

## EXPLORING THE DEMOGRAPHIC AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS INFLUENCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' BURNOUT: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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### Abstract

The study aimed to investigate and compare the demographic and contextual factors influencing the level of burnout of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers teaching at Iranian Public Schools (IPS) and Private Language Institutes (PLI). To this end, both quantitative and qualitative methods of gathering data were used. 100 EFL teachers participated in the quantitative phase. They were asked to complete "Maslach Burnout Inventory" and to write their demographic information. Data were analyzed using independent sample T-tests. The results of T-tests showed that IPS teachers with higher educational degrees had higher levels of burnout. A significant difference in the level of burnout were also found among teachers with different years of teaching experience, however, no significant difference was found between female and male teachers' level of burnout. In the qualitative phase of the study and in order to identify the contextual factors influencing teacher burnout, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 EFL teachers who were identified as "burnout teachers" based on the results of the first phase of the study. Low salary, heavy workload, teacher evaluation procedure, lack of teacher autonomy, student misbehavior, shortage of facilities, and time pressure were identified as some factors leading to teacher burnout.

**Keywords:** EFL teacher burnout, contextual factors, Iranian EFL teachers, teacher education programs

## INTRODUCTION

Previous studies have shown that many factors influence students' learning, the most important of all is the quality of instruction (Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor, 2007; Hattie, 2002; Nye, Hedges, and Konstantopolos, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain, 2005; Valiandes, 2015). This fact has been recognized by EFL discourse community as well, and Freeman and Johnson (1998) put teachers' importance in this way: "lagging behind by almost a decade, language teacher education has begun to recognize that teachers, apart from the method or materials they may use, are central to understanding and improving English language teaching" (p. 402).

One of the factors that can seriously influence teachers' quality of instruction, and is considered as one of the main occupational challenges of 21st century (Leiter & Maslach, 2005) is teacher burnout. The concept of burnout was defined as "an emotional state in which the worker loses his beliefs and positive feelings (optimism), his sympathy and respect for the 'clientele'. This moral exhaustion is often accompanied by physical exhaustion, illness or disorders evolving in a psychosomatic model" (Maslach, 1999, p. 212).

The concept of burnout has been investigated in different occupations, teaching is not an exception. In fact some scholars maintained that "burnout is a more important problem in the teaching profession than in many other professions with similar academic and personal requirements" (Lens & Jesus, 1999, p. 194). This may stem from the fact that teaching is a demanding and stressful occupation on one hand and a comparatively less paid profession on the other.

Since burnout is associated with the loss of 'energy', 'enthusiasm', and 'confidence' (Leiter & Maslach, 2005), it can influence different aspects of teachers' personal and professional life. According to Chan (2003), "it might impair the quality of teaching as well as leading to job dissatisfaction, work alienation, physical and emotional ill-health and teachers' leaving the profession" (p. 382).

### 1.1. The teacher-working environment fit

Previous studies have shown that both personal and contextual factors can contribute to teacher burnout (Fernet, Guay, Senecal, & Austin, 2012; Foley & Murphy, 2015; Fiorilli et al., 2015; Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Ju, Lan, Li, Feng, & You, 2015; Hoglund, Klinge, & Hosan, 2015; Lauermann, & Konig, 2016; Pas, Bradshaw, & Hershfeldt, 2012; Pietarinen, Pyhalto, Soini, & Salmela-Aro, 2013; Van Droogenbroeck, Spruyt, & Vanroelen, 2014). The findings of these studies imply that teacher burnout is the results of a complex interplay between teacher's personal characteristics and his/her working environment (Pietarinen, et al., 2013).

In order to describe this interplay between the personal and contextual factors influencing teacher burnout, the 'employee-working environment fit framework' was proposed by Locke (1969) maintaining that a good fit can reduce the risk of burnout while a poor fit can increase it (Edwards & Cable, 2009). This framework can be understood more efficiently in

terms of 'Job Demands-Resources Model' (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). According to this model, any occupation has two broad characteristics, 'job demands' and 'job resources' (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). Job demands refer to physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects and challenges of the job which require persistent effort (Demerouti, et al., 2001). Job resources refer to the physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects of the job that "may reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs", "are functional in achieving work goals", and "stimulate personal growth, learning, and development" (Hakanen et al., 2006, p. 497). If for a long time a teacher experiences a combination of low resources with high demands, it can result in burnout (Demerouti, et al., 2001).

