

BURNOUT LEVELS OF ACADEMICS AT DUHOK UNIVERSITY IN NORTHERN IRAQ

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Abstract

The study aimed to examine the burnout levels of lecturers in Duhok University. The sample of the study included 100 lecturers from different faculties and departments of Duhok University. A demographic questionnaire was used to collect the data regarding the individual characteristics including marital status, gender, age, and educational background. The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey (MBI-ES) (Maslach, Jackson Schwab, 1986) was also employed to collect the data concerning the burnout levels of the lecturers. Quantitative data were analyzed through SPSS 18 (Statistical package for the social sciences) program, the results revealed that there is no significant differences between lecturers' demographic features and their burnout levels in terms of age, marital status, seniority in profession, and educational background, but there is a significant difference in terms of gender feature. Finally, the study came up with several suggestions to decrease the burnout levels. **Keywords:** burnout level, University lecturers, Maslach inventory.

Introduction

Burnout refers to chronic exhaustion and reduced interest. It usually leads to low productivity and effectiveness at work. It also causes mental dysfunction, such as anxiety, depression, a drop in self-esteem, and so forth. The term 'burnout' for the first time was introduced by Freudenberger's (1974) in his Staff Burnout in the United States. Freudenberger's attempted to describe the nature and dynamics of the feeling of exhaustion commonly observed in human services workers. There are many causes burnout and many researchers' comments about the factors in their studies, Eggers (2011) said that " A lack of funding and low salaries for teachers is a direct link to emotional exhaustion and burnout' (cited in Warrad, 2012)." Kyricicou (2001), who also found out the students' indiscipline and behavioral problems were a major cause of teacher burnout among teachers" (cited in Sichambo, Maragia, Simiyu, 2012). Lots of researches indicate that a person who is suffering from burnout, shows some signals or symptoms such as a negative attitude coupled with the feeling that nothing is going to work out, feeling of stagnation and inefficacy, inability to concentrate, constant exhaustion , a lack of interest in social activities and being with others, short temper, and difficulty with healthy habits like exercise, diet, and regular sleep (Dachis, 2012). When these feelings of burnout start to occur, many people try to find solutions to cope with burnout, McKay states some possible natural remedies to avoid the burnout like taking a vacation, relaxing, enjoying, improving relationship with others, lessening work load, changing career, or quitting job (McKay 2010). So Many studies specifically on 'Teacher Burnout' have shown that the current issue merits attention in terms of research and applications in administrative and educational systems. Although burnout is increasingly observed in educational contexts, but no studies have been conducted on this discipline of teacher's burnout level in Northern Iraq, therefore, the researcher would like to conduct, measure, and show if there is a meaningful relationship between burnout levels and instructors' demographic features. This phenomenon generates itself in three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 2003). The aim of this study is to determine the level of burnout among lecturers in Duhok University, Northern Iraq. This is done by measuring their level of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment, using Maslach Burnout Inventory. The following research questions were addressed: Research Question 1: What are the burnout levels among lecturers in Duhok University? Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their age? Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their gender? Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their marital status? Research Question 5: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their seniority in profession? Research Question 6: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their educational background? Related studies on Burnout Originally, burnout was defined by Freudenberger's (1974) in an article entitled Staff Burnout as a specific psychological condition in which people suffer emotional exhaustion, experience a lack of personal accomplishment, and tend to depersonalize others. Cherniss (1980) identified that, in the process of burnout, both attitudes and behaviors change in an unconstructive manner in response to work stress. Maslach et al. (1996) further asserts that individuals suffering from burnout experience a depletion of physical and emotional resources, develop cynical attitudes, and feel a loss of professional self-efficacy. Leiter (1997) also identified six major influences on burnout: (1) workload; (2) lack of control over establishing and following day-to-day priorities; (3) insufficient reward and the accompanying feelings of continually having to do more for less; (4) the feeling of community in which relationships become impersonal and teamwork is undermined; (5) the absence of fairness, in which trust, openness, and respect are not present; and (6) conflicting values, in which choices that are made by management often conflict with their mission and core values. Croom

