

The Relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers' Burnout and Emotional Intelligence

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ABSTRACT--- *Burnout and emotional intelligence (EI) are two prominent factors in the process of teaching. This study analyzed the probable relationship between EFL teachers' burnout and EI in private language institutes of the cities of Shiraz and Marvdasht, Iran. It also investigated whether EI could predict burnout. To this end, 100 EFL teachers working at private language institutes, situated in Shiraz and Marvdasht filled out EI and burnout questionnaires. Using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, the results showed that teacher burnout was negatively correlated with EI. Moreover, Regression analysis showed that EI could be a predictor of burnout. The implications of the findings are also scrutinized.*

Keywords--- Stress, Burnout, Emotional Intelligence.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the process of teaching, Burnout and emotional intelligence (EI) are two prominent factors. Many teachers start their teaching profession with great enthusiasm and full of energy, unexpectedly, they find themselves disappointed to continue their profession. They start developing feelings of emotional exhaustion, indifferent attitudes towards their students, and not being satisfied in their job. People experiencing these feelings have been described as suffering from 'burnout'. The present research examined the relation of teacher burnout to EI, within a number of private language institutes, situated in the two cities of Shiraz and Marvdasht, Iran. It also aimed to find out whether EI could predict burnout. To do so, 100 EFL teachers working at private language institutes, situated in the aforesaid two cities filled out EI and burnout questionnaires. The findings of the research, examined by Pearson Product-Moment Correlation were indicative of the fact that teacher burnout was negatively correlated with EI. Moreover, Regression analysis manifested that EI could be a predictor of burnout. The implications of the findings are also mentioned.

2. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Teacher stress exists as an important subject in educational research in the present period of time. In recent years, the concern about teacher stress has increased, considering that about a third of the teachers surveyed in various studies around the world reported that they regarded teaching as highly stressful (Borg, 1990). The prolonged effects of teacher stress may result in teacher burnout.

Although the definitions of teacher burnout are many and various, researchers have often selected Maslach's teacher burnout definition (Maslach, 1982) describing burnout as a multi-faceted phenomenon, that is, the three dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment along with the MBI, or its teacher-specific version (MBI-ES) as the standard measurement tool are usually used to debate about teacher burnout, (see Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).

Teacher burnout can make teachers to express dissatisfaction and leave their profession. Burnout might have negative impacts on the quality of teaching and the relations between students and teachers. Hence, teachers should be assisted to get over burnout phenomenon. Some teachers win against teacher burnout, while others have little control over it. Emotional intelligence can be one of the factors that can help teachers to overcome teacher burnout. According to Bar-On, Brown, Kirkcaldy and Thome (2000) environmental pressures can be controlled by emotional intelligence. Thus, emotional intelligence might protect teachers from burnout phenomenon. In this regard, Ciarrochi, Chan and Caput, (2000) indicated that emotional intelligence may act as a shelter against stress.

The concept of intelligence has experienced different changes, from intelligence as a unidimensional concept (Binet, 1905, as cited in Martin, 1997) to intelligence as a multiple concept (Gardner, 1983), and finally to intelligence as an emotional notion (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). For Bar On's (1997b), emotional intelligence is "an array of noncognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (p.14). To examine emotional intelligence, Bar-On developed a self-report Emotional Intelligence test. This 133-item test includes five major categories and 15 subcategories as follows:

- A. Intrapersonal, comprising the five subparts of self-awareness, assertiveness, self-regard, self-actualization, and independence
- B. Interpersonal, entailing the three subparts of empathy, interpersonal relationship, and social responsibility
- C. Stress management, consisting the two subparts of stress tolerance and impulse control
- D. Adaptability, having the three subparts of problem solving, reality testing, and flexibility
- E. General mood, including the two subscales of happiness and optimism.