Looking at teacher burnout from the 'Job Demands-Resources Model' highlights the importance of the working environment as one of the central factors of teacher burnout. In a supportive working environment with reasonable job demands, effective evaluation, supportive leadership, and enough financial and technological support, one can expect low level of teacher burnout.

However, despite the important role of the working environment that can intensify or reduce the working stress and demands, few studies have examined its role in teacher burnout in EFL contexts. Therefore, this study tries to examine if teachers teaching in different teaching contexts (public or private schools) have different levels of burnout, and explores the contextual factors causing burnout among them. The study also aims at investigating the impact of academic degree, teaching experience and gender on the burnout level of EFL teachers' teaching in public and private schools.

In line with the objectives of the study, the following research questions are raised:

1. Is there any significant difference in the level of burnout of EFL teachers' having different academic degrees?
2. Is there any significant difference in the level of burnout of EFL teachers' having different years of teaching experience?
3. Is there any significant difference in the level of burnout of male and female EFL teachers?
4. What are the main contextual factors influencing the level of burnout of EFL teachers' teaching at Iranian Public Schools (IPS) and Private Language Institutes (PLI)?

## **Method**

Based on its purposes, this study is consisted of two phases: the quantitative phase and the qualitative one. In the quantitative phase, it is tried to answer the research questions 1, 2 and 3 and in the qualitative phase, attempts have been made to answer the research question 4.

### *2.1. Participants*

The participants of the quantitative phase of this study consisted of 100 EFL teachers teaching at IPS (61%) and PLI (39%) contexts in South Khorasan Province, Iran. Both male (35%) and female participants (65%) were included in the study. Their teaching experience ranged from 2 to 29 years. As regards the academic degrees, 68% held BA, 30% had MA, and 2% did not indicate their degrees. The reasons that the participants were chosen from both private and public schools were to examine the extent that teaching environment can influence teachers' burnout, and to identify the contextual variables that may lead to burnout in each context.

For the qualitative phase of this study, 16 teachers took part in the interview protocol. Teachers who participated in the interview were selected among teachers who were identified as burnout teachers based on the results of the first phase of the study, and were willing to participate in this phase of the study. The selected teachers included 6 burnout teachers having over 10 years of teaching experience, 6 burnout teachers having 5-10 years of teaching experience, and 4 burnout teacher having fewer than 5 years of teaching experience. 8 teachers were teaching in PLI and the other 8 ones were teaching in IPS contexts. All participants were contacted and visited for the purpose of collecting data.

### *2.2 Instrumentation*

For the quantitative phase of this study and in order to measure teachers' level of burnout, the Farsi language version of Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (FMBI-ES) scale (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001) was used. It identified three separate scores to indicate the levels for each of the constructs measured: 'emotional exhaustion' (EE), 'depersonalization' (DP), and 'reduced personal accomplishment' (PA). Participants answered each item on a seven-point Likert-scale, ranging from 'never' (0) to 'every day' (6). High scores on the EE and DP subscales and low scores on the PA subscale indicate burnout. This instrument has been used in different contexts and has been reported as one of the most reliable scales for measuring teacher burnout. The reliability coefficients for the subscales were calculated as .90 for Emotional Exhaustion, .79 for Depersonalization, and .71 for reduced Personal Accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2001). Iwanicki and Schwab (1981) reported Cronbach alpha estimates of .90 for EE, .76 for DEP, and .76 for PA. This inventory was translated into Persian, and the reliability coefficients for each subscale were reported as .84 for EE, .75 for DEP, and .74 for PA (Gargari, 1995).

