

BURNOUT LEVELS AMONG SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS REGARDING SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

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Abstract

The term burnout represents a psychological and emotional state among those working in the field of education, especially in the field of special education. The study aimed to assess the level of burnout among special education teachers based on a number of demographic characteristics, such as years of experience, gender, and educational background. There were 79 male and female teachers in the study sample chosen from several special institutions in Zarqa, Jordan; The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was used in the study in order to accomplish its goals. The results of the study indicated that burnout was moderate, and that emotional exhaustion (EE) was high in respect to the scale's dimensions. At the same time, personal accomplishment (PA) and depersonalization (DP) occurred at a moderate degree. The study's demographic characteristics, such as gender, years of experience, and academic background, did not appear to have any statistically significant effects on the outcomes.

Keywords: Burnout. Emotional Exhaustion. Depersonalization. Personal Accomplishment. Special Education Teachers

Introduction

The term "burnout" first appeared in the 1970s and was described as a feeling of weariness or annoyance resulting from unfulfilled expectations in a relationship, a cause, or a way of life. (Jackson and Parker, 2023). Burnout is a condition of mental, bodily, and emotional weariness brought on by experiencing excessive or protracted stress. (Bragg, 2025)

The syndrome known as "burnout" is brought on by prolonged exposure to stressful conditions and can result in feelings of depersonalization, emotional tiredness, inefficiency, and Insufficient achievement in one's personal and professional life. (Maslach et al., 2016). Stress and Burnout are common among teachers who are overworked and overcommitted. This is what special education teachers go through when they have many cases to handle, have to cover for other teachers, and frequently have to help other teachers. Teachers who are burned out frequently decide to quit teaching. Others will quit teaching entirely, while others will transition to another role. Special education kids frequently do not obtain the services they require when this happens, and

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their Individual Education Plan's integrity is not fulfilled (Kennel, 2024).

Wong and McGrew (2017) discovered a correlation between special education instructors' job burnout and their involvement and practice of teaching, which in turn affects the results of their students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Under the persons with disabilities education Act's Part B services, kids age 3 to 21 who satisfy the eligibility requirements for one of the 13 recognized disabilities are given IEPs.

Theoretical Framework

Everyday pressures at work have an impact on a person's performance and emotional well-being. Pressures at work and in other aspects of life can become major burdens that deplete a person's vitality and put them at risk for physical and mental health issues. Their personality and mental health are affected for a long time by things like being exposed to upsetting situations, caring for ill people, and seeing their pain (Al Katatba, 2020). The German doctor and psychologist the term burnout was created by Herbert J. Freudenberger, in his scholarly paper "Staff Burn-Out," defining it as "being exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources" at work. (Alahmed, 2024).

Maslach and Leiter (2016) defined burnout as a chronic psychological condition that arises in response to sustained workplace stress. It is typically characterized by three core elements: persistent emotional exhaustion, a growing sense of detachment or indifference toward one's job, and a noticeable decline in professional efficacy and accomplishment. Burnout is widely recognized as a significant concern in the field of occupational health due to its adverse effects on both individuals and organizations.

According to Allamdarloo and Moradi (2021), one of the most stressful jobs is teaching and in a long term, stress can lead to burnout. On the other hand, burnout actually encompasses depersonalization (a negative and pessimistic attitude toward one's job), emotional depletion (a significant experience of fatigue at work), and low sense of personal success (a bad assessment of one's job performance). (Gluschkoff et al., 2016). Teachers who experience burnout not only risk psychological harm, but also suffer from diminished professionalism and productivity, Anxiety, insomnia, forgetfulness, sadness; arrhythmia, hypertension, gastrointestinal issues, and chronic headaches are just a few examples of the psychological and physical symptoms that can accompany burnout. (Garcia-Arroyo et al., 2019; Tahar et al., 2023).

From the point of view of Alkobishi and Algahtani (2019), Teachers can experience burnout due to a variety of issues that are directly related to the teaching process, such as dealing with students who exhibit aggressive or sabotage behavior, or issues with mobility and activity, excess, or typical movements. Jeon et al. (2022) point out that in order to satisfy the basic requirements of young children, provide learning activities that foster their physical, social-emotional, linguistic, and cognitive development, and finish required non-instructional chores, teachers must perform a variety of duties. Students with a wide range of learning, physical, emotional, and intellectual challenges are served by special education teachers. Those students might require academic support in writing, math, or reading. Others require assistance in honing their organizing abilities. Some special education teachers work with students who use wheelchairs or have other physical limitations. Others assist students with sensory impairments, including those who are hard of hearing or blind. Teachers of special education may also work with students who have emotional issues and autism spectrum disorders (Kulberg, 2019).