(2003) found moderate, low, and high levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, respectively, among the teachers. Similar findings were reported for the levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization by Kirilmaz, Celen, and Sarp (2003) in Turkey. Kirilmaz et al. found that factors of age, gender, tenure, and number of children did not have any effect on the burnout level of 43 primary school teachers, while their marital status did. Serinkan and Bardakçı (2009) also contributed to the literature by revealing that the academicians have some kind of burnout due to heavy workload, lack of equipment in classes and offices, insufficient number of academicians, inadequate salary, and their partial prestige among other jobs. Zhouchou's study (2011) with 86 English teachers from secondary schools of Wenjiang District of Chengdu and the city of Changzhou revealed that the job burnout of English teachers in secondary schools is not very serious, and there is not a significant difference between female and male teachers. Finally, Watt et al. (2012) argued that teachers candidates "who find themselves in settings which do not allow them to realize their motivations are likely to feel less efficacious, less satisfied with their career choice, and to experience burnout or to leave profession". (pp. 801-801). Another study is conducted by Öztürk (2013); he used to the same Teacher Burnout Scale in Turkey, according to the findings, the instructors' level is a moderate level of burnout which is currently not a serious problem.

The Research Design and Objectives:

In this study a quantitative research design was used because the quantitative research design measures person's social behavior through observation, experiment, test, and then explains numerical analysis thus research results are objective, formal and systematic. For the objective results, James C. McCroskey 'Teacher Burnout Scale' was used to find out teachers' burnout levels and 'The information Form' which was prepared by the researcher. The dependent variable of the research is teachers' burnout level. The independent variable of the research is age, gender, marital status, seniority in profession and educational background. Participants and Setting of the Study: Participants of this study were 100 lecturers from University of Duhok during 2022-2023 academic years. Selection was done randomly from different faculties, departments, and professional experienced lecturers having university education either master degree or PhD degree. They were both males and females and aged between 25 and +40 years old with a range of between 1 and +11 years of teaching experience from different departments. The demographic characteristics of lecturers who were participated are shown in the table 1 below:

VARIABLES		NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	PERCENTAGE
AGE	25 – 30	15	15.0
	30 – 39	53	53.0
	40 and Over	32	32.0
	Male	75	75.0
	Female	25	25.0
	Married	79	79.0
	Single	19	19.0

Divorced	2	2.0
1 – 5	17	17.0
6 – 10	31	31.0
11 and Over	52	52.0
Master	78	78.0
Ph.D.	22	22.0

One hundred lecturers participated in this study. As seen from the table above, among 100 of lecturers, 75 (75%) were male and 25 (25%) were female. There were three age groups in the study such as 25-30, 30 – 39, and 40 and over age groups. In the first age group (25-30) was the smallest group of 15 participants (15%), the second group (30-39) constituted the largest group of the participants 53 (53%), the last group 40 and over was 32 participants (32%). 52 of the lecturers who participated in the study had 11 years and over, 31 had 6 - 10 years, and 17 of them had 1-5 years. As for their Educational Background (master and doctoral), 78 of the participants were holding master degree, and 22 of them among 100 participants were holding doctoral degree.

Instruments: The demographic questionnaire was designed to ascertain variables including age, gender, ethnicity, and education level. And Maslach's Inventory Educator Survey (MBI-ES) was also used to assess the levels of burnout among lecturers. Maslach's Inventory Educator Survey (MBI-ES): Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI- ES) includes 22 items that asked the respondents how often they experience feelings that relate to burnout. These items are related to the three dimensions of burnout (i.e., Emotional Exhaustion (EE) = 9 items; Depersonalization (DP) = 5 items; and Personal Accomplishment (PA) = 8 items). The Emotional Exhaustion subscale assesses the feelings of being emotionally exhausted or overextended. The Depersonalization subscale evaluates the feelings of impersonal responses towards people. The Personal Accomplishment subscale measures the feelings of successful achievement (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986).

Procedure: In this study, 100 participants who are all Iraqi lecturers in different departments from Duhok in Northern Iraq were selected. They were from both genders and from different ages with different years of experiences. In this study, questionnaires in the form of papers were spread among lecturers from different fields. Collecting data started at October 2022 and lasted for about 15 days. The probable needed time for filling out both questionnaires was about 15 minutes. Professors were encouraged to contact the researcher if any query or concerns arose as a result of their participation in the study. Gathering data was summarized by the use of SPSS software (Version 18). Then, the correlation between these two variables was calculated. Secondly, as the main collection tool 'Teacher Burnout Scale' developed by James McCroskey (2001) was used. The scale describes four degrees of burnout to interpret the results of the scale. These four degrees are as follow;