For the qualitative phase of this study, a face to face semi-structured interview was conducted in order to have a deeper understanding of teacher burnout in the two contexts. Participants were asked the following questions:

1. How would you describe teacher burnout?
  - a. Have you experienced burnout during your teaching career? If yes, what were the symptoms you have had?
  - b. Do you feel the stress you confront in your job is in or out of your control to be coped with? Please Explain?

- c. Has the stress of your job ever made you want to leave the teaching profession? Explain how?
- d. Does the stress you feel in the workday influence your overall satisfaction with your job? Explain how?
2. What are the main factors influencing EFL teachers' burnout in your context of teaching?
  - a. What are the main sources of stress in your workday?
  - b. What factors have made you feel burnout with your present job?

### 1.3 Procedure

On the quantitative phase of the study, Farsi version of MBI-ES questionnaire was distributed among IPS and PLI teachers. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained the officials' approval, and the consent of the English language teachers, then, the teachers were presented with a brief introduction of the purposes of the research and the MBI-ES. The teachers were personally approached at the public schools and English language institutes. All teachers were assured that their participation would be anonymous, voluntary, and confidential. 110 questionnaires were distributed among the participants among which 100 were completed and returned. For the qualitative phase of the study, after the interviews were recorded, they were transcribed, and then, the major themes causing teacher burnout in IPS and PLI contexts were identified and categorized.

## Results

### A. Results of the quantitative phase

The collected data were entered into SPSS version 16 to be analyzed. The data were analyzed in two steps: a) descriptive statistics and b) inferential statistics.

#### 3.1 Descriptive statistics

##### 3.1.1 Reliability of the Instruments

To ensure that the questionnaire was reliable, an analysis was done using Cronbach's Alpha to estimate the reliability indexes of the instruments.

Table 1: *Results of the Reliability of the Instrument*

Questionnaire	N of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Burnout	22	.605

As Table 1 shows, the Burnout instrument enjoys a relatively high reliability ( $\alpha=.60$  for Burnout).

### 3.2 Inferential statistics

In order to answer the research questions, inferential statistics including independent samples T-tests were used.

In order to answer the first research question, independent samples T-test was employed in which the means of BA and MA IPS EFL teachers in three components of burnout (EE, PA, DP) were compared (Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2: *Group statistics for the difference between IPS EFL teachers' level of burnout and their academic degree*

Group Statistics					
	Education	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
EE	BA degree	43	19.441	4.14213	.63167
	MA degree	15	26.933	10.01760	2.58653
PA	BA degree	43	39.133	6.72346	1.02532
	MA degree	15	30.558	5.89027	1.52086
DP	BA degree	43	15.581	4.19315	.63945
	MA degree	15	20.266	4.26726	1.10180

Table 3: *Independent Samples T-test for the difference between IPS EFL teachers' level of burnout and their academic degree.*

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		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
E E	Equal variances assumed	14.123	.000	4.055	56	.000	-7.49147	1.84746	11.19238	-3.79057
	Equal variances not assumed			2.814	15.70	.013	-7.49147	2.66255	13.14457	-1.83838
P A	Equal variances assumed	.335	.565	4.382	56	.000	-8.57519	1.95670	12.49493	-4.65545
	Equal variances not assumed			4.675	27.71	.000	-8.57519	1.83420	12.33416	-4.81623

D P	Equal variances assumed	.084	.773	- 3.71 0	56	.000	-4.68527	1.26300	-7.21536	-2.15519
	Equal variances not assumed			- 3.67 8	24. 10	.001	-4.68527	1.27392	-7.31388	-2.05666

As Table 2 and 3 show, there is a statistically significant difference (sig 2-tailed<.05) between the means of BA and MA IPS EFL teachers in three components of burnout. Based on these data, it can be concluded that IPS EFL teachers with higher educational degrees have higher levels of burnout.

The similar test was conducted to check the difference between BA and MA teachers teaching at PLI. As Tables 4 and 5 show, there is a statistically significant difference ( $t=2.91$ , sig<.05) between the means of BA ( $M= 15.68$ ) and MA ( $M=20.14$ ) EFL teachers teaching at PLI in EE component of burnout. Other components of burnout (PA, DP) do not statistically differ between BA and MA teachers.