In here, a summary of the most relevant studies into burnout and emotional intelligence are discussed. A study done by Oginska-Bulik (2005) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived stress in the workplace. A sample of 330 participants in various professions participated in the study. The findings showed the essential role of emotional intelligence in overcoming stress. Also a study conducted by Gohm, Corser, and Dalsky (2005) examined the association between emotional intelligence and stress among 158 freshmen. The results of this study revealed that emotional intelligence can potentially reduce stress for some individuals, but not for others. In another study, Iordanoglou (2007) examined the relationship between EI, leadership, job commitment and satisfaction among 332 primary education teachers in Greece. Results showed that EI is strongly related to teachers' commitment and satisfaction.

Ghonsooly (2012) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between creativity and burnout among Iranian EFL teachers with respect to gender differences. He found that creativity significantly correlates with reduced personal accomplishment but weakly with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Moreover, the results indicated that the relationship between reduced personal accomplishment and the creativity was not influenced by gender.

Vaezi & Fallah (2012) in another study examined the relation of teacher stress to the sense of humor and emotional intelligence among 108 EFL teachers. It was also investigated that whether teacher stress could be predicted by the sense of humor and EI. The findings showed that EFL teachers' sense of humor and EI were reversely correlated with their stress level. It was also found that, EI could predict teacher stress.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sampling procedure

Population of this study included all the teachers teaching at private language institutes in Shiraz and Marvdasht. Because the language institutes in these two cities were scattered, the researcher applied random cluster sampling to choose the participants of the study. According to Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Razavieh (2010) cluster sampling is a kind of probability sampling in which the chosen unit is a group of individuals who are naturally together; that is, a number of individuals who share similar characteristics with regard to the variables in the study formulate a cluster. In this study, the selected unit is English private language institutes in Shiraz and Marvdasht. Twenty institutes were randomly chosen from Shiraz and Marvdasht language institutes. Twenty clusters comprised one hundred and ninety EFL teachers. Thru stage sampling, one hundred EFL teachers were selected.

3.2. Instrument

To collect the data about teacher burnout, Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator's Survey (MBI-ES) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) was used. This is a 22-item self-report instrument including three components: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. In this questionnaire a seven-point frequency rating scale, ranging from "never" (0) to "every day" (6) is used. In the present study use was made of the original English version of the scale. To examine language teachers' EI, "Bar-On EI test" (Bar-On, 1997) was utilized. In this questionnaire a 5-point response scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was used. It consists of 5 major factors and 15 components. Persian version of the EI test with 90 items was employed in the present study. Internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and constructs validity of this questionnaire were assured by Samouei (2003). To check the reliability of MBI-ES and Bar-On EI test in this study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to measure the overall internal consistency. (MBI-ES, $\alpha = 0.84$) and Bar-On EI test ($\alpha = 0.79$) have an acceptable level of reliabilities.

The current study was carried out from February 15, 2013 to January 10, 2014. In order to collect the data for this study, different steps were carried out. First, the teachers were selected from Shiraz and Marvdasht private language institutes. The questionnaires including "Bar-On EI test" (Bar-On, 1997) and Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator's Survey (MBI-ES) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) were distributed among the participants either directly by the researcher or were e-mailed. Teachers filled them out and submitted to the researcher. To examine the relation of teachers' EI and burnout a series of Pearson Product-Moment Correlations was utilized. In order to determine if EFL teachers' EI could predict their burnout, regression analysis was employed.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Correlation between EI and Burnout

To analyze the relation of teachers' EI to burnout, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used. The results showed that a significant negative correlation between EI and burnout was found ($r = -0.268$, $p < 0.01$) (see Table 1).

TABLE 1

THE RESULTS OF CORRELATION BETWEEN EI AND BURNOUT

	Burnout	Sig
EI	-0.268**	0.007

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To discover whether EI can predict burnout, Regression Analysis was run. The results revealed that teachers' EI was a negative predictor of the teacher burnout. According to R square ($R^2 = 0.07$) ($\beta = -.268$, $t = -2.75$, $p < .01$, $F = 7.58$), 7% of the variance in burnout could be explained by the independent variable, EI (see Table 2).

