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Abstract

Teacher burnout is an important phenomenon that affects the education system and society as a whole. Assessment represents a form of stress for teachers, and this study explores the association between teachers' assessment-related beliefs and their burnout level. To this end, the Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment inventory (TCoA) along with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) were administered to a sample of Iranian teachers. Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) and Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) were employed for data analysis. The results reveal a significant association between teachers' conceptions of assessment and the three dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment). It is similarly found that conceiving of assessment as irrelevant to the life and work of teachers and learners is the best predictor of Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment, whereas Student Accountability is the best predictor of Emotional Exhaustion. Finally, the results are discussed and implications are provided in the context of education.

Keywords: *teachers' conceptions of assessment, burnout, multiple correspondence analysis*

1. Introduction

After the concept of burnout became a focus of interest in the mid-1970s, it rapidly expanded to cover a wide variety of social and personal problems facing workers (Shukla & Trivedi,

2008). The burnout phenomenon is “a chronic state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that arises in personnel from the cumulative demands of their work” (Goddard, O’Brien, & Goddard, 2006, p. 857). It is mainly distinguished as the inability to be adequately concerned about and engaged with clients due to growing frustration, tension, and anxiety (Shukla & Trivedi, 2008). Maslach (1984) clarified burnout as the lack of concern and enthusiasm toward the people one is working with. Further, he maintained that this negative response results from interpersonal contact with people on a large scale or as Kasinath and Kailaslingam (1995) put it, individuals who do ‘people work’. A commonly accepted portrayal of burnout is “a three dimensional syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that occurs among individuals who work with people in some helping capacity” (Maslach, 1982, p.3). Specifically, emotional exhaustion centers round the feeling of being overextended and exhausted by one’s work. Depersonalization is a feeling of ill-will and indifference toward the receivers of one’s service. Personal accomplishment hinges on the positive feeling of competence, meaningfulness and achievement in one’s work with people (Maslach, 1982).

The teaching profession is not exempt from burnout. Though teaching is often referred to as a labor of love, it is stressful occupation. Although the reasons may vary, most teachers experience stress during their working life (Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012). Many teachers cope with the long-term stress; others fail and experience burnout (Jennett, Harris, & Mesibov, 2003).

Teachers can be viewed as ‘people workers’ with learners as their ‘clients’ (Shukla & Trivedi, 2008). Teacher burnout not only affects learners and the classroom environment but also society and educational processes. A teacher who is highly frustrated and detached from pupils cannot be beneficial to society, the educational system or the workplace (Shukla &

Trivedi, 2008). Hence, burnout as a major social dysfunction merits careful attention. Numerous studies (e.g. Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012) have been conducted in this area. Some have investigated the impact of burnout on productivity, health, and work efficacy (e.g. Huebner & Huberty, 1984). Others have analysed its genesis (e.g. Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Many studies have been carried out to determine the sources of burnout in teaching domain, as the quality of education is directly tied to the phenomenon of teacher burnout. For instance, age, gender, and years of experience (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), personality traits (Schaufeli, 2003), emotional intelligence (Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012) and classroom environment (Dorman, 2003) have been identified as influential in teacher burnout.

Meanwhile, assessment—a dominant force in students' lives and a potential cause of anxiety to teachers—has gone largely unnoticed by researchers as a possible source of teacher burnout. Teachers' attitudes toward assessment have been investigated (e.g. Brown, 2004), and the way teachers conceive assessment can strongly impact the way they make decisions and act in different situations. Every person owns a number of concepts and beliefs in his/her mind, forming his/her attitude. This system rules the way individuals interpret and grasp the realities around themselves and their relationships with others (Baghaei, Pishghadam, Ghaviandam, & Bazri, 2012; Pishghadam, & Navari, 2010; Pishghadam & Pourali, 2011). In the same vein, conceptions operate as a framework through which teachers perceive, respond to, and interact with their teaching environment (Marton, 1981). Teachers' styles of thinking concerning different issues of pedagogical procedures such as assessment intensely affect how they teach and what pupils may learn (Thompson, 1992). These attitudes are mostly influenced by teacher cognition. Borg (2009) declared that teacher cognition is what teachers think, know, and believe, which can play a remarkable role in the way teachers

act in the classroom. As an extension to this reasoning that teachers' conceptions of assessment influence their pedagogical engagement with students, it can be argued that those conceptions can also influence their disengagement with students—and thus their burnout level (Bibou-Nakou, Stoqiannidou & Kiosseoglou, 1999). This present study investigates the association between teachers' assessment-related beliefs and their level of burnout.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Burnout