Table 4: *Group statistics for the difference between PLI EFL teachers' level of burnout and their educational degree*

Group Statistics					
	Education	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
EE	BA degree	25	15.6800	4.67012	.93402
	MA degree	14	20.1429	4.45243	1.18996
PA	BA degree	25	31.6800	5.82895	1.16579
	MA degree	14	34.5000	9.35414	2.50000
DP	BA degree	25	14.2400	7.53481	1.50696
	MA degree	14	16.4286	5.00330	1.33719

Table 5: *Independent Samples T-test for the difference between PLI EFL teachers' level of burnout and their educational degree*

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2- taile d)	Mean Differenc e	Std. Error Differenc e	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
EE	Equal variances assumed	.053	.819	-2.910	37	.006	-4.46286	1.53379	-7.57061	-1.35510
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.950	28.163	.006	-4.46286	1.51275	-7.56078	-1.36494
PA	Equal variances	2.955	.094	-1.163	37	.252	-2.82000	2.42517	-7.73386	2.09386

	assumed Equal variances not assumed			-1.022	18.787	.320	-2.82000	2.75845	-8.59794	2.95794
	Equal variances assumed	3.226	.081	-.971	37	.338	-2.18857	2.25467	-6.75696	2.37982
DP	Equal variances not assumed			-1.086	35.753	.285	-2.18857	2.01470	-6.27555	1.89840

To examine the level of burnout of EFL teachers having different years of teaching experience, independent samples T-test was employed. Experience was defined hierarchically in this study with teachers with 1-4 years of experience as novice, the ones with 5-10 years of teaching experience as moderately experienced, and those with 11 and more years of teaching experience as highly experienced.

As we did not have any IPS teacher having 1 to 4 years of teaching experience, the difference in the level of burnout of highly experienced and moderately experienced EFL teachers teaching at IPS was compared using T-test.

Table 6: *Group statistics for IPS EFL teachers' burnout according to their teaching experience*

Group Statistics					
	WorkHistory	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Moderate	28	18.6786	4.86144	.91873
EE	Experienced	32	22.6563	5.73394	1.01363
	Moderate	28	31.5714	7.93692	1.49994
PA	Experienced	32	32.8750	7.43032	1.31351
	Moderate	28	16.1786	4.57087	.86381
DP	Experienced	32	17.7500	4.41405	.78030



Table 7: *Independent samples T-test for the difference of IPS EFL teachers' burnout according to their teaching experience*

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Differen ce	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
EE	Equal variances assumed	.038	.847	-2.876	58	.006	-3.97768	1.38328	-6.74662	-1.20873
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.908	57.951	.005	-3.97768	1.36803	-6.71613	-1.23923
PA	Equal variances assumed	.821	.369	-.657	58	.514	-1.30357	1.98488	-5.27675	2.66960
	Equal variances not assumed			-.654	55.739	.516	-1.30357	1.99377	-5.29798	2.69084
DP	Equal variances assumed	.083	.775	-1.353	58	.181	-1.57143	1.16131	-3.89605	.75319
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.350	56.358	.182	-1.57143	1.16406	-3.90300	.76014

Based on the data in Table 6 and 7, there is a significant difference ( $t=2.876$ ,  $df=58$ , sig 2-tailed $<.05$ ) between highly experienced ( $M= 22.6563$ ) and moderately experienced ( $M=18.6786$ ) IPS EFL teachers in EE component of burnout. The two other components i.e. PA, DP do not statistically differ in moderate and high experienced teachers ( $p>.05$ ).

To check the difference in the level of burnout among PLI EFL teachers having different years of teaching experience, independent samples T-test was employed. All the PLI participants were either novice or moderately experienced teachers.