According to Cech and Gillova (2021), Johnson et al. (2005), (Mearns & Cain, 2003) among other helpful professions, the teaching profession is one of the most susceptible to burnout syndrome. Teachers are negatively affected by burnout syndrome, but their students are the ones that suffer the most. Guven, Gazelci and Ogelman (2022) confirmed that almost every occupational group that works with people frequently experiences burnout because of the nature of their jobs, although it is particularly common in the health and education sectors and the rate is high among special education teachers.

As for special education teacher's instruction for students with special needs involves overcoming a number of challenges (Fernando, Patrizia, & Tiziana, 2020; Williams et al., 2022). The fact that they frequently find themselves in circumstances where they must raise, train, and guide children who require special care adds to the difficulty of their jobs and obligations. These people face a distinct set of difficulties as a result. People who work in special schools are expected to possess far higher levels of patience and endurance than their counterparts in other professions when compared to others who teach. (Darawsheh et al, 2023).

Special education teachers in certain countries deal with many pressures, including low pay, bonuses, a heavy workload, little social support, and the challenge of managing a classroom full of special needs students. Parents also put pressure on them, expecting immediate and noticeable improvements

in their children's behavioral and mental health (Lahoual, 2020). Williams et al. (2022) mentioned that some challenging circumstances might encounter special education teachers in their job such as lack supportive parents and administration, poor relationships with colleagues, disruptive students.

Special education teachers' burnout has been the subject of numerous international research that examine it from various dimensions Al-Bawaliz, Arbeyat and Hammadneh (2015) examined the burnout of Special education teachers and its relationship with emotional intelligence in Jordan, the results revealed that as the burnout decreases the emotional intelligence increases. A study conducted in United Arab Emirates by Bataineh and Alsagheer (2012) aimed to analyze the relationship between Special education teachers' burnout and social support, the results showed that social support can reduce burnout of Special education teachers. Lahoual (2020) researched the degree of burnout among special education teachers as well as the role that the big five personality traits—extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience, and conscientiousness—play in predicting burnout among special education teachers, the study's findings showed that special education teachers experience high levels of burnout. They also showed that one component, agreeableness, might predict burnout, accounting for roughly 18.2 percent of burnout.

The Present Study

The significance of the present study comes from its capacity to address contemporary global events that highlight the value and importance of special education teachers' roles in instructing students with special needs. Moreover the study sought to determine the causes and degrees of burnout among special education teachers in order to enhance their competences.

The findings of the study may attract the attention of authorities such as the Ministry of Education and the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Jordan, as there aren't many specialist studies on the topic of special education teachers' burnout throughout the Arab world and locally.

The study offers theoretical literature on the topic of special education teachers' burnout both locally and in the Arab globe. As a result, it might help pave the way for additional research on burnout and its relationship to other factors in the study's target group.

The current study sought to: (1) determine the degree of burnout experienced by special education teachers, and (2) To demonstrate the variations in special education teachers' burnout that are caused by the variables of gender, years of experience and academic qualification. More precisely, the current study will look at the burnout amongst the special education teachers in light of the following research questions:

1. To what extent do special education teachers experience burnout?
2. Does the gender variable account for any statistically significant differences in burnout among special education teachers?
3. Do the varying years of experience among special education instructors result in any statistically significant differences in burnout?
4. Does the variable academic qualification cause any statistically significant differences in burnout among special education teachers?

Methods

Participants

Seventy-nine special education instructors who were enrolled in special institutions at Zarqa Governorate made up the study's total sample. Simple random sampling was used to choose the sample. Table 1 displays the demographic information of the participants based on the variables of the study (gender, educational level, and years of experience) (Table 1).

Instrument

In order to accomplish the study's goals, the researcher employed The MBI, or Maslach Burnout Inventory, was developed by Maslach et al., (1996). This included 22 items spread across three sub-dimensions: (a) emotional exhaustion (EE; included nine items: 1. 2. 3. 6. 8. 13. 14. 16 and 20), (b) depersonalization (DP; included five items: 5. 10. 11. 15 and 22) and (c) Personal accomplishment (PA; included eight items: 4. 7. 9. 12. 17. 18. 19 and 21).

The adopted MBI has been used to a pilot sample of thirty special education instructors who were chosen at random from special institutions in order to assess its validity and reliability and accomplish the goal of the current study. As shown in Table (2), for the combined sub-dimensions, a person correlation coefficient value was assumed. and with the inventory's overall score in order to confirm the scale's constructive validity (Table 2).