Teachers experiencing burnout show chronic symptoms such as emotional exhaustion, fatigue, and loss of feeling of accomplishment which may affect their teaching performance either advertently or inadvertently. As a consequence, they find that their feelings toward their job, their students, and even themselves have turned more negative than in the past (Shukla & Trivedi, 2008). Furthermore, burnout teachers tend to communicate less frequently with their students and provide less information, praise, and assent to their ideas (Beer & Beer, 1992).

It is a commonly held view that burnout takes time to evolve; therefore, it is to some extent logical to expect that beginning teachers do not experience this widespread problem (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Yet, Fimian and Blanton's (1987) comparison of less experienced and more experienced teachers showed that the levels of burnout appear to be nearly identical in both groups. Previous studies have determined the role of factors such as work pressure, lack of support and role clarity highly influential on burnout rate (Kahill, 1988; Maslach &

Goldberg, 1998). In Hong Kong, MBI (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) was adapted by Lau (2002), who found that “teaching language subjects does not seem to be a salient factor of teacher burnout while teaching students with lower academic ability is related to greater burnout in depersonalization” (p.316). In regard to the relationship between burnout and different sources of teacher occupational stress, Lau’s study also revealed that “heavy workload and time pressure had great correlation with emotional exhaustion ($r=.48$) while pupil misbehaviour had greater correlation with both depersonalization ($r=.356$) and personal accomplishment ($r=-.266$)” (p.319). Elsewhere, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) identified variables such as age, marital status, and personality type as factors in teacher burnout. The study showed that younger workers have a higher rate of burnout in comparison than those in their 30s or 40s. Additionally, unmarried participants were more apt to burnout than their married counterparts. In terms of personality traits, they concluded that there is a high level of burnout among people with low self-esteem and low level of resilience. This study’s findings were reinforced by Pishghadam and Sahebjam (2012), who studied the effect of personality and emotional intelligence on teacher burnout. Their analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and personality types as well as the three burnout dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.

On the whole, research findings have revealed that there exist numerous elements which may contribute to teacher burnout. Some of them are pertinent to teachers’ daily communication with their students and their parents and some to schools and educational systems (Tatar & Horenczyk, 2003). Taylor and Sobel (2001) reported that teachers may not have the required knowledge or experience to interact with or address issues concerning students with different backgrounds. Hence, the stress and adversity may end in occupational

burnout. Similarly, students' discipline problems such as discourtesy and noisy attitude (Borg, Riding & Falzon, 1991) along with parental expectations (McCormick, 1997), have been considered as major sources of stress and teacher burnout. Moreover, lack of access to facilities, dissatisfaction with physical environment or working time were found to be potent organizational factors (Friedman, 1991).

2.2 Teachers' Conception of Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of the curriculum and an important research topic within the field of curriculum. Morris and Adamson (2010) regard assessment as “the term used to describe those actions we undertake to obtain information about pupils' knowledge, attitudes or skills” (p.127). The information collected can serve different purposes. It can be used as end-of-course evaluation of student achievement (summative assessment) and / or as on-going feedback to diagnose, predict and guide students to improve their future performance (formative assessment). Different stakeholders would have different views on the function of assessment and amongst them, teachers' views are crucial because assessment results can inform them of the success or failure of their teaching approaches, as well as how students learn. In addition, teachers' views and attitudes with regard to assessment are affected by their cultural beliefs. Therefore the context in which teachers view assessment should be taken into consideration. With a view to positioning the present study in the literature, previous studies on teachers' conception of assessment are reviewed.