Table 8: Group statistics for PLI EFL teachers' burnout with respect to their teaching experience

Group Statistics					
	Work History	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
EE	Novice	19	14.8421	3.84799	.88279
	Moderate	20	19.9500	4.86096	1.08694
PA	Novice	19	31.8421	6.45724	1.48139
	Moderate	20	33.5000	8.10133	1.81151
DP	Novice	19	12.8947	7.09377	1.62742
	Moderate	20	17.0500	5.88016	1.31484

Table 9: Independent samples T-test for PLI EFL teachers' burnout with respect to their teaching experience

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
EE	Equal variances assumed	.672	.418	-3.626	37	.001	-5.10789	1.40876	-7.96232	-2.25347
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.648	35.862	.001	-5.10789	1.40027	-7.94816	-2.26763
PA	Equal variances assumed	.786	.381	-.704	37	.486	-1.65789	2.35389	-6.42733	3.11154
	Equal variances not assumed			-.708	35.942	.483	-1.65789	2.34011	-6.40412	3.08833
DP	Equal variances assumed	.314	.578	-1.996	37	.053	-4.15526	2.08201	-8.37382	.06329
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.986	35.029	.055	-4.15526	2.09221	-8.40254	.09201

According to Tables 8 and 9, there is a statistically significant difference ( $t=-3.626$   $df=37$ ,  $sig=.001$ ) between level of EE among novice ( $M=14.8421$ ,  $SD=3.84799$ ) and moderately experienced ( $M=19.9500$ ,  $SD= 4.86096$ ) PLI EFL teachers. The rest of burnout components i.e. PA and DP do not significantly differ in the two groups of EFL teachers (novice and moderately experienced) ( $p>.05$ ).

To determine the extent to which teacher burnout is related to gender, independent samples T-test was performed for both PLI and IPS EFL teachers.

Table 10: *Group statistics for IPS EFL teachers' burnout according to their gender*

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
EE	male	20	20.5500	8.53769	1.90908
	female	41	21.0488	7.25586	1.13318
PA	male	20	30.6000	9.70838	2.17086
	female	41	31.1220	9.26066	1.44627
DP	male	20	13.8000	4.16249	.93076
	female	41	14.1707	4.14067	.64666

Table 11: *Results of independent samples T-test for the difference of IPS EFL teachers' burnout according to their gender*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
EE	Equal variances assumed	.735	.395	-.238	59	.813	-.49878	2.09796	-4.69679	3.69923
	Equal variances not assumed			-.225	32.812	.824	-.49878	2.22007	-5.01652	4.01896
PA	Equal variances assumed	.479	.492	-.203	59	.839	-.52195	2.56576	-5.65603	4.61213
	Equal variances not assumed			-.200	36.220	.843	-.52195	2.60851	-5.81114	4.76724
DP	Equal variances assumed	.068	.795	-.328	59	.744	-.37073	1.13127	-2.63440	1.89293
	Equal variances not assumed			-.327	37.608	.745	-.37073	1.13335	-2.66587	1.92441

As Tables 10 and 11 show, there is not any significant difference between IPS EFL teachers in the three components of burnout [EE (sig=.81>.05), PA (sig=.83>.05), DP (.74>.05)] with respect to gender.

Furthermore, independent samples t-test was conducted to show the difference between PLI EFL teachers' level of burnout with respect to their gender (Tables 12 and 13).

Table 12: *Group statistics for PLI EFL teachers' burnout according to gender*

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
EE	male	13	14.7692	5.52500	1.53236
	female	26	15.1923	5.22317	1.02435
PA	male	13	27.3846	10.79767	2.99474
	female	26	25.7692	10.30847	2.02166
DP	male	13	10.0000	3.46410	.96077
	female	26	11.6923	4.82302	.94587

Table 13: *Results of independent samples T-test for the difference of PLI EFL teachers' burnout according to their gender*

#### Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
EE	Equal variances assumed	.273	.604	-.234	37	.816	-.42308	1.80811	-4.08666	3.24051
	Equal variances not assumed			-.230	22.924	.820	-.42308	1.84321	-4.23675	3.39059
PA	Equal variances assumed	.150	.701	.454	37	.652	1.61538	3.55636	-5.59048	8.82125
	Equal variances not assumed			.447	23.124	.659	1.61538	3.61325	-5.85696	9.08773

DP	Equal variances assumed	1.928	.173	-1.125	37	.268	-1.69231	1.50419	-4.74009	1.35548
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.255	32.072	.218	-1.69231	1.34824	-4.43834	1.05372

As Tables 12 and 13 show, there is not any statistically significant difference between PLI EFL teachers in three components of burnout [EE (sig=.81>.05), PA (sig=.65>.05), DP (.26>.05)] with respect to their gender.