The person correlation coefficient values between the burnout inventory MPI sub-dimensions and the inventory's overall score are all statistically significant and appropriate for the current investigation, as shown in Table (2). The coefficient of internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha was computed for the MPI sub-dimensions and the scale's overall score in order to confirm the scale's reliability; the results varied between 0.760 and 0.830. The inventory's overall score has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.912, which is high and suitable for the goals of the study.

On a Likert scale with a range of 0 to 6, the MBI items are scored as follows: 0 for "Never," 1 for "few times a year," 2 for "once a month," 3 for "few times a month," 4 for "once a week," 5 for "few times a week," and 6 for "every day." Garwood (2023) point out that the meaning of three sub-dimensions ranking as follow: emotional exhaustion (EE; higher = more burnout), depersonalization (DP; higher = more burnout) and Personal accomplishment (PA; lower = more burnout). This inventory has demonstrated satisfactory convergent validity; it has been mainly utilized in the evaluation of burnout among different professions in numerous countries.

The range used to compute the degree of burnout is $(6+0) / 3 = 2$, and as a result, the category's significance is as follows.: less than 2 represent low level; from 2 to less than 4 represent medium level; and from 4 to less than 6 represent height level.

Statistical Methods

Statistical techniques were applied in accordance with the study's questions, goals, and variable characteristics. Data entry and required analysis were done using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS, 23). In addition to the T-Test and the One Way ANOVA test, to determine the extent to which the study sample responded to the study inventory items, means and standard deviations were used.

Results

Below are the research conclusions, which respond to the research questions. First, the findings pertaining to the first query: To what extent do special education teachers experience burnout? The averages and (SD) of the total MBI scores for teachers and on each of its sub dimensions were determined in order to respond to this question, as indicated in (Table 3).

Table (3) shows that the overall burnout score is at a medium level, with a mean of (3.61) and SD of (0.333). It also shows that (EE) came in a high level, with a mean of (4.29) and SD of (0.516), followed by (DP) with a mean of (3.94) and SD of (0.411). Finally, with a mean of (2.60) and SD of (0.294), (PA) appeared in a medium degree.

Second: Results related to the second question: Does the gender variable account for any statically significant differences in burnout among special education teachers?

The study sample's mean responses were calculated along with means and standard deviations to address the second question. The MBI sub-dimensions and the inventory's overall score were compared using a T-test for independent samples. Moreover, (Table 4) shows that.

Table 1. Distribution of the study sample according to demographic variables.

Variable	Category	Count	%
Gender	Male	21	26.6
	Female	58	73.4
Educational Level	Diploma	31	39.2
	Bachelors	46	58.2
	Master	2	2.5
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	21	26.6
	5 – 10 years	44	55.7
	More than 10 years	14	17.7

Table 2. Values of the person correlation coefficient between the overall score and the sub-dimensions.

Sub Dimensions	EE	DP	PA	Over all
EE	--	*0.89	*.92	*0.97
DP	--	--	*.85	*0.93
PA	--	--	--	*0.92

Table 3. Means and SD for the sub dimensions and overall score on the MBI.

Sub Dimensions	EE	PA	Over all
EE	4.28	0.516	high
DP	3.94	0.411	medium
PA	2.60	0.294	medium
The Overall	3.61	0.334	medium

Table 4. T-test results of independent samples.

Source	Gender	N	M	SD	T	df	Sig
EE	Male	21	4.10	0.605	2.012	77	0.840
	Female	58	4.36	0.466			
DP	Male	21	3.93	0.435	0.535	77	0.595
	Female	58	3.98	0.405			
PA	Male	21	2.55	0.322	0.814	77	0.418
	Female	58	2.62	0.284			
The Overall	Male	21	3.50	0.387	1.675	77	0.098
	Female	58	3.64	0.308			

Table 5. Means and SD for the study sample based on the years of experience variable.

Source	Years of Experience	N	M	SD
EE	1-5 years	21	4.41	0.434
	5-10 years	44	4.20	0.570
	More than 10 years	14	4.36	0.421
DP	Years of Experience	21	3.97	0.318
	1-5 years	44	3.94	0.443
	5-10 years	14	4.08	0.441
PA	Years of Experience	21	2.63	0.280
	1-5 years	44	2.55	0.288
	5-10 years	14	2.71	0.319
The Overall	Years of Experience	21	3.66	0.272
	1-5 years	44	3.54	0.356
	5-10 years	14	3.70	0.332

Table 6. Findings from a One-Way ANOVA.