In a project entitled “Student assessment for teaching and learning: Teacher perceptions and practices”, it was found that “regardless of grade level, 97% of teachers indicated that the primary purpose of collecting assessment data was to improve student learning, followed

closely by improved instruction (96%) and improved communication with students (95%)” (Kemp & Friesen, 2009). A study exploring beginning teachers’ perception of assessment revealed that all participants emphasized that the purpose of assessment was to provide a form of feedback to the teacher. Teachers from the Humanities articulated a formative-style of feedback and Mathematics teachers emphasized a summative-style of feedback (Antzoulatos, 2008).

Brown (2008) has argued that Teachers’ Conceptions of Assessment (TCoA) aggregate into four major inter-correlated factors, loosely categorized as ‘purpose’ (category 1-3) and ‘anti-purpose’ (category 4):

1. Assessment is for improving teaching and learning (Improvement).

The notion of *improvement*, sometimes known as formative assessment or assessment *for* learning, has been proved to carry positive impacts on education and provide proper feedback on student learning outcomes and teacher instructional practices. The considerable merit of the improvement notion is that assessment improves students’ learning together with the quality of teaching (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

2. Assessment evaluates and holds schools and teachers accountable (School Accountability)

The premise of assessment is *School accountability* that utilizes assessment results to publicly manifest that teachers and schools do a good job and reach required standards (Butterfield, Williams & Marr, 1999).

3. Assessment ratifies students’ learning and holds them accountable (Student Accountability)

Student accountability, implies that learners are individually accountable for their own learning. Placing learners into different classes or groups and entry selection examinations are examples of this kind (Brown, 2004). Practices applying this conception embrace: assigning scores to students' works, granting certificates based on their performances, and making different decisions (Guthrie, 2002).

4. Assessment is radically irrelevant to the life and work of teachers and learners (Irrelevant).

Irrelevant as the final concept posits that the formal evaluation of students holds no legitimate position within pedagogical purposes perhaps because it is bad, neglected and unfair or causes unnecessary anxiety and damages learners' self-esteem (Brown, 2004). The idea of inaccuracy (e.g. standard error of measurement) may enrich this 'anti-purpose' belief (Brown, 2004).

In the TCoA, Brown (2008) argues that there is a strong tension between *accountability* and *improvement* oriented purposes specifically related to educational assessment. Brown also used the TCoA and conducted studies on teachers' conception of assessment in different places. In Hong Kong, where there is a strong public examination system and cultural acceptance that examinations lead to enhanced social equity, (Cheung, 2008) found that there was a strong and positive correlation ($r=.91$) between the conception that assessment *evaluates* students and assessment is for *improvement* (Brown, Kennedy, Fok, Chan & Yu, 2009). In New Zealand, however, the same two conceptions were very weakly correlated ($r=.21$), which the researchers attributed to cultural diversity (Brown, Hui, Yu & Kennedy, 2011). Brown, Hui, Yu & Kennedy (2011) conducted another study of Hong Kong and South China teachers' conception of assessment and similarly it revealed that *accountability* was positively correlated with *improvement* ($r=.80$). They argued that this association indicates

that “teachers are persuaded that a powerful way to improve student learning is to exam them” (p.314). For the studies carried out in New Zealand (Brown, 2011) and Queensland (Brown, Lake & Matters, 2011), teachers specified the *improvement* of teaching and learning as the basic goal of assessment. In a recent attempt, Pishghadam & Shayesteh (2012) investigated Iranian EFL teachers’ conceptions of assessment found that teachers mainly believed that assessment makes *students* more *accountable*.

3. Purpose and Context of the Study

Since uncovering the beliefs teachers hold in terms of teaching, learning, and specifically assessment can be rewarding and, due to the significance of research on the teacher burnout syndrome, the current paper investigates the relationship between Iranian teachers’ conceptions of assessment and their burnout level, with a focus on the following points:

- First, to explore the association between a group of Iranian EFL teachers’ conceptual beliefs of assessment and their burnout level;
- Second, to examine which teachers’ conceptual beliefs best predict three subscales of teacher burnout.