### Results of the qualitative phase

In the qualitative phase and in order to answer the fourth research question of the study, a semi structured interview was conducted with 16 EFL teachers who were identified as burnout teachers based on the results of the first phase of the study. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Then, the major themes causing EFL teachers' burnout were identified through the coding process in both IPS and PLI contexts. The themes that emerged from the interviews were categorized and presented in table 14.

Table 14: *Contextual factors causing IPS and PLI teachers ' burnout.*

Contextual factors influencing IPS and PLI teachers ' burnout	Public Schools/ Private Language Institutes	Public Schools	Private Language Institutes
Low salary	✓		
Shortage of educational equipment/facilities	✓		
Formal evaluation procedure		✓	
Class observations			✓
Heavy workload	✓		
The lack of teacher autonomy	✓		
Teaching materials		✓	
Lack of principals' and peers' support	✓		
Standardized testing		✓	
Students' misbehavior and lack of motivation		✓	
Crowded Classes/large classes		✓	
Feeling of not being effective		✓	
Time pressure		✓	

As table 14 shows, teachers teaching in both PLI and in IPS contexts felt that low salary, the lack of autonomy, the shortage of educational facilities, the lack of principal and peer support, and their job workload made them feel stressed. The main reason contributing to these teachers' dissatisfaction with their job was the fact that teaching is a comparatively low-paid job. So many teachers cannot devote all of their time and energy to this profession, and in order to satisfy their financial needs, some of them need to do other part-time jobs which is stressful for them. Furthermore, EFL teachers in both contexts must teach the prescribed syllabi determined by the officials within a limited time period. This and the lack of multimedia facilities especially in IPS contexts made the teachers feel stressed and uncomfortable.

Classroom observation, was mentioned as a stressful factor by EFL teachers teaching in PLI context. This may stem from the evaluation culture in which the main purpose is to 'hire and fire' instead of teacher professional development. Instead of sporadic classroom observations for a limited period of time aiming mostly at teaching quality assurance, the teachers believed that supervisors and managers should pay more attention to the potential contribution of evaluation for their professional development by devoting more time to it and providing more constructive feedback on teacher's performance.

Formal evaluation, teaching materials, standardized testing, students' misbehavior and lack of motivation, crowded classes, and feeling of not being effective are factors mentioned by the teachers teaching in IPS contexts. The subjectivity of evaluation, and the out-of-date teaching materials caused teachers to feel that their instruction is not effective. Besides, since their classes are crowded and not equipped with multimedia devices, and there is just one session devoted to teaching English in the whole week in the students' weekly schedule, the IPS teachers felt that they could not teach language effectively for communicative purposes. Instead they needed to focus mostly on teaching grammar and reading comprehension which is boring for many students.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the contextual and demographic factors causing EFL teachers' burnout by gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. The results indicated that teachers with higher educational degrees had higher levels of burnout. A significant difference in the level of burnout was also found among teachers with different years of teaching experience, however, no significant difference was found between female and male teachers' level of burnout. In the qualitative phase of the study and in order to identify contextual factors influencing teacher burnout, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 EFL teachers who were identified as 'burnout teachers' based on the results of the first phase of the study. Low salary, job workload, teacher evaluation procedure, lack of teacher autonomy, students' misbehavior, lack of principal and peer support, shortage of facilities, and time pressure were identified as some factors leading to teacher burnout.

Previous studies have investigated the contextual factors influencing teachers' burnout. For example, Öztürk (2013) investigated the causes of burnout among Turkish instructors. He identified "heavy workload", and "students and institutional problems" as the leading reasons of teachers' burnout (p. 587) which are similar to the burnout causes mentioned by the teachers in this study.

