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e-mail: kursatcesur@comu.edu.trFACTORS CAUSING BURNOUT AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN
TURKEY

Abstract. This study aimed to explore the reasons behind English language teachers' burnout in Turkey. To achieve this aim, qualitative research methodology was followed. In this respect, 102 comments from English teachers in Turkey in response to a post on Facebook were analyzed. After an investigation of the comments, 7 recurring themes were found by the researcher. In the order of frequency, these are: "Students, system, being a teacher, parents, colleagues, administrators and others". Uninterested and disrespectful students are among the top reasons of teachers' burnout. Noise in the classroom also drains teachers' energy most in their classrooms. Another important reason for teacher burnout is that students are unwilling. Therefore, teachers believe that it is nearly impossible to teach English to such kind of students. These results were examined in detail and compared to the results of relevant studies in literature in the discussion part. In this respect, several important implications and suggestions were presented for both in-service and future teachers of English.

Key words: burnout, English teachers, qualitative analysis, education system in Turkey.

Introduction.

Among many issues investigated in English Language Teaching (ELT) field, teacher burnout is one concern that has recently started to attract researchers' attention. Many teachers of English feel such a level of stress and pressure that they are not able to perform well in their profession anymore or stop enjoying their profession altogether. Although there are many research studies conducted in the area of "teacher burnout"; there are still limited studies that directly examine English language teachers' burnout. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap in the literature by determining the reasons for burnout among Turkish teachers of ELT.

Burnout was first coined by Freudenberg [1], who explained it as "a state of mental and physical exhaustion caused by one's professional life". Freudenberg was a consulting psychiatrist at a free clinic in New York's East Village. When he observed the volunteers of the clinic, he noticed a common decrease in their motivation. After that first definition, many other researchers developed the term. Soon after, Maslach [2] described burnout as a psychological condition in which one feels distanced from work. She defined the syndrome as one which causes mental fatigue. She also defined three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment [3]. When the term "burnout" was first introduced, it was only attributed to human services. However, researchers began to notice that the condition applied to many others out of the human service field [4]. Teachers are one worker group that is immensely affected by the burnout syndrome. In a study conducted by Kyriacou [5], almost one quarter of teachers stated that they believe teaching is "extremely stressful". Furthermore, there are an alarmingly high number of teachers who intend to leave their profession because of burnout at all career stages [6].

Literature review

What are the factors causing teacher burnout?

There are many studies conducted to investigate the factors triggering the burnout syndrome for teachers. In fact, it is nothing uncommon to hear teachers complain about the daily challenges they have to struggle with. Scholars have long searched for the most common reasons behind this

phenomenon. Kyriacou [5] listed 10 main causes of teacher stress in his study. These are: “teaching pupils who lack motivation”, “maintaining discipline”, “time pressures and workload”, “coping with change”, “being evaluated by others”, “dealing with colleagues”, “self-esteem and status”, “administration and management”, “role conflict and ambiguity” and “poor working conditions”.

In Kyriacou and Sutcliffe's study [7], the most frequent reasons for teacher stress were found to be “pupil's poor attitudes to work”, “trying to uphold/maintain values and standards” and “covering lessons for absent teachers”. The most common stress symptoms were found to be “exhaustion” and “feeling frustrated”. Furthermore, Byrne [8] found out in her “gender”, “age”, and “type of student taught” have the most effect on teacher burnout. She also noted that (a) the grade level at which one is teaching has an important impact on teacher burnout and (b) organizational management cause many teachers a great deal of stress regardless of the grade level.

Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Muñoz and Carrasco-Otriz [9] found out that both personality traits and specific contextual variables could be associated with burnout. The teachers with a high degree of neuroticism and introversion got the highest burnout scores. They also noted that the more burned out teachers have, the less importance they attach to their relationship with students. In a study conducted by Skaalvik and Skaalvik [10], “conflict with students' parents” and “having to organize teaching in ways one did not believe were the best” were found to be the factors that are most strongly related to teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout. They noted that there is a very strong correlation between teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy. Similar to the present study, Sadeghi and Khezrlou [11] investigated English language teachers in Iran to explore the factors that cause their burnout. They found out that high emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment and level of education significantly contribute to teacher burnout while age, gender and marital status have no significant impact.