Within the context of Iran, English language education is basically viewed as theory-oriented rather than practice-oriented system. Speaking English is considered to have little use in society. Instead, English language learners’ primary intentions are to pass school tests, universities entrance exams or international proficiency tests. Since, public schools have not proved to be successful in fulfilling the stated demands; learners tend to choose English language institutes as an alternative. During the last decades, English language institutes have undergone educational reforms to shed more light on language functions, communicative needs and meaningful learning than in the past. Yet, public schools still tend to pursue their

old rote learning policies of grammar-translation method, including reading and translating texts, memorizing vocabulary and practising grammar rules. Public schools are mainly run by the government funding and provide their students with free education. In this system, decisions are made by the government and teachers are considered as mere performers who are forced to teach the books and materials provided by the authorities in charge. Furthermore, in public schools teachers are permanently employed and do not have the fear of losing their jobs; thus, there is no competition or interest for maintaining a better fruitful class. These schools offer the students a general programme which includes various subjects such as math, science, history and English. In essence, they are not language schools, specifically. Moreover, students' mother tongue (i.e. Persian) is used as the medium of communication, instruction and teaching due to the fact that most of the teachers are not fluent enough to speak English in the class. Students' learning is chiefly assessed through standardized tests. The test content of each course is generally put forward by the pertinent teacher, while the minimum achievement criterion is offered by the ministry which is 10 out of 20. Summative assessment plays a substantial role in making decisions about learners and their level of achievement. That is, their final score is the ultimate aim. Schools have two semesters in each year and students receive credentials at the end of each semester; however, the last semester is more significant since it reflects whether the learners are permitted to continue to the next grade.

The educational systems of language institutes are decentralized. They charge tuition and depend on tuition fees or non-public sources. Their mere intention is language education. They have the flexibility to establish different programs, curriculums and assessment systems with regard to their learners' different purposes. In accordance, selecting textbooks and materials together with the course content is done by the institutes based on their pre-set

goals. Meanwhile, teachers own more freedom in administering their own materials and strategies. However, institute teachers are temporarily employed. This implies that on the condition they do not attract more learners to the institute; they will be replaced immediately. Furthermore, the medium of communication and instruction is English and teachers are required to avoid learners' mother tongue (i.e. Persian) in the class. In this system, students' learning is measured through different tests designed by both the teachers and the institutes along with class activities, tasks and term projects. Approximately 60% of learners' total score result from the qualitative and quantitative evaluation of their class performance (i.e. formative assessment), 10% midterm exam and 30% final exam and interview. The minimum criterion for passing is usually 70 or 75 out of 100. Institutes have 4 or 8 terms each year (i.e. one/two terms per season). At the end of each term they provide their learners with credentials to proceed to the next level.

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants

The total population participated in this study consisted of 113 English language teachers working at different private language institutes of Mashhad, a city in north-eastern of Iran. The rationale behind selecting language institutes (informal setting) and not public schools (formal setting) was the centralized educational policies in Iran's public schools.

The participants were both male (N=36) and female (N=77) teachers aged between 22 to 52 years old (Mean= 27) with a range of between 1 to 20 years of teaching experience (Mean= 5.5). The teachers had all majored in the various branches of English like English teaching (TEFL) (N=83), English literature (N=12), and English translation (N=18) at B.A.

(N= 9), M.A. (N=89) or Ph.D. (N=15) level. It is necessary to mention that in the educational setting of Iran, people educated in diverse branches of English, with an acceptable level of knowledge and proficiency in English language, are allowed to teach English.

4.2. Instruments

To collect the required information two scales were administered to the community sample: Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), and Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment (TCoA) inventory.

