

# Analysis on Job Burnout of EFL University Teachers in Henan Province of China

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**Abstract**—Job burnout refers to the sub-healthy living conditions that are produced by modern people when dealing with complex societies. In recent years, with the development of higher education and the reform of education system in China, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university teacher are facing great challenges and experiencing great pressure and job burnout. However, very few researches have been done on the job burnout of university teachers, especially EFL university teachers in China. This study investigated the current situation of job burnout among EFL university teachers in Henan Province of China, and the differences in job burnout as related to demographic features.

**Keywords:** job burnout; EFL university teachers; emotional exhaustion; depersonalization; personal accomplishment; demographic features

## I. INTRODUCTION

In China, there is increasing work-related pressure due to rapid social and economic development in recent years. Teaching is much more stressful than nursing, managerial jobs, and professional and support management (Evers, Brouwers & Tomic, 2002). According to the data released by Tencent and MyCOS (an education consulting firm) in 2016, about 80% of university and college teachers felt great pressure in China. Prolonged exposure to stressful work conditions can result in teacher job burnout (Platsidou, 2010). Therefore, job burnout has become an unavoidable problem. Job burnout can result in physical, emotional and psychological problems. Since the 1970s, researchers in psychological and educational fields have been studying job burnout of doctors, nurses, teachers and etc. Researchers have already developed important theoretical frameworks and achieved significant research findings (Maslach et al., 2001). While in China, the research on job burnout started rather late. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the current levels of job burnout among EFL university teachers in Henan Province of China. Through demographic data, this study also sought to examine the differences in job burnout as related to gender, age, years of teaching experience, professional title, the highest academic qualification, and marital status.

## II. MEASUREMENT OF JOB BURNOUT

Maslach (1982; Maslach et al., 2001) is one among the earliest researchers on job burnout, and she remains very famous and active in this field. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which was developed by her and her

colleagues, is one of the foremost widely used instruments for job burnout. As the mainstream measure for burnout, there are five versions of the MBI: Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), Human Services Survey for Medical Personnel (MBI-HSS (MP)), Educators Survey (MBI-ES), General Survey (MBI-GS), and General Survey for Students (MBI-GS (S)). All MBI items are scored using a 7-point frequency scale from 0 (= “never”) to 6 (= “every day”). The high score means high level of job burnout, and vice versa.

The MBI-ES consists of 22 items and is a version of the original MBI for describing working experience, attitudes and feelings of educators. It was designed for teachers, administrators, other staff members, and volunteers working in any educational circumstance. The respondents are required to answer the questionnaire according to their own feelings. The instrument principally measures the syndrome of three dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA). The 9-item Emotional Exhaustion scale mainly measures the emotional demand of the job, and one’s feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted. The 5-item Depersonalization scale mainly measures the subjects’ negative, unfeeling and impersonal response toward their recipients. The 8-item Personal Accomplishment scale measures the subjects’ feelings of competence and successful achievement on one’s work with people. The 8 items of PA are reverse-scored items.

## III. RESEARCH DESIGN

### A. Objectives

The present study aims at investigating the job burnout level of EFL university teachers in Henan Province of China. With a better understanding of the actual situation of EFL university teachers’ burnout, educational administrators and teacher education institutions can make more informed teacher education decisions, and adopt more specific countermeasures and policies against teacher burnout appropriately.

### B. Respondents

130 EFL university teachers in Henan Province of China were invited to answer the original MBI-ES questionnaire as the pilot study in May 2019. Then for the field study in June and July, 361 respondents were randomly selected from 12 local application-oriented universities in Henan Province.

### C. Instrument

The adapted version of MBI-ES was used as the research instrument in this study. Demographic information was added to the first part of the questionnaire. The demographic items including gender, age, years of teaching experience, professional title, the highest academic qualification, and marital status.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

All the data collected were put into SPSS 23.0 software for analysis. Validity and reliability of the instrument were tested in this study. In the data screening and cleaning procedure, no missing value or outlier was detected. The Independent Samples T-Test and the One-way ANOVA test were employed to investigate the differences among teacher job burnout and demographic features.