Studies conducted in Turkey

In Turkish context, the concept of teacher burnout was investigated in several aspects, for teachers working at different institutions. In Toker's study [12] in which he explored the teacher burnout levels of the academicians in Turkey, it was revealed that marital status and age were significantly related to job burnout. Inandi [13] aimed to determine whether female teachers in Turkey experience burnout due to the career barriers they face. He found out that career barriers resulting from school and environment factors are significant predictors of female Turkish teachers' emotional exhaustion.

Sari [14] conducted a study to analyze burnout among special school teachers and head teachers; and the factors affecting their burnout. His study revealed that more experienced subjects have higher emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and less job satisfaction compared to their less experienced colleagues. However, more experienced subject felt higher personal accomplishment. Along the same line, Capri and Guler [15] investigated teachers working in special education and rehabilitation centers. They found significant negative correlations between teachers' occupational burnout levels and levels of job satisfaction, which was a significant precursor of burnout.

In the same vein as this study, Cephe [16] examined 44 English instructors in his study to determine the major factors leading to ELT teacher burnout. The results revealed that the instructors regard administrative applications in their institution as the major factor for their burnout. Another finding was that instructors with a high level of burnout displayed “alienation to professional identity”. Han and Mahzoun [17] used qualitative methods to investigate the factors that demotivate EFL teachers in Turkey. They found out that the main causes for teacher demotivation were: “lack of effective communication with school administration and colleagues and lack of interest, attention and respect from behalf of students”.

Materials and methods of research. Qualitative research method was followed in the study. It used content analysis to examine a group of comments on a Facebook group for ELT teachers in Turkey. The comments were made in response to a post that asked: “What drains your energy the most in your job?” There were 102 replies to the post.

The comments were all transferred to an excel file and analyzed by the researcher for recurring themes and patterns [18]. To achieve the validity and trustworthiness of the data analyzed, the researcher asked for another researcher's help in coding and analyzing the data. After an examination of all the comments, the researcher determined 7 main reasons for teacher burnout (*Students, system, being a teacher, parents, colleagues, administrators and others*). All the comments were studied again and assigned into one of these 7 main categories. The main categories were listed in order of frequency in a table, considering the number of likes they have received on Facebook. More detailed tables were also made for each main category to examine the specific reasons teachers put forth for each of them.

Results and their discussion. After all the comments were analyzed, 7 reasons were determined by the researcher. These themes are: “*Students, system, being a teacher, parents, colleagues, administrators and others*”. Samples of some teachers' ID numbers (T1, T2, T3, etc.) will be shown in parenthesis in this part of the study. The frequencies of the main factors are listed in Table 1. According to Table 1, the most common reason for ELT teacher burnout in Turkey is “students”, with a frequency of 46. Additionally, the comments about students received 187 likes in total, which is the highest amount of likes compared to likes all the factors received. Not only the educational system, but also being a teacher is itself difficult according to their opinions (T11). They believe that parents can also cause them some problems and some of the teachers see parents as the causes of their burnout (T22). Besides some other reasons, colleagues (T37) and the administrators (T44) are also seen as a cause for teacher burnout.

Table 1. The causes of burnout.

What causes the burnout of the EFL teachers?	f	Likes
Students	46	187
System	16	63
Being a teacher	14	50
Parents	12	39
Colleagues	10	47
Administrators	10	42
Others	10	10
Total (Overlapping within 102)	118	438

The causes of burnout resulting from *students* are broken into more specific reasons and shown in Table 2 below. According to the table, teachers mostly feel burned out because of *uninterested* (T6) and *disrespectful* (T62) students. *Noise* (T55), *unwillingness* (T72), *complaining* (T93) and *difficulties* (T23) also cause burnout among teachers.

Table 2. The causes of burnout resulting from students.

Students	f
Uninterested and disrespectful	19
Noise	12
Unwillingness	10

Complaining	2
Difficulties	1
Students (Blank)	2
Total	46

The causes of burnout resulting from the system are examined in Table 3. Among the teachers that reported that the system drains them out, most of them specified the monotonousness as the reason for their burnout. The formalities at school are so many that 3 of them believe it is really difficult for them to do their real job, which is teaching English (T79). One teacher specified several problems such as lack of necessary equipment or materials needed in their teaching practices (T48). Besides trying to catch up with the curriculum, a teacher says he/she has so many lesson hours to teach (T53).

Table 3. The causes of burnout resulting from the system.