Source		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig
EE	Between Groups	0.725	2	0.363	1.373	0.259
	Within Groups	20.072	76	0.264		
	Total	20.798	78			
DP	Between Groups	0.223	2	0.112	0.652	0.524
	Within Groups	13.006	76	0.171		
	Total	13.229	78			
PA	Between Groups	0.283	2	0.142	1.662	0.197
	Within Groups	6.480	76	0.085		
	Total	6.763	78			
The Overall	Between Groups	0.360	2	0.180	1.632	0.202
	Within Groups	8.387	76	0.110		
	Total	8.747	78			

Table (4) indicates that there are disparities between the averages for male and female on the MPI's dimensions and overall score. The average for (EE) was 4.10 for men and 4.36 for women. The average for (DP) was 3.93 for men and 3.98 for women, and the average for (PA) was 2.55 for men and 2.62 for women. Finally, It is clear that the variations in the averages of the male and female participants in the sample of the study are quite little. The overall MPI score mean for males was 3.50, while the mean for females was 3.64. The T-test for independent samples, which examines mean differences, revealed no statistically significant difference that might be attributable to gender on MBI and its sub-dimensions.

Third: Findings pertaining to the third question: Do different special education teachers' years of experience results in any statistically significant variations in burnout? The study sample's averages and standard deviations were computed based on the years of experience variable in order to respond to the third question. That is seen in (Table 5).

Table (5)'s findings demonstrate that the study sample's mean responses on the sub-dimensions and their overall MBI score varied from one another. As shown in (Table 6), a One Way ANOVA is assumed in order to analyze these differences.

The sub-dimensions' statistical values (F) are as follows: EE achieved 1.373, although DP (0.652) and PA (1.662) aren't statistically significant at the significance level ($\alpha < 0.05$), according to Table (6). When it came to the variances in the study sample's mean score on the MBI overall, It was found that the overall score's statistical value (F) was 1.632, which at the significance level ($\alpha < 0.05$) is not statistically significant.

Forth: Findings pertaining to the fourth question: Does the variable academic qualification cause any statistically significant differences in burnout among special education teachers? To answer the question, the means and standard deviations of the study sample were calculated using the variable academic qualification. This can be observed in (Table 7).

The findings in Table (7) demonstrate that the study sample's mean responses on the sub-dimensions and the MBI overall score differ. An assumed One Way ANOVA is used to analyze these differences, as in (Table 8).

The entire MBI score has a statistical value (F) of (0.760), which is not statistically significant at the significance level ($\alpha < 0.05$), according to table (8), which shows the variances in the study sample's mean score overall. At the significance level ($\alpha < 0.05$), the statistical value (F) of the sub-dimensions: EE attained (0.318), although the DP (0.993) and for PA (0.925) are not statistically significant.

Discussion

To determine the variations in special education teachers' burnout that can be ascribed to the following factors: gender, years of experience, and academic qualification, this study examined the level of burnout among special education teachers. The findings are believed to add to the body of knowledge.

The results of the study indicate that the level of burnout among special education teachers have a medium degree, which similar to previous studies: Alhamed (2024), Al Sabah et al. (2022), Al Darawsheh et al. (2023), Squillaci (2020), Stathopoulou et al. (2023), and Al Sawalmeh et al. (2021). It turned out that this result contrasted with some previous research, Tahar et al. (2023) is one example, which demonstrated the degree of burnout among special education teachers was low; the results of AL Katatba (2020), Al Raggad (2018), Ramadan et al. (2020), Williams & Dikes (2015) and Laoual (2021) which found that the level of burnout was high. One could argue that the study's date, location, and the burnout assessment used may have contributed to the results' discrepancies from earlier research. according to Alhamed (2024), Aldosiry (2022) and Candeias et al. (2021) pointed out that providing appropriate support and improving working conditions could alleviate burnout

among special education teachers. In addition, the results revealed that the sub-dimension Emotional Exhaustion (EE) came in a high level, which similar to previous studies: Al hamed (2024), AlSabah et al. (2022), AlDarawsheh et al. (2023), and Al Sawalmeh et al. (2021). according to Maslach and Leiter (2016); Klusmann et al. (2023); Wang et al. (2024), Teacher emotional exhaustion, which is characterized as a substantial depletion of emotional reserves brought on by persistent pressures connected to the teaching profession, is a crucial component of burnout in the educational setting.

Additionally, the results revealed no statistically significant differences in burnout among special education teachers attributed to the gender variable, which indicates that the level of burnout is the same for male and female. Furthermore, this included the results of Al Sawalmeh et al. (2021); Elbatsh (2022); Platsidu & Agaliotis (2008). However, this result differs from results of some researches such as Alraggad (2018); Liorent (2016); Alhamed (2024). This result can be explained by the fact that special education teachers (male & female) perform the same tasks and responsibilities related to the educational services provided to students with special needs, in addition to the fact that they live in the same working conditions.