### A. Pilot Study

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested with Cronbach's Alpha. The values of the reliability of three sub-scales and the overall scale were above 0.7, from 0.886 to 0.932, implying all the items were reliable and ready for exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

From the first EFA result, the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) procedure has extracted four components with eigenvalue exceeding the value of 1.0, with the total variance explained for all four components to be 68.364%, over the sixty percent value as the minimum percentage of acceptable variance explained in factor analysis for a construct to be valid. However, from the rotated component matrix results, item EE9 ("I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.") was the only one fell into factor 4.

After dropping the item EE9, the final results of the EFA of teacher burnout displayed that the existence of three-factor components with 21 items only. The value of the KMO for the teacher burnout construct was 0.903. Kaiser suggested that  $KMO > 0.9$  was marvelous (Kaiser, 1974; Field, 2013). The final result revealed that the PCA procedure has extracted three clear-cut components with eigenvalue exceeding the value of 1.0. Explicitly, the three components explained a total of 66.397% of the variance; by component 1 contributing 25.727%, component 2 contributing 22.612%, and component 3 contributing 18.057%. So the final version of MBI-ES used in this study consisted of 21 items.

### B. The Overall Situation

The data of the field study was also put into SPSS software for analysis. The mean value of teacher job burnout and its three dimensions was calculated first.

TABLE 1 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS of SUB-SCALES of TEACHER JOB BURNOUT

No.	Construct/Sub-Construct	Mean	SD
1	Teacher Job Burnout	4.235	.648
2	Emotional Exhaustion	4.383	.707
3	Personal Accomplishment	4.082	.894
4	Depersonalization	4.239	1.037

Table 1 shows the overall level of teacher job burnout and its three sub-scales. Based on this seven-point scale (0-6), the overall mean score of teacher burnout (mean = 4.235, SD = 0.648) indicated a relatively high level of job burnout among EFL university teachers. The levels of teacher burnout were also divided into three categories: 0-2 = low, 2.01-4 = moderate, and 4.01-6 = high. The highest percentage (70.1%) rated the overall levels of teacher burnout was "High", followed by 29.6% "Moderate", and only 0.3% "Low". Meanwhile, the mean score of all three sub-constructs of teacher job burnout indicated that they were all rated as "High". The results showed that the job burnout level of EFL university teachers in Henan Province of China was relatively high. Guo Xuhong (2018) did research on college English teachers' job stress and job burnout among 59 respondents from four universities in Hubei Province. In her research, job stress and burnout were both on a relatively low level, not serious. It was different from the result of this study. And Zhu Mengfei (2019) conducted research on occupational stress and burnout of teachers in colleges and universities in Shandong Province. It was found that there was a certain degree of occupational stress among those 116 university teachers, and thus a certain degree of job burnout.

### C. Analyses in Demographic Features

In this part, job burnout was investigated according to demographic features, in order to analyze how job burnout is related to gender, age, years of teaching experience, professional title, the highest academic qualification, and marital status.

#### 1) Gender:

The Independent Samples T-Test was employed to find out whether male and female EFL university teachers have differences in their teacher job burnout levels. Table 2 showed that in the present study, the level of teacher job burnout and all the three dimensions (EE, PA, and DP) had no statistically significant difference in the perspective of gender. In other words, though the mean values of male EFL university teachers' job burnout and its three dimensions were all a little higher than female teachers', the differences were statistically not significant. As a result, in the field of EFL teaching, male teachers suffered a little higher job burnout than their female colleagues, but the difference was not significant. This result is similar to the result of Guo's research in 2018 and Zhu's research in 2019.

TABLE 2 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN JOB BURNOUT

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Sig.
Job burnout	Male	66	4.3189	.71250	.243
	Female	295	4.2157	.63292	
EE	Male	66	4.3845	.76784	.988
	Female	295	4.3831	.69390	
PA	Male	66	4.1989	.91225	.242
	Female	295	4.0564	.88877	
DP	Male	66	4.4061	.97221	.150
	Female	295	4.2027	1.04926	

2) Age:

The One-way ANOVA was employed to find out whether different age or teaching experience among EFL university teachers have differences in teacher job burnout. Since in some research, job burnout was believed to be related with age and the length of work experience. In this study, age was ranked into 7 ranges: “30 or under”, “31-35”, “36-40”, “41-45”, “46-50”, “51-55”, and “56 or above”. It can be seen from Table 3 that age did not show any significant differences in the level of job burnout and its three dimensions. This is a little different from Guo’s findings. In her study, there was significant difference existing in the overall level of job burnout. Teachers of 36-40 years old and teachers who were over 50 years old had significant difference. While in Zhu’s research, the burnout levels differed significantly between different groups. The age group of 30 or under had the highest level of burnout, and especially in PA.

