001$), но не было статистически значимой разницы между мужчинами и женщинами по субшкале выгорания на работе ($p = 0,99$). По результатам данного исследования Министерству образования Ирана предлагается принять меры для предотвращения профессионального выгорания учителей специальных школ за счет повышения уровня услуг на их рабочих местах.

Ключевые слова: профессиональное выгорание, учителя, государственные школы, спецшколы.

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Introduction

On the one hand, teaching is one of the most stressful jobs, and, on the other hand, long-term stress can lead to burnout [35]. Gluschkoff et al. [17] defined burnout as a chronic psychological syndrome that occurs in response to prolonged work-related stress. In fact, burnout includes Emotional exhaustion (a strong feeling of tiredness at work), Depersonalization (negative and pessimistic attitudes toward one's job), and Low sense of personal accomplishment (negative evaluation of one's job performance [16; 26–28]).

Research shows that students' characteristics at school can lead to teacher burnout and that teacher burnout, in turn, can lead to a decline in the quality of teaching and poor academic performance in students [7; 30]. Furthermore, studies have shown that in addition to the characteristics of students, various other factors, such as teachers' gender and school type (public vs. special), can affect teachers' burnout [22; 30].

In general, research findings on job burnout among special school teachers compared to public school teachers are conflicting and inconsistent. For example, some studies have

shown that the rate of burnout among special school teachers is higher than that of public school teachers [1; 2; 6; 12; 18–20; 22; 30; 40]. However, some studies have reported that there is no significant difference between teachers in special schools and teachers in public schools in terms of teacher burnout [4; 6; 46]; and some studies have shown that the burnout rate among public school teachers is higher than that of special school teachers [1; 3; 8; 41].

Furthermore, studies on the role of gender in teacher burnout are at variance with each other. For example, some studies have shown that job burnout is more prevalent among female teachers than male teachers [9; 25]. Contrary to these studies, some studies have reported that male teachers experience higher levels of job burnout than do female teachers [5; 8; 9; 14; 20; 31; 34; 35; 44]. However, these studies are not supported by some other studies that have shown no significant difference between male and female teachers in terms of job burnout [5; 10; 13; 32; 33; 42; 43; 45].

Therefore, it can be stated that there is conflicting evidence about the role that sex plays in the differences between public and special school teachers regarding their job burnout [5; 10; 22; 33; 35]. Since the beginning of research on teacher burnout, various studies have referred to demographic variables, such as sex, as key factors that can account for the differences between the teachers regarding their job burnout. Nevertheless, the results of research in this area do not allow us to draw definite and clear conclusions regarding the role of sex in burnout and its subscales, including Emotional Exhaustion, Low sense of personal accomplishment, and Depersonalization [28; 35]. Although job burnout syndrome and the role of demographic factors, such as sex, have been considered and investigated among different teachers in several studies, including those of Schwarzer and Hallum [38], Schalvik and Schalvik [41], Liorrens, Bakker, Schaufeli & Salanova [24], it is not clear how these factors affect burnout in public and special school teachers.

Several studies have shown that burnout negatively impacts on school teachers [26; 30; 37]. According to these studies, the effect of burnout on teachers was that they spent less time teaching students. In addition, burnout can lead to fatigue in teachers, threaten their mental health, reduce their interest in out-of-school entertainment, decrease their productivity at school, and give rise to negative attitudes towards their performance [30]. For example, the results of a study by Schaufeli and Enzman [35] showed that burnout was associated with Emotional Exhaustion, Low sense of personal accomplishment, and Depersonalization. They also found that long-term burnout could cause job stress. Moreover, Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen, and Christensen [21] stated that burnout was a dynamic process negatively influenced teachers' personal life, their performance at work, and their communication with students.

