

IN THE NAME of GOD



University of Sistan and Baluchestan

Faculty of Humanities

Department of English Language and Literature

**The Relationships Between Iranian EFL Teachers'
Perfectionism, Burnout, and Their Teaching Style
Preferences**

M.A. Thesis

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Language**

Supervisor: Dr. Farrokhlagha Heidari

Advisor: Dr. Giti Mousapour Negari

By

Seyyed Reza Seyyedi Noghabi

Zahedan, Iran

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استاد مشاور : دکتر گیتی موسی پور نگاری

نگارش :

سید رضا سیدی نوقابی

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University of Sistan and Baluchestan

Faculty of Humanities

Department of English Language and Literature

We hereby approve that this thesis by Seyyed Reza Seyyedi Noghabi entitled:

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Committee on the Oral Examination:

Supervisor: Dr.Farrokhlagha Heidari

Advisor: Dr. Giti Mousapour Negari

First Internal Examiner:

Second Internal Examiner:

Head of the Department of the English Language and Literature: Dr.Yahya Keikhai

Zahedan, Iran

December, 2013

DEDICATION

I DEDICATE MY THESIS TO MY BELOVED FATHER AND MOTHER, WHO HELPED AND ENCOURAGED ME IN LIFE ALSO, TAUGHT ME HOW TO BE A TRUE HONEST PERSON. THEY INSTILLED CONFIDENCE OF HARD WORK AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN ME.

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationships between Iranian EFL teachers' perfectionism, burnout and their teaching style preferences, and also the difference between male and female EFL teachers and their teaching style preferences. To this end, a sample of 99 EFL teachers (46 males and 53 females), who had years of teaching experience, were selected. The measurement scales used in this study were: a) Ahwaz Teachers' Perfectionism, a 27-item questionnaire, b) Maslach Burnout Inventory, a 22-item questionnaire, and c) Teachers' Teaching Style Preferences (Grasha, 1994), including 40 items. For analyzing the gathered data between teachers' perfectionism and burnout with their teaching style preferences, we used One-way ANOVA. To see if there is any significant difference between male and female EFL teachers and their teaching style preferences, the researcher ran a Two-Way Chi-square test. The analysis showed: there is no significant difference between teachers' perfectionism and teaching style preferences. Also there was no difference between teachers' burnout and their teaching style preferences. Besides, it was found there is no significant association between male and female teachers' teaching styles.

Keywords: Teachers' Perfectionism, Teachers' Burnout, Teaching Style Preferences, Iranian EFL Teachers, Male and Female Teachers.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations

ATP	Ahwaz Teachers' Perfectionism
B.A.	Bachelor of Arts
ESL	English as Second Language
EFL	English as Foreign Language
DP	Depersonalization
EE	Emotional Exhaustion
MBI	Maslach Burnout Inventory
M.A.	Master of Arts
PA	Personal Accomplishment
TSI	Teaching Style Inventory

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In ESL and EFL classrooms, teachers pay much attention to teaching/learning styles based on the belief that they should have knowledge about pupils' learning needs, students' individual differences, their own psychological conditions, the goals they want to achieve, the culture which the classes are running in, and also the teaching styles they use. Some scholars believe teachers and their teaching attitudes are the main elements for any educational system's success (Saha & Dworkin, 2009).

After various studies done by researchers especially in the 1980s, it was stated that students' desires and needs are not the sole important matter in classes and that teachers, as material providers and educational advisors, have significant influence on education and also on the pedagogical milieu.

Teachers' perfectionism has been introduced as a sense of giftedness during 1920s. Perfectionism has been found in the field of psychology for many decades, dating to the days of psychoanalysis. Even then, psychodynamic theorists could not agree whether perfectionism

was a sign of a neurotic and disordered personality (Horney, 1951) or a healthy and innately human instinct (Adler, 1956a).

However, recent researches have shown that perfectionism is a multi-dimensional trait (e.g. Rice, Ashby & Slaney, 1998; Terry-Short, Owens, Slade & Dewey, 1995) and may associate with greater life satisfaction (Gilman & Ashby, 2003).