TABLE 3 AGE DIFFERENCES in JOB BURNOUT

	Age	N	Mean	SD	Sig.
Job burnout	30 or under	54	4.2698	.48500	.808
	31-35	96	4.2133	.55067	
	36-40	147	4.2352	.70393	
	41-45	27	4.3404	.66401	
	46-50	15	4.2762	.60987	
	51-55	9	4.2169	1.08146	
	56 or above	13	3.9817	.93203	
EE	30 or under	54	4.3657	.67023	.744
	31-35	96	4.3607	.65189	
	36-40	147	4.4116	.72507	
	41-45	27	4.4306	.72501	
	46-50	15	4.2917	.62082	
	51-55	9	4.6389	.83489	
	56 or above	13	4.1346	1.02248	
	30 or under	54	4.1574	.77596	

PA	31-35	96	4.0326	.74566	.781
	36-40	147	4.1003	.96699	
	41-45	27	4.1991	.98013	
	46-50	15	4.1250	.83719	
	51-55	9	3.9167	1.50390	
DP	56 or above	13	3.7596	.94437	.773
	30 or under	54	4.2963	.94509	
	31-35	96	4.2667	1.07983	
	36-40	147	4.1687	1.07492	
	41-45	27	4.4222	.84185	
	46-50	15	4.4933	.95877	
	51-55	9	4.0222	1.19350	
	56 or above	13	4.0923	1.09122	

3) Years of Teaching Experience:

And years of teaching experience was ranked into 6 ranges: “5 years or less”, “6-10 years”, “11-15 years”, “16-20 years”, “21-25 years”, and “26 years or more”. From Table 4, it is obvious that EFL university teachers with different years of teaching experience showed no significant difference in their levels of job burnout and the three dimensions. This was also consistent with Guo’s and research findings. While in Zhu’s study, the differences were significant. Teachers with experience more than 5 years had higher burnout levels.

TABLE 4 TEACHING EXPERIENCE DIFFERENCES in JOB BURNOUT

	Years of teaching	N	Mean	SD	Sig.
Job burnout	5 or less	77	4.2863	.46236	.269
	6-10	99	4.1991	.54796	
	11-15	106	4.1990	.68570	
	16-20	41	4.3798	.85459	
	21-25	14	4.3946	.52011	
	26 or more	24	4.0298	.95278	
EE	5 or less	77	4.3896	.64538	.654
	6-10	99	4.2992	.58380	
	11-15	106	4.4434	.74744	
	16-20	41	4.4817	.79724	
	21-25	14	4.3214	.82729	
PA	26 or more	24	4.3125	.93687	.135
	5 or less	77	4.0909	.75971	
	6-10	99	4.1263	.70428	
	11-15	106	3.9988	.99081	
	16-20	41	4.2744	1.08980	
	21-25	14	4.3929	.67021	
	26 or more	24	3.7344	1.17626	

DP	5 or less	77	4.4338	.90345	.209
	6-10	99	4.1556	1.07611	
	11-15	106	4.1283	1.02062	
	16-20	41	4.3854	1.16909	
	21-25	14	4.5143	1.03095	
	26 or more	24	4.0500	1.06852	

4) Professional Title:

Also, if EFL university teachers' professional title is related to their job burnout levels was investigated in this study. In China, university teachers have four kinds of professional titles: teaching assistant, lecturer, associate professor and professor. Table 5 shows the mean scores and the one-way ANOVA analysis results of these four groups. And the results clearly showed that professors scored the lowest in job burnout (M = 3.517), emotional exhaustion (M = 3.679), personal accomplishment (M= 3.375), and depersonalization (M = 3.486). In the meantime, associate professors had the highest scores. However, the ANOVA results showed that the differences in job burnout and two dimensions (emotional exhaustion and depersonalization) were significant. This was different from the result of Guo's, in which no significant difference was found. Zhu did not analyze the difference on professional title in her study.