4.2.1. MBI

In order to determine participants' level of burnout, a Persian adaptation of MBI (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) was utilized. The Persian adaptation of MBI has revealed accurate indexes of reliability and validity (Badri Gargari, 1995). Reliability of the instrument varied from 0.74 to 0.84 and the factorial structure was compatible with the original version. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients estimated for the obtained data was equal to 0.81. The 22-item questionnaire is composed of three subscales: Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal accomplishment. The items are scored relying on two different ways. First according to *frequency*, in which the items are scored on a 7- point frequency scale ranging from (0) "never" to (6) "everyday". Second according to *intensity*, in which the items are scored on an 8 point scale ranging from (0) "none" to (8) "very much". The higher the scores in both frequency model and intensity model the more, the participants experience burnout feeling. Since Maslach and Jackson (1981) suggested the frequency model as the best, this model was chiefly employed in the current study (see Appendix A).

4.2.2. TCoA

For the purpose of measuring teachers' perceptions of the nature and structure of assessment Persian translation (Pishghadam & Shayesteh, 2012) of TCoA inventory (Brown, 2006) was given to a sample of English language teachers. "TCoA" is a 27-item self-report questionnaire validated (via SEM) and designed to elicit teachers' conceptions of assessment with respect to its four primary constituents i.e. Improvement, School accountability, Student accountability, and Irrelevant. Two of the primary conceptions encompass sub-factors; improvement had four 1st order factors (i.e., improves teaching, improves learning, is valid, describes student learning) and irrelevance had three first-order factors (i.e., is ignored, is bad, is inaccurate). The response scale for the items is a six-point, positively-packed, agreement rating scale; that is, two negative options (i.e., mostly disagree and strongly disagree) and four positive options (i.e., slightly, moderately, mostly, and strongly agree) (Brown, 2004). Besides, the overall reliability estimated by means of Cronbach Alpha obtained for the data in hand is 0.80 (see Appendix B).

4.3. Procedure

Initially, the Persian translation of TCoA and Persian adaptation of MBI were both emailed and handed to 113 teachers to fill out. Collecting the needed data, they were entered into and processed with SPSS 20 program. Dependent variables comprised Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal accomplishment. Independent variables consisted of Improvement, Irrelevant, School accountability, and Student accountability. To analyze the data and discover the relationship between dependent and independent variables Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) was run. MCA may also be referred to as Homogeneity Analysis or Principal Component Analysis for nominal data. MCA is an explanatory data technique employed to analyze categorical data (Benzecri, 1992). Also, it enables the researchers to alter complicated numerical tables to graphical displays (Hoffman & Franke,

1986). Thereafter, Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) was conducted to find out which of the teachers' conceptions best predict burnout dimensions.

5. Results

As already mentioned, there exists a link between teacher belief systems and their pedagogical practices. Accordingly, teacher's practices and attitudes in their educational contexts discriminate the burnout levels experienced by them (Bibou-Nakou, Stogiannidou & Kiosseoglou, 1999). Moreover, building on the fact that, a significant role has been assigned to assessment as an essential element of pedagogical process, teachers' conceptions in this regard may be markedly conspicuous. Therefore, this study has correlated English teachers' assessment-related beliefs with English their level of burnout. To examine the association between teachers' conceptions of assessment and their level of burnout MCA was run. Further, to explore which teachers' conceptions are strong predictors of teacher burnout, MRA was performed, subsequently.

5.1. Multiple Correspondence Analysis

Figure 1 depicts the graphic representation of the MCA employing the scores in teachers' conceptions of assessment and burnout dimensions. The plot allows for easier visualization of the associations among variables and provides a visual display of the values in the dataset plotted with their axes (Doey & Kurta, 2011). In this model three dependent variables (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishments) which are components of burnout are investigated with four constructs of teachers' conceptions of assessment (Improvement, Irrelevant, Student Accountability, and School Accountability). The Cronbach's Alpha for this model was equal to .70. The analysis presented a 75 % level

of adjustment, which manifests the accuracy of mapping, thus highlighting three groupings. The row and column points which seem to be close together share identical profiles; whereas the ones which are placed far from each other hold different profiles (Doey & Kurta, 2011). In accordance, close variable points are encircled and labeled from Group A to Group C to simplify the deed of interpretation (Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Munoz & Carrasco-Ortiz, 2005).