<i>System</i>	<i>f</i>
Monotonousness	6
Formalities	3
Problems	2
Curriculum	1
Lack of necessary equipment	1
Workload	1
System (Blank)	2
Total	16

Table 4 below depicts the reasons resulting from being a teacher. “*Not being open to innovations*” (T32) is the most popular response in this category, followed by “*not being respected*”(T100), *communicating with people* (T86), *concerns for the future* (T95) and *difficulties* (T32)”.

Table 4. The causes of burnout resulting from being a teacher.

Being a teacher	<i>f</i>
Not being open to innovations	5
Not being respected	3
Communicating with people	1
Concern for the future	1
Difficulties	1
Being a teacher (Blank)	3
Total	14

In the following table, it can be clearly seen that the teachers feel burned out because of the parents as well. “*Ignorance* (T17), parents acting *asknow-it-alls* (T69), acting *inconsiderate* (T78), acting *irresponsible* (T82) and *difficulties* (T3) caused by the parents” are among the reasons of burnout caused by the teachers.

Table 5. The causes of burnout resulting from parents.

Parents	f
Ignorance	3
Know-it-all	1
Inconsiderate	1
Irresponsible	1
Difficulties	1
Parents (Blank)	5
Total	12

There were also several complaints about the colleagues. Teachers stated they feel drained out because of their “colleagues’ *ego* (T47) and *attitudes* (T71). Also, *incompetent* (T12), *know-it-all* (T96), *ignorant* (T38), *lazy* (T66) and *unwilling* colleagues (T88)” drain some EFL teachers’ energy.

Table 6. The causes of burnout resulting from colleagues.

Colleagues	f
Their ego	2
Attitudes	2
Incompetent	1
Know-it-all	1
Ignorance	1
Being lazy	1
Unwilling	1
Colleagues (Blank)	1
Total	10

Teachers also faced problems because of the administrators’. Their *negative attitudes* (T51), *mobbing* (T2), *formality* (T89), *incompetent* (T14) administrators, *discipline problems* (T58) and administrators who show *no support* (T73)”.

Table 7. The causes of burnout resulting from the administrators.

Administrators	f
Negative Attitudes	2
Mobbing	1
Formality	1
Incompetency	1
Discipline problems	1
No support	1
Just administrators (Blank)	3
Total	10

Finally, there were a few other response that were not very popular among other teachers which reasoned that teaching drain them out because of “*watching duty* (T27), *time of the lesson* (T65), *negative comments* (T90) from other people, *course books* (T30), being a *substitute teacher* (T9), *crowded classes* (T42) and *personal characteristics* (T81)”.

Table 8. The causes of burnout resulting from other reasons.

Others	f
All of them	2
Watch Duty	1
Time of the lesson	1
Negative comments from others	1
Coursebook	1
Being a Substitute teacher	1
Everything burns out	1
Crowded Classes	1
Personal Characteristics	1
Total	10

The results of this study corroborate the findings of the former studies regarding teacher burnout in the existing literature. It is noteworthy that the frequency order of the factors in this study is largely in line with Kyriacou's findings [5]. His findings suggested that the main reasons for teacher burnout are "teaching pupils who lack motivation", "maintaining discipline", "time pressures and workload", "coping with change", "being evaluated by others", "dealing with colleagues", "self-esteem and status", "administration and management", "role conflict and ambiguity" and "poor working conditions". When compared with the results of this study, it could be said that "students", which emerged as the most common result, covers "teaching pupils who lack motivation" and "maintaining discipline". The second most common factor found in this study, "system", covers "time pressure and workload" and "coping with change". The third factor, "being a teacher", covers "being evaluated by others" and "self-esteem and status". One difference that stood out in the current study is the "parents" factor, which was not listed as a factor that leads to teacher burnout in Kyriacou's findings.

One study regarding the fourth most common factor found in this study, "parents", to be a factor that lead to teacher burnout was carried out in Norway [10]. The researchers found out that conflict with parents had a negative relationship with five of the six dimensions of teacher self-efficacy, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Unlike many other studies that were carried out in the Turkish context, "colleagues" and "administrators" were not very common compared to the other factors. These factors were found to be the fifth and sixth most common factors respectively. Cephe [16] reasoned that "administrative applications in teachers' institution" was the most common reason for teacher burnout in Turkey. Similarly, in another research study [17], the most common reason for teacher burnout was found to be "lack of effective communication with school administration and colleagues", followed by "lack of interest, attention and respect from behalf of students". More studies need to be conducted in Turkish context to identify if this is a significant difference.