Furthermore, some other factors were also found to have a relationship with or impact on teacher burnout. For example, Akbari and Tavassoli (2011) found a significant correlation between teacher efficacy and the components of teacher burn out. Furthermore, Mahmoodi and Ghaslani (2013) found a negative correlation between teacher burn out and their reflectivity and emotional intelligence. However, in their study, significant differences were not found in teachers' burn out and reflectivity with regard to their teaching experiences. This is not in line with the findings of this study in which teaching experience had an impact on teacher burnout.

In another study, Chenevey, Ewing, Whittington (2008), investigated the relationships between job satisfaction, occupational stress, personal strain, personal coping resources, and burnout among agricultural education teachers. Teachers in their study "indicated a moderate level of frequency of burnout and a moderate to high level of intensity of burnout", however, "no significant relationships were found between demographic characteristics and burnout, or between organizational factors and burnout" (p. 12). These findings are not in line with the result of this study. Because although gender had no significant correlation with burnout in the present study, the teachers teaching in public and private sectors had different levels of burnout.

Although many studies have addressed inservice teachers' burnout, no one can deny the significant role of preservice teacher preparation programs on shaping a positive or negative attitudes towards the teaching profession that may influence teachers' burnout. Previous studies have indicated that some factors during higher education such as achievement strategies and self-esteem can influence burnout during employment (Salmela-Aro & Nurmi, 2007; Salmela-Aro, Tolvanen, & Nurmi, 2009). It has been shown that teachers with more effective training feel more efficacious to face the challenges of the teaching profession which makes them less susceptible to burnout (Brissie, Hoover-Dempsey, & Bassler, 1988; Brouwers, Tomic, & Boluijt, 2011).

Based on the theoretical model of teacher development which was proposed by Ingersoll and Strong (2011), teacher development starts with preservice preparation programs, and then teachers are required to participate in induction programs. It is believed that the development of burnout can be affected by teacher preparation and induction programs (Hultell, et al., 2013). Even some studies have shown that beginning teachers have high level of burnout since many of them have already experienced burnout during their education (Gavish & Friedman, 2010). Therefore, it is incumbent on teacher preparation programs to familiarized preservice teachers with the demands of the teaching profession and teach them enough knowledge and skills so they can do their responsibilities without any problem. They should also be taught some strategies to cope with stress and burnout. Pietarinen et al. (2013), maintains that learning

coping strategies by teachers “allow them to reduce burnout and construct a better environment fit, which may further promote their well-being in work” (p.69).

In a meta-analysis of 65 studies of coping, stress, and burnout, Montgomery and Rupp (2005) discussed different coping strategies and their effectiveness. Foley and Murphy (2015) believe that teaching environment and teachers’ personal characteristics determine the type of coping that can be effective for teachers. Furthermore, Chan (2010) maintained that ‘positive psychology’ can be helpful in combating burnout “suggesting that intervention efforts could be more productively shifted from coping with symptoms or components of burnout to promoting or enhancing the antithesis of burnout” (p. 165). He further maintained that “strength-based interventions based on forgiveness and gratitude are effective and could be integrated into the positive approaches to combating burnout” (165).

The results of this study indicated that teachers working in private and public schools had different levels of burnout, and the contextual factors influencing their job burnout and satisfaction were not the same. These findings further support the importance of working environment in teacher burnout. Therefore, as the demands of teaching in different contexts are different, teacher education programs should be in line with the demands of the future teaching context(s) of preservice teachers.

The present study tried to shed some lights on the contextual and demographic factors influencing EFL teachers’ burnout. Considering the importance of teachers as the main components of each educational system and the profound effect of burnout on teachers’ performance and consequently students’ achievement, educational systems should take serious actions in order to identify and combat the personal and contextual causes of teachers’ burnout. Furthermore, as teaching is a stressful profession, and foreign language teaching imposes even more stress on teachers, it is hoped that other researchers continue this line of research in order to identify the contextual and personal causes of teacher burnout in different teaching environments, and try to make both inservice and preservice teachers aware of effective strategies for coping with this phenomenon.

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