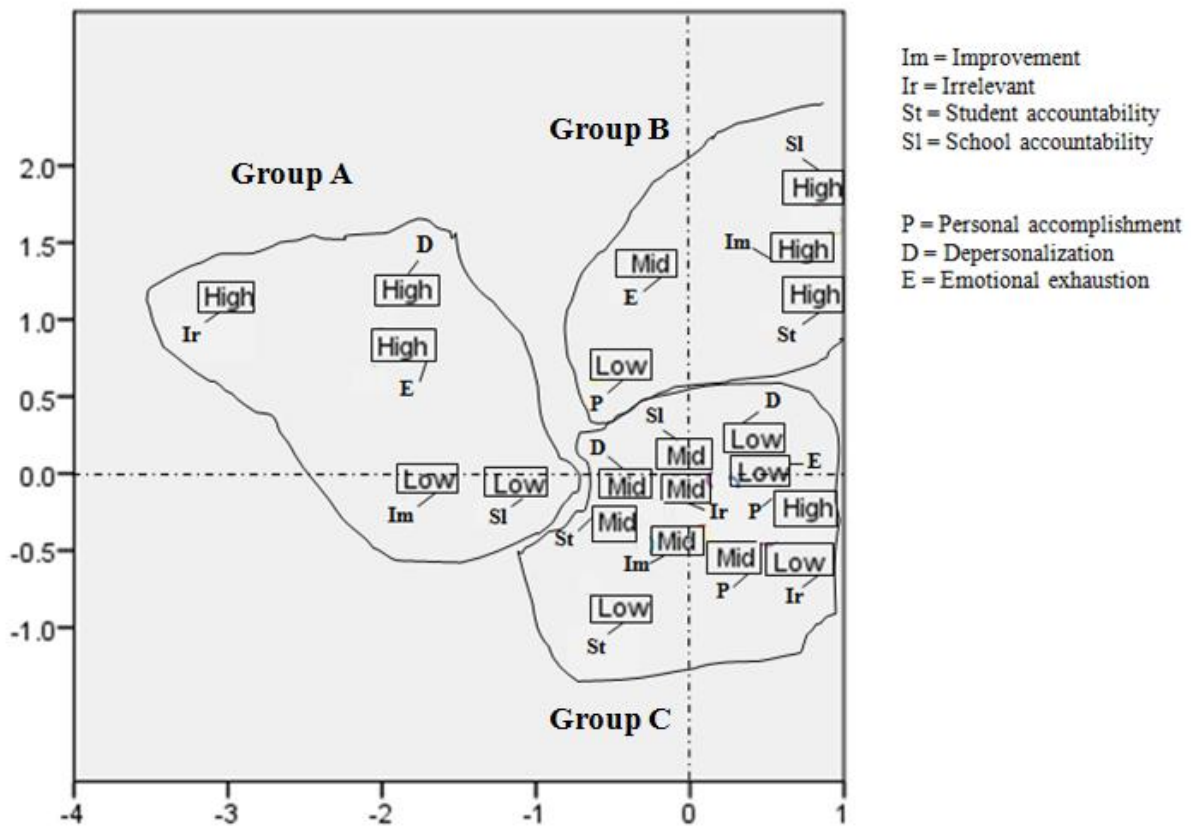


Figure 1. Joint description of teachers' conceptions of assessment and burnout level (MCA).

Close inspection of Figure 1 demonstrates that Group A includes teachers with high scores in Irrelevant and low scores in School Accountability and Improvement in association with high scores in Depersonalization and Emotional Exhaustion. Group B represents teachers with high scores in Student Accountability, School Accountability, and Improvement in

association with medium scores in Emotional Exhaustion and low scores in Personal Accomplishment. Group C stands for the teachers with medium scores in Student Accountability, Improvement, Irrelevant, and School Accountability along with low scores in Student Accountability and Irrelevant in relation to low scores in Depersonalization and Emotional Exhaustion, medium scores in Personal Accomplishment and Depersonalization and high scores with Personal Accomplishment.