Regarding the result reached by the study that differences in burnout are not statistically significant according to the variable of years of experience among special education teachers, This outcome aligned with the conclusions drawn by Al-Sabah et al. (2022); Khalil, Al Shamali & Al Smadi (2020); Platsidu & Agaliotis (2008); Alaraideh (2016); Abd Elhadi (2017). And not consisted with the results of Al Sawalmeh et al. (2021); Liorent (2016).

It is possible to explain this outcome in light of the fact that special education teachers face recurring and chronic psychological, behavioral, and educational challenges with students with special needs, which leads to them being exposed to the same professional pressures regardless of years of experience. The results of Al-Khatib et al. (2020) study also supported this trend, as it did not reveal significant differences in burnout levels attributable to the variable of experience among special education teachers in Jordan.

As Maslach & Leiter (2016) noted in their review of studies related to burnout, years of experience are not always a definitive indicator of burnout level. Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2010) supported these results, as it showed that the level of psychological burnout among teachers is not greatly affected by years of experience, but rather is affected by other variables such as administrative support and the work environment. Jennett, Harris, & Mesibov's (2003) study of teachers of students with autism spectrum disorders concluded that years of

Table 7. The study sample's means and standard deviations based on the academic qualification variable.

Source	Academic Qualification	N	M	SD
EE	diploma	31	4.23	0.531
	Bachelor's	46	4.32	0.517
	Master's	2	4.33	0.314
DP	diploma	31	3.92	0.402
	Bachelor's	46	4.02	0.396
	Master's	2	3.70	0.989
PA	diploma	31	2.54	0.336
	Bachelor's	46	2.64	0.261
	Master's	2	2.62	0.353
The Overall	diploma	31	3.54	0.359
	Bachelor's	46	3.63	0.315
	Master's	2	3.56	0.482

Table 8. One Way ANOVA. Results.

Source		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig
EE	Between Groups	0.173	2	0.086	0.318	0.728
	Within Groups	20.625	76	0.271		
	Total	20.798	78			
DP	Between Groups	0.337	2	0.168	0.993	0.375
	Within Groups	12.892	76	0.170		
	Total	13.229	78			
PA	Between Groups	0.161	2	0.080	0.925	0.401
	Within Groups	6.603	76	0.087		
	Total	6.673	78			
The Overall	Between Groups	0.171	2	0.086	0.760	0.471
	Within Groups	8.575	76	0.113		
	Total	8.747	78			

experience did not reduce a teacher's likelihood of burnout, but that ongoing daily challenges remained regardless of a teacher's experience.

As for the result reached by the study that the differences are not statistically significant according to the variable of academic qualification among special education teachers, because special education is such a difficult field, instructors of all backgrounds experience similar psychological and professional stressors.

This conclusion can be interpreted through several considerations. Burnout is strongly linked to a number of circumstances, such as managing complicated Behavioral problems, having limited resources, and having a lot of administrative and instructional responsibilities. (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Furthermore, academic qualification may not always indicate a teacher's capacity for burnout management or effective coping mechanisms. Prior studies have demonstrated that professional psychological assistance and coping mechanisms are more important in reducing burnout than Academic qualification. According to Billingsley (2004) Supportive, work settings and access to training resources help prevent emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, field experience and institutional support have a greater impact on burnout levels than academic qualifications. Finally, the homogeneity of the sample with regard to employment conditions may have reduced the discriminatory impact of academic qualifications, which is the reason that there were no statistically significant differences. (Farber, 2000).

Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, a conclusion is drawn that there is a medium level of burnout among special education teachers in the overall degree and, consequently, to the DP and PA sub dimensions, while a high degree of the EE sub dimension. Burnout did not differ significantly as a result of the study due to the variables; gender, years of experience and academic qualifications among the sample of the study.

Recommendations

The following suggestions could be made in light of the current study's findings:

1. Strengthening psychological support and educational guidance programs.
2. Activating continuing professional development programs.
3. Conduct further qualitative, field research, and further studies exploring the psychological and organizational factors that may be most closely related to burnout.
4. Improving the work environment and conditions, Establishing an effective system for professional recognition and motivation.
5. Focusing on administrative and leadership support.

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Table 2. Mediating Variable Values.

	Std Coefficient Value	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Conclusion
Organizational Commitment (X1) -> Principal's Digital Leadership (Z) -> Innovative Organizational Culture (Y)	0.045	1,419	0.078	No Mediating

Source: data processed using the Smart PLS 3 application.