Given that the detrimental effects of burnout have been widely documented in the literature, it is imperative to raise awareness among education officials regarding this issue and persuade them to provide school teachers with the conditions and facilities that can reduce their stress and burnout. Therefore, the present study is significant since its findings can heighten awareness among decision-makers and officials in the area of education. In addition, the present study was conducted to help education officials to design and develop educational programs that can increase the flexibility and efficiency of teachers in both public and special schools. In brief, the negative effects of job burnout on teachers' performance, the contradictory findings regarding the role of sex in job burnout among

public and special school teachers, and the limited studies available in this area of research highlight the significance of the present study. Therefore, the present study aimed at comparing teachers, both male and female teachers, in public and special schools in terms of job burnout. Thus, this study sought to address the following research question:

Is there any significant difference between male and female teachers working in public and special schools regarding the subscales of job burnout?

Materials and Methods

Population, sample, and sampling method. The design of the present study was causal-comparative. In this study, the statistical population consisted of all public and special school teachers in Jahrom, Fars Province, Iran, of which a sample of 84 teachers, including 42 public school teachers and 42 special school teachers, were selected. Due to the small number of special school teachers, they were selected through convenience sampling method while the public school teachers were selected through multi-stage random sampling method. The sample characteristics of the teachers of special schools and teachers of public schools are presented in Table 1. There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of the mean age (by independent t-test), sex (by Chi-squared test), educational level (by Chi-squared test), and work experience (by Chi-squared test).

Table 1

Sample characteristics for teachers of special schools and teachers of public schools

	Teachers of Special Schools (n=42)	Teachers of General Schools (n=42)	Sig.
Mean age (SD) (years)	40,64 (6,40)	39,19 (9,35)	t=0,831, p=0,409
Range (years)	24–57	23–52	–
Male (female) of teachers	19 (23)	20 (22)	$\chi^2=0,480$, p=0,827
educational level (%): <MA(>MA)	28 (14)	31 (11)	$\chi^2=0,513$, p=0,474
work experience (%): <15 years(>15 years)	23 (19)	20 (22)	$\chi^2=1,750$, p=0,186

Notes. MA — Master of Arts.

Instrument. Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was used to measure job burnout in this study. This scale was developed by Maslach [28]. MBI includes 22 items that measure Emotional exhaustion (9 items), Depersonalization (5 items), and Low sense of personal accomplishment (8 items) in workplaces. The scoring of items in MBI is based on a 5-point scale. The respondents can choose one of the five options available, including *strongly agree*,

agree, not certain, disagree, strongly disagree, to expresses their feelings towards the items of the inventory. Maslach and Jackson [26] calculated the reliability of this test using Cronbach's alpha for each of the subscales of this questionnaire and obtained the following coefficients: Emotional exhaustion, 0,90; Depersonalization, 0,79; and Low sense of personal accomplishment, 0,71. The validity of three factors of MBI has been confirmed [36]. By correlating MBI with Psychophysiological Symptoms Checklist (PSC) concurrent validity coefficients in the range 0,1–0,36 were obtained [11]. In Iran, Sepehri Shamloo et al. [39] calculated the reliability of this test using Cronbach's alpha for each of the subscales of this questionnaire and obtained the following coefficients: Emotional exhaustion, 0,79; Depersonalization, 0,85; and Low sense of personal accomplishment, 0,87. Sepehri Shamloo et al. [39] reported the interclass correlation coefficient 0,87, which indicated good test-retest reliability ($r=0,87$, $p<0,01$). The construct validity of the scale was obtained using exploratory factor analysis, showing 3 factors with Eigen values greater than 1. In confirmatory factor analysis, the original three-factor model of MBI was adequate [39]. In this study, the internal consistency of the scale was evaluated by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient; the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0,75 for Emotional exhaustion, 0,71 for Depersonalization, and 0,73 for the Low sense of personal accomplishment.

Procedure. After obtaining the necessary approvals to conduct this research and a letter of recommendation, the researchers referred to the special schools authorized by Jahrom Education Department and invited all teachers working in these schools to participate in this research. In the end, 42 questionnaires completed by special school teachers were collected. It is worth noting that special school teachers were chosen using the convenience sampling method. Furthermore, teachers from public schools were selected through multi-stage random sampling. Actually, for selecting the teachers from public schools, the list of schools in Jahrom was prepared, and randomly four schools for girls (two high and two elementary schools) and four schools for boys (two high and two elementary schools) were selected. Teachers in these schools were randomly selected. The teachers were asked to participate in the study if they wished, and a total of 42 questionnaires were collected. It should be noted that the participants individually completed the paper and pencil version of MBI at school, which took about 15 minutes. It is worth mentioning that demographic information was added at the beginning of the questionnaire, and the respondents first filled in the demographic information such as age, gender, and then answered the questionnaire items.