5.2. Multiple Regression Analysis

In the current section we exhibit the results obtained by MRA using teachers' conceptions of assessment as predictors of burnout dimensions.

5.2.1. Prediction of Emotional Exhaustion

As Table 1 reveals there is only one model with a single predictor. This indicates that Student accountability was examined as predictor of Emotional Exhaustion.

Table 1.

Multiple regression analyses for Emotional Exhaustion

Model	Predictors	R	R ²	Adjusted R ² F	B	Std. Error of the Estimate	P
1	Student accountability	.19	.03	.02	-0.19	8.90	.000

In the model, it can be observed that R² equals 03. That is, in this regression model nearly 3% of the variance can be predicted from the independent variable. Simply put, the scores of Student accountability can predict 3% of the variance in Emotional Exhaustion; thus, it can be considered as a predictor of Emotional Exhaustion. Furthermore, the standard error of

estimate displays the precision of a prediction model. The smaller the standard error of estimate, the better the prediction will be. The standard error of estimate is 8.90 which is an acceptable value. Beta coefficients similarly demonstrate that the association between Student Accountability and Emotional Exhaustion is negative and significant ($B = -0.19, p < .05$). It means having a low Student Accountability is the best predictor of high scores in Emotional Exhaustion. That is, the teachers who barely view assessment as a tool to certify students and consider them accountable for their own learning are expected to become more emotionally exhausted by their profession compared to their colleagues with rather different perspectives toward assessment.

5.2.2. Prediction of Depersonalization

As Table 2 shows, there is merely one model with Irrelevant as the sole predictor.

Table 2.

Multiple regression analyses for Depersonalization

Model	Predictors	R	R ²	Adjusted R ² F	B	Std. Error of the Estimate	P
1	Irrelevant	.34	.11	.11	.34	4.55	.000

Based on the above table it can be seen that R² equals 0.11. It indicates that in the regression model, the scores of Irrelevant account for almost 11% of the variance in Depersonalization. Moreover, the standard error of estimate is 4.55 which shows the adequate accuracy of the prediction. Beta coefficients equally present that there is a significant positive correlation between Irrelevant and Depersonalization ($B = 0.34, p < .01$). Hence, having a high score in Irrelevant is the best predictor of Depersonalization which means the teachers who propose that assessment does not own any pedagogical purpose and is irrelevant to

teachers and learners are somewhat more expected to become indifferent toward their learners and experience burnout.

5.2.3. Prediction of Personal accomplishment

Identical to the two aforementioned analyses, Table 3 indicates a single model holding Irrelevant as the exclusive predictor.

Table 3.

Multiple regression analyses for personal accomplishment

Model	Predictors	R	R ²	Adjusted R ² F	B	Std. Error of the Estimate	P
1	Irrelevant	.27	.07	.06	-0.27	7.68	.000

According to the table, R² equals .07, which means the scores of Irrelevant accounts for approximately 7% of the variance in Personal Accomplishment. Besides, the standard error of estimate is 7.68 which confirms the curacy of prediction. Likewise, the relationship between Irrelevant and Personal Accomplishment is significantly negative ($B = -0.27, p < .05$). This implies that having low scores in Irrelevant best predicts high scores in Personal Accomplishment. In other words, the teachers who account assessment as an effective instrument to educational intentions are expected to hold better positive feelings of competence and achievement and experience burnout later than their counterparts.