1. **No Feelings of Burnout Level (0 – 35):** indicate few burnout feelings
2. **Low Level (36 – 55):** indicates some strong feelings of burnout, but not probably a serious problem
3. **Moderate Level (56 – 70):** indicates substantial burnout feelings, so getting some help is suggested
4. **High Level (71 – 100):** indicates the individual is experiencing severe burnout. This instrument measures the symptoms of teacher burnout. Burnout can lead to very aberrant behavior on the part of teachers-including resignation, emotional outbursts and other apparently irrational behavior. Expected alpha reliability estimates for this instrument are above .85 face validity is good" (Richmond, V.P. Wrench, J.S & Gorham, J. (2001) Data Collection: The researcher conducted to nearly all the departments in Duhok University in order to reach each of

the participants one by one during the academic year 2022-2023. The participants were asked to fill in the Burnout scale and information form used to collect data. The quantitative data which was gathered via the questionnaire were analyzed through SPSS 18 (Statistical package for the social sciences) program was used. In order to find out what the level of lecturers' burnout is and whether there is a statistically significant difference between burnout levels and participants' age, gender, marital status, seniority in profession, educational background (master or PhD) certain tests was used such as "t" test, ANOVA (one way of analysis of variance). For the results of the study is taken .05 level of significance criteria. Findings and Discussion: This section discusses the findings that derived from the data collected from the questionnaire. This study aims to find out the answers of the following question and sub-questions: Research Question 1: What are the burnout levels among lecturers in Duhok University? Sub-Questions: Sub-Question 2: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their age? Sub-Question 3: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their gender? Sub-Question 4: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their marital status? Sub-Question 5: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their seniority in profession? Sub-Question 6: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their educational background? Research Question 1: What are the burnout levels among lecturers in Duhok University? Table 2: Shows the degrees of the instructor's burnout levels.

Degrees of Burnout	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0 – 35 No Feelings of Burnout Level	50	50.0	50.0	52.0
	36	36.0	36.0	85.3
36 – 55 Low Level	9	9.0	9.0	94.7
56 – 70 Moderate Level	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
71 – 100 High Level				
	100	100.0	100.0	
Total				

According to the results of the teacher burnout scale, the burnout levels of 50 participants (50%) are between 0 and 35, which means there are few burnout feelings. Those of the 36 participants (36%) vary between 36 and 55, which means there are some strong feelings of burnout. There are 9 participants (9%) who have substantial burnout feelings at the level 56-70, which means that they need some help to solve their problems. And only 5 participants (5%) have been found to have the burnout degree between 71 and 100, this means that they are experienced severe burnout feelings. According to the findings related to the study, the burnout levels of the lecturers (instructors) who work in Duhok University of Northern Iraq is between 0 and 35. This degree indicates 'No Feelings of Burnout Level'. Sub-Question 2: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their age? Table 3: Shows whether lecturers' age affect their burnout levels.

Age	N	mean	Df	p	Significance Level
25 – 30	15	45.46	2	.76	P > .05
30 – 39	53	51.77			
40 and over	32	50.75			
Total	100	50.50			

Table 3 is related to the burnout levels of instructors with regard to the age as an independent variable. As can be seen in the table, the mean of the burnout levels of the 25 – 30 age group is 45.46, the mean of the 30 – 39 age group is 51.77, and the mean of the 40 and over age group is 50.75. ANOVA (one way of analysis of

variance) test was used to test the homogeneity of variances and the significance level was found to be $.53 > .05$. As the age variable was non-homogenous, the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was used. When the burnout mean results of the groups are compared according to the Kruskal-Wallis test, the 30 – 39 age groups seems to have the highest burnout level, and the 25 – 30 age groups has the lowest mean. However, as the significance level is $.76 > .05$, there is no significant differences between the burnout levels of the instructors in terms of age. Sub-Question 3: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their gender? Table 4: Shows whether lecturers' gender affect their burnout levels.

Gender	N	mean	Df	Sig.(2tailed)	Significance Level
Female	25	65.68	1	.002	P < 0.5
Male	75	45.44			

The t-test results of the male and female instructors' burnout degrees are shown in the table 4. It can be seen that the mean of the female instructors' burnout levels is 65.68 and the mean of the male instructors' is 45.44, the mean of burnout results of the female instructors is higher than that of the male instructors. However, this difference is statistically significant as the significance level (2tailed) is $.002 < 0.5$, in short, there is a significance difference between instructors' gender and their burnout levels. Sub-Question 4: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their marital status?

Table 5: Shows whether lecturers' marital status affect their burnout levels.