Another important issue that affects teachers' emotional conditions and feelings is teachers' burnout, an item which has recently been focused on in many studies. Surveys have shown that for this matter one out of every four teachers eventually leaves teaching profession (Mark & Anderson, 1978). Teacher's attribution is also a great matter of deep concern to educational policy-makers (politicians) and administrators, because of vast budgets invested in teachers' training education and in-service training. Yet, in spite of these shortcomings and depleted motivation and job initiation those teachers who experience burnout stay within the educational system and may pose an equally serious, great problem since their demoralization and consequent behavior may directly impact classroom atmosphere (Charters, 1970).

Zamani Rad and Nasir (2010) state that teaching is stressful it has been estimated that between 5 to 20 percent of all U.S teachers are burned out at any given time. In comparison with other professions, teachers show high levels of exhaustion and cynicism, i.e. the core dimensions of burnout. These days' new findings in psychology have shown that teachers are quitting their jobs and some of those who remain within the teaching system have lack of motivation. The new approaches

toward teachers' emotional state and sense of burnout become new titles for curriculum developers, and ministries of education.

Although lack of validated cut-off points in most countries makes it difficult to determine the prevalence of burnout, two broad findings emerge from the research: 1) teachers are more vulnerable than other workers to burnout symptoms (De Heus & Diekstra, 1999), and 2) burnout affects all teachers in the same way all over the world (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

In Iran, as in many other large countries, burnout and other stress-related disorders occur as a result of social problems such as increasing inflation, economic depression and high cost of living. In fact many Iranians feel stressful combined with job tension and anxiety, fears, resentment and other emotional disturbances when they start to work. Investigations have shown that stress and burnout are one of prevalent issues among Iranian teachers (Fakhraee Faruji, 2012).

According to Rice and Ashby (2007), we can clearly see that teachers teach or manage their own classes differently from person to person. Those teachers who experience some sort of burnout and try to have different levels of perfectionism to achieve their own goals, show multi-form teaching styles in schools and the discrepancies among them are varied.

Today teachers are not considered as passive figures and sole actors of prescribed teaching methods but rather as active and decision-makers with different individual and psychological characteristics. Scholars mostly believe that psychological conditions are the only factors affecting teachers' teaching and learning (e.g. Coburn, 2003; Rosenholtz,

1991; Runhaar, 2008; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002; Veen, Slegers, & Van de ven, 2005, cited in Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijssel, 2011).

Teacher's own values, beliefs, attitudes, objectives, personal and social background, and finally their background culture constitute their teaching behaviors (Heimlich & Norland, 2002). Teaching style is the whole of teacher's own professional perceptions.

1.2 Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

Today some teachers abandon their jobs because of teaching burnout. On the other hand, teachers who stay in school milieu create a negativistic and pessimistic image as a consequence of their job burnout as their professional performance is impaired. In the literature of educational field of research, teachers' burnout has been a great concern. In recent studies, there has been three factors influencing teachers' burnout: administrators' leadership style, organizational factors, and personality characteristics of the teacher (Cherniss, 1993).

Recently, researchers have paid more attention on the affective aspects of students (foreign language learners) and the environmental features such as classrooms, school milieu, and the like (Fakhraee Faruji, 2012). However, there has been little investigation about teachers' psychological and emotional conditions. In spite of the importance of teachers' psychological and affective desires, few nationwide studies have been conducted in order to highlight these important affective aspects.

While a great deal of research has examined the links between perfectionism and anxiety, depression, and self-esteem, fewer studies have examined the difference between teachers' perfectionism and burnout and their teachers' teaching styles, and also the association between teaching style and teachers' gender.

1.3 Significance of the study

Nowadays, there is a rich body of research showing that teachers have the most crucial effect on students' achievement and success (e.g. Saha & Dworkin, 2009; Akbari, Kiany, Imani Naeeni, & Karimi Allvar, 2008). Since teachers play a main role in pedagogical success there is an urgent need to know them and their personality factors.

Many researchers believe that teachers' perfectionism and burnout have not been studied thoroughly in ESL and EFL contexts.

A great deal of research has been conducted that substantiates the contribution of stable personality factors like perfectionism to psychological difficulties, especially when stressful conditions are present (Hewitt & Flett, 2002). Perfectionism as popularly understood, has long been recognized as having associations with disturbances at work, self-condemnation, and "tyranny of should" (Horney, 1951, p. 65), but only recently has it been researched systematically. Stoeber and Rennert (2008) state that teachers' striving for perfection is negatively correlated with threat appraisals, avoidant coping, and their burnout. Teachers' perfectionism has also been assumed not to contribute to their stress and burnout.