Statistical processing. Data analysis was performed by MANOVA method using SPSS software version 22.

Ethical Considerations. Public and special school teachers gave consent for their participation in this study. The participants were aware of the purpose of the study, and they had the right to leave the study at any time. They were assured that all their information would remain confidential. The ethical review board of the Education Department of Jahrom in Fars Province in Iran approved the study.

Results

The mean score and standard deviation for job burnout and its subscales based on sex differences are presented in Table 2. It is worth noting that the results of the Kolmogorov–

Smirnov test showed that the data were normal in all three variables of Emotional exhaustion ($z=0,094$, $p=0,065$), Depersonalization ($z=0,087$, $p=0,069$) and Low sense of personal accomplishment ($z=0,076$, $p=0,073$).

Table 2

The mean score and standard deviation for Job Burnout and its subscales based on sex differences

Variables	Public school teachers			Special school teachers		
	Sex	Mean	SD	Sex	Mean	SD
Emotional exhaustion	Male	46,18	6,11	Male	47,03	5,24
	Female	45,45	6,77	Female	48,31	6,37
Depersonalization	Male	23,32	2,90	Male	24,69	2,24
	Female	24,50	2,93	Female	24,00	2,68
Low sense of personal accomplishment	Male	33,27	4,43	Male	35,72	3,05
	Female	32,80	4,25	Female	35,31	4,35

As shown in Table 2, the mean score for job burnout subscales, including Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization, and the Low sense of personal accomplishment, was higher among male and female teachers in special schools than male and female teachers in public schools. MANOVA was used to determine whether school type (public vs. special), sex, and the interaction between these two variables (school type*sex) had a significant effect on the level of job burnout subscales among teachers. The results are presented in Table 3.

It is worth noting that before MANOVA was performed, the Levene's test was used to evaluate the assumption of homogeneity of variances, and the results showed that it was not significant for three variables of Emotional exhaustion ($F=0,135$, $p=0,714$), Depersonalization ($F=1,123$, $p=0,292$) and Low sense of personal accomplishment ($F=2,843$, $p=0,153$); therefore, MANOVA could be conducted. Furthermore, to study the homogeneity of covariance matrices, Box's M test was used. The result showed that its value was not significant ($F=1,590$, $p=0,145$). Therefore, the variance-covariance matrix of the dependent variables is equal in the three groups.

Based on the data presented in Table 3, it can be stated that the effect of school type on the linear combination of dependent variables was significant. However, Table 3 also reveals that the effects of sex and the interaction between school type and sex on the linear combination of dependent variables were insignificant. To further investigate whether school type had a significant effect on any of the dependent variables, MANOVA was performed, and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 3

Values of Wilks' lambda in MANOVA for the subscales of Job Burnout among public and special school teachers based on sex

Sources	Value	F	df _H	df _E	Sig.
School type	0,900	2,891	3	78	0,041
Sex	0,994	0,146	3	78	0,932
School type*Sex	0,957	1,170	3	78	0,327

Table 4

The results of MANOVA for the subscales of Job Burnout

Variables	School type (public vs. special)		Sex		School type*Sex	
	F	p	F	p	F	p
Emotional exhaustion	1,828	0,180	0,039	0,84	0,534	0,467
Depersonalization	0,519	0,473	0,166	0,69	2,393	0,126
Low sense of personal accomplishment	7,657	0,007	0,246	0,62	0,001	0,975

Based on the results presented in Table 4, the effect of school type on Emotional exhaustion ($F=1,828$, $p=0,180$) and Depersonalization ($F=0,519$, $p=0,473$) was not significant, but the effect of group on Low sense of personal accomplishment ($F=7,657$, $p<0,007$) was significant. In addition, the effect of sex on Emotional exhaustion ($F=0,039$, $p=0,84$), Depersonalization ($F=0,166$, $p=0,69$), and the Low sense of personal accomplishment ($F=0,246$, $p=0,62$) was not significant. Finally, the interaction between school type (public and special) and sex did not have any significant effect on Emotional exhaustion ($F=0,534$, $p=0,467$), Depersonalization ($F=2,393$, $p=0,126$), and Low sense of personal accomplishment ($F=0,001$, $p=0,975$).

Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a significant difference between public and special school teachers only in terms of the subscale of the Low sense of personal accomplishment. To flesh out, teachers in special schools displayed a greater low sense of personal accomplishment than did teachers in public schools.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of the present study showed no significant difference between public and special school teachers in terms of Emotional exhaustion as a subscale of job burnout. This could be due to work pressure, which is caused by several factors, including parents'

unreasonable expectation for excessive homework and exams, school principals' and deputy principals' high expectations, bulky textbooks, insufficient feedback from students, the limited size of classrooms, limited budget, resources, and facilities, and strict adherence to administrative protocols [4; 15]. In addition, the findings showed that there was no significant difference between public and special school teachers in terms of depersonalization. This finding can be supported by the fact that teachers, irrespective of which school they teach in, have certain concerns about maintaining order in the classroom, building a positive relationship with students and colleagues, gaining sufficient information relevant to their teaching, managing time constraints based on students' level of understanding, and fighting for more attention in the processes of decision-making. These concerns affect all teachers and can adversely impact teachers' classroom management and students' learning process, thereby impeding the achievement of educational goals. These factors will negatively influence teachers' attitudes towards teaching, learning, and the school environment. Over time, the teachers' motivation will decrease due to the lack of access to a balanced and controllable condition that is conducive to their job needs and interests; as a result, they will experience depersonalization after a while [29]. However, the findings indicated that special school teachers showed a greater low sense of personal accomplishment than did public school teachers. To explain this difference, we suggested combining Emotional exhaustion and Depersonalization can lead to the lower personal accomplishment in special school teachers [28]. In addition, lack of motivation, pessimistic attitudes towards one's performance, and negative attitudes towards students with special needs in special school teachers can result in low sense of personal accomplishment, ultimately leading to the departure of these teachers from special schools, in particular, and special education environment, in general [23].

Furthermore, the results showed no significant difference between male and female teachers in terms of job burnout subscales, namely, Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization, the Low sense of personal accomplishment. This finding is supported by other studies that have shown male and female teachers face the same challenges, including crowded classrooms, parents' high expectations, poor academic performance of some students, and learning problems in some students. Thus, both male and female teachers experience the same amount of pressure and tension at work [33; 43; 45]. That is why sex does not significantly affect the level of job burnout [32]. Also, lack of educational facilities in schools, teachers' financial problems, decreased a number of teachers and increased responsibilities and expectations of principals and other colleagues cause male and female teachers to experience the same level of emotional exhaustion [45]. Moreover, repetitive activities in the classroom, students' behavioral problems, reduced self-efficacy of teachers in education, and a lack of teaching materials and facilities are among the challenges which teachers, irrespective of their sex, have to deal with in almost all schools. These challenges, in turn, diminish teachers' motivation and make them feel cynical about their jobs and performances. Thus, male and female teachers are equally affected by depersonalization [5]. The results also showed no significant difference between male and female teachers in terms of a low sense of personal accomplishment. Therefore, we can argue that students' poor performance and the diminished results teachers receive compared to their daily efforts reduce both male and female teachers' motivation at work and hamper their activities alike. Hence, the two sexes did not differ in terms of the low sense of personal accomplishment [20; 33].

Due to the small size of samples in this study, the results shall be generalized carefully. In addition, in this study, only a questionnaire was used to assess job burnout. We suggest doing the research on a larger scale so that the results can be generalizable to other public and special school teachers. Based on the results of this study, we recommend to arrange some training workshops to address the issue of burnout to special school teachers. To reduce job burnout among special school teachers, the Ministry of Education shall hire more teaching assistants and invite volunteers to help special school teachers to teach students with special needs. Finally, occupational therapists, speech therapists, and physiotherapists can help teachers to cope with students with special needs. Their help can reduce some of the problems which special school teachers face at work.

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