TABLE 2

REGRESSION ANALYSIS SUMMARY FOR EI PREDICTING BURNOUT

Predictor	R	R Square	F	B	SEM	BETA	T
EI	0.268	0.072	7.58				
				-0.093	19.07	-0.268	-2.75

A significant negative correlation between EI and burnout showed that these variables move in different directions. In other words, with increase of teachers' EI, burnout decrease. Furthermore, regression analysis showed that EI could significantly predict burnout. The results of this study are in line with prior studies on the role of emotional intelligence in burnout, but these are not sufficient in the context of foreign/second language. Those with high emotional intelligence can cope better with environmental pressures associated with vocational stress than those with low EI (Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, and Salovey, 2010; Mendes, 2002). In a study in England, it was found that teachers' EI could predict burnout (Brackett, et al, 2010). A study by Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler, and Mayer (1999) revealed that individuals who can control their emotional conditions are healthier because they "accurately perceive and appraise their emotional states, know how and when to express their feelings and can effectively regulate their mood states" (p. 161). This proposes that emotional intelligence skills are closely related to physical as well as psychological health (Tsaousis and Nikolaou, 2005). Consequently, in teaching English as a foreign language in schools and institutes, teachers with high emotional intelligence are more likely to get over teacher burnout.

Also it was found that, all of the 15 components of EI test were negatively correlated with teachers' burnout. Among these components, happiness was discovered to have the highest negative correlations with burnout as follows: burnout and happiness ($r = -0.706$, $p < 0.01$) (see Table 3).

TABLE 3

TABLE 3

THE RESULTS OF CORRELATION BETWEEN COMPONENTS OF EI AND
TEACHERS' BURNOUT

	Burnout
Self-awareness	-0.215*
Assertiveness	-0.364**
Self-regard	-0.648**
Self-actualization	-0.592**
Independence	-0.626**
Empathy	-0.226*
Social responsibility	-0.428**
Interpersonal relationship	-0.638**
Reality	-0.508**
Flexibility	-0.404**
Problem solving	-0.220*
Stress tolerance	-0.641**
Impulse control	-0.212*
Optimism	-0.427**
<u>Happiness</u>	<u>-0.706**</u>

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to Sultanoff (1994) happiness is opposed to the source of stress and can help teachers to protect themselves against stressful classroom environments. He found that when people have feelings of pleasure, they can control negative feelings of depression, anxiety, and anger. If stress is a by-product of burnout and happiness can negate stress, then happiness may have a positive influence to make teacher burnout less intense.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The results of this study reveals some findings to better understanding of EI and burnout phenomenon in an EFL context. The results of the current study showed that increasing teachers' EI can decrease their burnout. So, EFL teachers should be trained to increase their EI. Kremenitzer (2005) stated that: "an increase in a teacher's emotional intelligence significantly impacts on student learning in a powerful way both in academic and interpersonal domains" (p. 6). Greenberg (2002) also indicated that emotionally intelligent teachers are more secure to stress and can better cope with stressors. It can be implied that if teachers received suitable trainings to develop their emotional intelligence, burnout would be reduced. Emotional intelligence skills should be introduced to schools and institutes to train teachers how to get over the problem of burnout and to alleviate their psychological pressures. Ministries of Education should also select teachers with high level of emotional intelligence by applying psychological tests. Finally, conscious efforts should be made to integrate emotional intelligence into the seminars organized for teachers.

Due to the fact that the participants of this study were selected thru cluster sampling from small districts, the findings will have limited generalizability. Moreover, the present study sought the answers of research questions with only two self-

report instruments. In other words, only quantitative data were collected. It is assumed that observing teachers and conducting interview session with teachers could help in gaining a deeper understanding of their burnout and EI level still other studies are suggested so that the effects of burnout can be better perceived in relation to emotional intelligence.

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