TABLE 5 DIFFERENCES of PROFESSIONAL TITLE in JOB BURNOUT

	Years of teaching	N	Mean	SD	Sig.
Job burnout	Teaching Assistant	81	4.2628	.56072	.008
	Lecturer	178	4.1964	.66877	
	Associate Professor	95	4.3348	.61488	
	Professor	7	3.5170	1.04922	
EE	Teaching Assistant	81	4.3611	.70323	.019
	Lecturer	178	4.3581	.70239	
	Associate Professor	95	4.5013	.66156	
	Professor	7	3.6786	1.07252	
PA	Teaching Assistant	81	4.1003	.85386	.188
	Lecturer	178	4.0730	.89081	
	Associate Professor	95	4.1368	.89992	
	Professor	7	3.3750	1.20329	
DP	Teaching Assistant	81	4.3654	1.03286	.035
	Lecturer	178	4.1348	1.12808	
	Associate Professor	95	4.3853	.80649	
	Professor	7	3.4857	1.03187	

5) Highest Academic Qualification:

As it is shown in Table 6, EFL university teachers of different highest academic qualifications have significant differences in their levels of job burnout, emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment and depersonalization. The mean scores showed that EFL university teachers with PHD or EDD degree have the highest levels of job burnout, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization, while teachers with M.A. degree have the highest level of emotional exhaustion. While in Zhu's study, the result did not show significant difference on teachers' academic qualifications.

TABLE 6 DIFFERENCES of HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION in JOB BURNOUT

	Highest academic qualification	N	Mean	SD	Sig.
Job burnout	B.A.	25	3.855	.77840	.008
	M.A.	333	4.261	.63049	
	PhD./EdD.	3	4.492	.63413	
EE	B.A.	25	4.010	.78056	.014
	M.A.	333	4.415	.68884	
	PhD./EdD.	3	4.000	1.3169	
PA	B.A.	25	3.820	.86984	.048
	M.A.	333	4.094	.89226	
	PhD./EdD.	3	5.000	.57282	
DP	B.A.	25	3.664	1.2024	.015
	M.A.	333	4.281	1.0154	
	PhD./EdD.	3	4.467	.80829	

6) Marital Status:

Teachers with different marital status may lead to different job burnout levels. However, no significant difference was found among EFL university teachers of different marital status (Table 7), because the Sig. values of them were all above 0.05. This result was the same as that of Guo's in 2018. But in Zhu's study, the difference was significant. Married teachers had higher levels of burnout than unmarried teachers.

TABLE 7 DIFFERENCES of MARITAL STATUS in JOB BURNOUT

	Marital status	N	Mean	SD	Sig.
Job burnout	Single	48	4.2857	.47801	.802
	Married	305	4.2248	.66694	
	Divorced	8	4.2976	.86157	
EE	Single	48	4.4219	.67024	.921
	Married	305	4.3775	.71405	
	Divorced	8	4.3750	.72580	
PA	Single	48	4.1302	.76403	.894
	Married	305	4.0730	.90515	
	Divorced	8	4.1563	1.23879	

DP	Single	48	4.3167	.74586	.769
	Married	305	4.2236	1.07433	
	Divorced	8	4.4000	1.18080	

## V. CONCLUSION

The present study analyzed and investigated the current level of EFL university teachers' job burnout in Henan Province of China. The main findings are: (1) The job burnout of EFL university teachers were relatively on a high level and higher than some previous studies. (2) Female teachers suffered less job burnout than male teachers, but the difference was not significant. (3) Teachers of different age groups did not have significant different levels of burnout. (4) Years of teaching experience did not cause significant difference in the job burnout degree. (5) As for education background, teachers with doctoral degree have the highest levels of job burnout, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization, while teachers with M.A. degree have the highest level of emotional exhaustion. (6) There was no significant difference in teacher job burnout with regard to the marital status.

The results in this study showed that all EFL university teachers were suffering relatively high level of job burnout, without significant difference related to gender, age, years of teaching experience, and marital status. Only education

background showed significant differences in the job burnout level and the three dimensions of it.

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