Marital Status	n	mean	Std.dev.	df	p	Significance Level
Married	79	50.88	29.40	2	.75	P > .05
Single	19	50.52	29.17			
Divorced	2	35.0	7.07			
Total	100	50.50	29.01			

As it is seen in the table 5, there is no significant difference between instructors' marital status and their burnout level as the significance level is $.75 > .05$. The significance level of test of homogeneity is $.15 > .05$, the results shows that the groups are non-homogeneous. ANOVA (one way of analysis of variance) test was used. The mean score of the married is 50.88, the mean score of the single is 50.52 and the mean score of the divorced is 35.0, from the results depicted in the table, it can be said that the burnout level of the married is the highest, that of the unmarried is the next and that of the divorced is the lowest among the participants groups. However, the difference is not significant statistically. A similar study is carried out by Asgari's study (2012), it is reported that there is no significant difference between marital status and burnout levels. Sub-Question 5: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their seniority in profession? Table 6: Shows whether lecturers' seniority in profession affect their burnout levels.

Seniority in Profession	n	mean	Df	P	Significance Level
1 – 5	17	40.88	2	.32	P > .05
6 – 10	31	52.48			
11 and over	52	52.46			
Total	100	50.50			

As it is shown in table 6, the mean of the 1 – 5 seniority in profession group is 40.88, the mean of the 6 – 10 seniority in profession group is 52.48, and the mean of the 11 and over seniority in profession group is 52.46.

ANOVA (one way of analysis of variance) test was used to test the homogeneity of variances according to which the significance level was $.77 > .05$, this means that the seniority groups were non-homogeneous. But according to the results of Kruskal-Wallis, the significance level was found to be $.32 > .05$. This shows that there is no meaningful difference between instructors' seniority in profession and their burnout level. However, regarding seniority in profession group, the 1 – 5 has the lowest burnout level, the 6 – 10 has the highest burnout level, and 11 and over is close to the highest level among seniority in profession groups. Other studies had conducted by researchers like Dincerol (2013), Sezar (2012) in the literature state the difference between the seniority and the burnout level is found to be statistically significant. Sub-Question 6: Is there a significant difference between the burnout levels of University lecturers and their educational background? Table 7: Shows the difference between lecturers' educational background and their burnout levels. □

Educational Background	n	mean	Std. dev.	Df	p	Significance Level
Master	78	51.60	29.85	1	.47	P > .05
PhD	22	46.59	26.04			
Total	100	50.50	29.01			

Table 7 shows the number of all 100 participants. According to the participants' educational background (master and doctoral degrees), 78 of the participants were holding master degree certifications, and 22 of the participants were holding doctoral certifications from all faculties and departments. ANOVA (one way of analysis of variance) test was used. The significance level of the test homogeneity of variances was found to be $.27 > .05$. In terms of the educational background, the groups were found to be non-homogenous. Also, is seen in table 7, that the significance level is $.47 > .05$. It shows that there is no significant difference between instructors' educational background (master and PhD) and their burnout level. The researcher Koruklu's (2012) found that there was no significant difference between burnout level and demographic features such as the faculty they graduated from. Conclusion and Suggestions Conclusion: The present study investigates the burnout levels of instructors working in Duhok University and attempts to indicate whether there was a meaningful relationship between instructors' burnout levels and their age, gender, marital status, seniority in profession, and their educational background. In order to carry out the study, the participants of the study were selected among from all the faculties and departments of Duhok University in Northern Iraq during 2022-2023 academic year. The participants were asked to fill in the Burnout scale and information form to collect the data. The quantitative data was gathered via the questionnaire and analyzed through the SPSS 18 (Statistical package for the social sciences) program. In order to find out what the level of instructors' burnout was and whether there was a statistically significant difference between burnout levels and participants' age, gender, marital status, seniority in profession, and educational background. The results of the study indicate that the instructors' burnout levels is between 0 – 35 which indicates No Feelings of Burnout Level. Moreover, the study explains that apart from gender feature there is no significant difference between instructors' burnout level and their demographic features such as age, marital status, and seniority in profession, and educational background.

Suggestions for Further Studies:

Other studies could be done in the same area

١. This study is conducted in a university in Northern Iraq. A similar study can be carried out in another environment such as high schools or secondary schools in North of Iraq.

٢. This study is carried out on university instructors. A similar study can be carried out on students to examine their burnout levels.

٣. This study deals with instructors' burnout level in relation to their demographic features. Another study can be carried out on instructors' burnout level in relation to their physical conditions.

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