Conclusion.

Teacher burnout is a serious concern for many ELT teachers in Turkey. This study identified 7 main reasons that cause the teachers participated in this study to feel burned out: students, system, being a teacher, parents, colleagues, administrators and other reasons. Important implications can be drawn from the results of this study. Precautions should be taken to prevent teacher burnout and provide a more positive and comfortable teaching environment both for the teachers and the students. It is apparent that in the Turkish context, the system, the parents of the students and the administrators pose serious challenges for teachers. The education system and the administrative work assigned to teachers should be revised and renovated considering teacher needs. School administrators play an important role in decreasing teacher burnout. They should work to address and solve the problems that could arise as a result of teacher and parent conflict. Constant constructive feedback and positive assessment should be done by administrators to maintain teacher wellbeing. On a final note, it should be kept in mind that this is a small scale study that only explored the comments coming from a number of ELT teachers in Turkey. The participants are limited to the comments written under the post on

Facebook. More prospective and comprehensive studies should be conducted in several different contexts to further analyze ELT teacher burnout.

ТҮРКИЯДАҒЫ АҒЫЛШЫН ТІЛІ МҰҒАЛІМДЕРІНІҢ ШАРШАУ СИНДРОМЫН ТҮЗЕТІН ФАКТОРЛАР

Аңдатпа. Бұл зерттеу Түркиядағы ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің оқыту үдерісінде шаршауының себептерін зерттеуге бағытталған. Бұл мақсатқа жету үшін сапалы зерттеу әдістемесі қолданылды. Осыған байланысты Түркиядағы ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің Facebook желісіндегі жазбаға жазған 102 пікірі сарапталды. Пікірлерді зерттегеннен кейін зерттеуші 7 қайталанатын тақырыпты тапты. Жиілігі бойынша олар: “Оқушылар, жүйе, мұғалім болу, ата-аналар, әріптестер, әкімшілер және басқалар”. Қызығушылығы аз және белсенді емес студенттер мұғалімдердің шаршауының негізгі себептерінің бірі болып табылады. Сыныптағы шу мұғалімдердің қуатын көп жұмсайды. Мұғалімнің шаршауының тағы бір маңызды себебі – оқушылардың дайындықсыз болуы. Сондықтан мұғалімдер мұндай оқушыларға ағылшын тілін үйрету мүмкін емес деп есептейді. Бұл нәтижелер егжей-тегжейлі қарастырылды және талқылау бөлімінде әдебиеттердегі сәйкес зерттеулердің нәтижелерімен салыстырылды. Осыған байланысты ағылшын тілі пәнінің біліктілігін арттыратын және болашақ мұғалімдері үшін бірнеше маңызды ұсыныстар ұсынылды.

Негізгі сөздер: шаршау, ағылшын тілі мұғалімдері, сапалы талдау, Түркиядағы білім беру жүйесі

ФАКТОРЫ, ВЫЗЫВАЮЩИЕ СИНДРОМ УСТАЛОСТИ УЧИТЕЛЕЙ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА В ТУРЦИИ

Аннотация. Это исследование было направлено на изучение причин синдром усталости учителей английского языка в Турции. Для достижения этой цели использовалась качественная методология исследования. В связи с этим были проанализированы 102 комментария учителей английского языка из Турции в ответ на публикацию в Facebook. После изучения комментариев исследователь обнаружил 7 повторяющихся тем. В порядке частоты это: “Студенты, система, преподаватель, родители, коллеги, администраторы и другие”. Незаинтересованные ученики – одна из главных причин синдром усталости учителей. Шум в классе также истощает учителей больше всего в их классах. Еще одна важная причина синдрома усталости учителей – нежелание учеников учиться. Поэтому учителя считают, что таких учеников практически невозможно научить английскому языку. Эти результаты были подробно изучены и сопоставлены с результатами соответствующих исследований в литературе в порядке обсуждения. В связи с этим был сделан ряд важных выводов и предложений как для действующих, так и для будущих учителей английского языка.

Ключевые слова: синдром усталости, учителя английского языка, качественный анализ, система образования в Турции.

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