5. Discussion

The results show that the four major teachers' conceptions of assessment are significantly correlated with teacher burnout level. As it was illustrated, high scores in Irrelevant and low scores in School Accountability and Improvement are in association with high scores in Depersonalization and Emotional Exhaustion. That is, the teachers who do not esteem assessment as a sign of school quality or an improvement tool for learning and deem assessment negative, bad, and unfair, may become exhausted, indifferent, and finally experience burnout to a higher degree. Moreover, it was found that high scores in Student Accountability, School Accountability and Improvement are significantly correlated with medium scores in Emotional Exhaustion and low scores in Personal Accomplishment. This finding seems to be very surprising, but if we consider the situation in Iran, the outcomes would be justifiable. One possible line of explanation is that private language institutes have a laissez-fair policy, based on which they make students pass the courses easily. Thus examination is not very important and teachers are not supposed to design any exam. In this type of situation, when teachers do not have any control over the exam, though they have positive attitudes towards assessment, they experience burnout. Further, medium scores in Improvement and School Accountability along with low to medium scores in Student Accountability and Irrelevant were in relation with low scores in Emotional Exhaustion, low to medium scores in Depersonalization, and medium to high scores in Personal Accomplishment. The overall picture of these complex associations is that teachers with negative attitudes to assessment are more susceptible to different dimensions of burnout.

Teachers' understanding of assessment can significantly predict teacher burnout. The best prediction of high scores in Emotional Exhaustion was provided by low scores in Student Accountability due to its negative Beta coefficients. It means that the teachers who do not consider individual student accountable for their own learning and improvement (Brown,

2004), feel overextended and exhausted (Maslach, 1982, Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012) more than their colleagues who assign scores to students' works, grant certificates based on their performances, and make different decisions (Guthrie, 2002). This finding can be justified in the context of language learning in Iran where teachers attribute students' success or failure to students' efforts (Pishghadam & Shayesteh, 2012). In consequence, incongruence with what Clouse (1983) stated, teachers may lose the necessary motivation for competition and experience burnout. The best prediction of high scores in Depersonalization was produced by high scores in Irrelevant. It is entirely logical to infer that the teachers who account assessment as inaccurate, neglected, or unfair (Brown, 2004) may become indifferent and lose their concern toward their learners and their profession (Maslach, 1982). Eventually, the best prediction of low scores in Personal accomplishment was resulted from high scores in Irrelevant. It is quite justifiable that the teachers who esteem assessment as negative, bad, or unfair (Brown, 2004a) do not hold the feeling of competence, achievement, or meaningfulness (Maslach, 1984); thus, experience burnout more than their co-workers.

The results obtained as to the purpose of the study can be interpreted as having some implications for more effective education. First and foremost, in order to prevent this negative dysfunction, new programs and innovative ways should be proposed to shift teachers' understanding of assessment and to convince them that assessment is rather serious and beneficial than bad or unfair. Second, those who recruit teachers should pay close attention to the mindsets of the prospective teachers. Obviously, teachers with negative attitudes towards assessment are more prone to experiencing burnout. Third, the outcomes of this study present assessment as a potential source of teacher burnout, which requires to be taken more seriously. In fact, in-service and pre-service teachers are expected to be more

conscious of the effects of their assessment attitudes on their class performance and motivation.

All in all, the current paper addresses the dearth of empirical studies highlighting teachers' beliefs and also adds to the body of knowledge about teacher burnout. Nonetheless, due to our restricted sampling, caution must be exercised before the results of the present study be generalized to other contexts. The outcome of the study in question add weight to the argument that burnout researchers would be well advised to pay extra attention to uncovered sources of burnout such as teachers' creativity fostering behaviors. In addition, our findings could be compared with those of other cultures and settings to find cross-cultural similarities and difficulties in terms of teacher burnout.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Sample items of Maslach Burnout Inventory

Emotional exhaustion: I feel emotionally drained from my work.

Depersonalization: I feel I treat some recipients as if they were impersonal objects.

Personal accomplishment: In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.

Appendix B. Sample items of Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment

Improvement: Assessment is a way to determine how much students have learned from teaching.

Student accountability: Assessment is assigning a grade or level to student work.

School accountability: Assessment is an accurate indicator of a school's quality.

Irrelevant: Assessment is unfair to students.