Original Paper

An Investigation and Research on the Burnout of English Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools in Henan Province

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Abstract

To explore the current situation of burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province and analyze its influencing factors, this study conducted a questionnaire survey among 210 English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province, and used the data statistical software SPSS for analysis. The results show that the overall burnout of English teachers in primary and secondary schools in the province has reached a medium level, and there are significant differences in burnout among teachers of different ages, teaching experience, marital statuses, and professional titles. Therefore, education policymakers and school administrators need to pay timely attention and take appropriate measures to improve the situation.

Keywords

teacher burnout, English teachers, SPSS

1. Introduction

Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do 'people-work' of some kind. It is mainly manifested in three aspects: emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and reduced personal accomplishment (PA) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Xu, Ji, and Chao (2004) believes teacher burnout generally refers to the work fatigue and sense of frustration that teachers experience under the long-term pressure of multiple factors, especially when facing financial difficulties and social prejudices. This can lead to a state of depression, numbness, indifference, and fatigue, and is manifested as a morbid psychology and behavior in daily life. Previously, teacher burnout has become a topic of great concern in academic circles, and many scholars have conducted research from different perspectives. Through a questionnaire survey of kindergarten teachers across various systems in Beijing, Liang and Feng (2004) found that the burnout situation among these teachers is not optimistic. Their study identified multiple influencing factors, including background, societal,

organizational, occupational, and personal factors. Specifically, these factors encompassed the social recognition of kindergarten teachers, the kindergarten systems in place, and teacher role positioning. In the field of physical education, Zhao, Wang, and Tian (2014) showed that the burnout level of female teachers is significantly higher than that of male teachers. There is no significant difference in some dimensions among different age groups. Academic qualifications affect the level of reduced personal accomplishment. Self-esteem is negatively correlated with burnout and is a mediating variable for the impact of social support on burnout. Huang and Zhang (2018) pointed out that college teachers show obvious burnout due to factors such as educational reform and professional characteristics, and it can be alleviated by measures such as guiding the establishment of career ideals, strengthening the concept of lifelong learning, strengthening humanistic care, and paying attention to the combined force of social support. Hu (2021) employed a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, adopting a perspective rooted in positive psychology, to find that the overall level of burnout among college English major teachers is not high. Personality characteristics affect the level of burnout, and teachers can relieve burnout from the emotional, personality, and cognitive levels.

It can be seen that previous studies on teacher burnout mostly focused on college teachers, physical education teachers in primary and secondary schools, or kindergarten teachers, and there were few studies on English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province. As the province with the largest number of students in basic education in China, Henan Province accounts for one-tenth of the national total and has an important impact on the development of basic education in the whole country. With the continuous deepening of educational reform in Henan Province, English teachers in primary and secondary schools are under more work pressure and challenges, and the problem of burnout has become more prominent. Based on this, this research takes English teachers in primary and secondary schools in various places in Henan Province as the research object, and uses questionnaire surveys and SPSS data analysis to study the current situation of burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province and analyze its causes. This research can not only help to enrich the theoretical model of teacher burnout, provide new perspectives and data support for future research, but also enable education policymakers and school administrators to better understand the causes of teacher burnout, and then develop effective intervention measures to enhance teachers' work motivation and teaching effectiveness.

2. Research Design

2.1 Research Subjects

This study targeted 210 English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province who participated in the "National Training" and "Provincial Training" programs. These teachers differed in terms of age, educational background, teaching experience, marital status, the schools they taught in, and the teaching levels, forming an ideal sample for this research. Specifically, there were 182 female teachers, accounting for the majority. Teachers under the age of 40 accounted for 70%, and most of them held a

bachelor's degree. Taking these teachers as the research subjects can well reflect the current situation of burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province, making the research more practical. The basic information of the teachers is shown in Table 1.

Variables	Types	Frequency	Proportion (%)
C 1	Male	28	13.3
Gender	Female	182	86.7
	20-30	61	29.0
	31-40	88	41.9
Age	41-50	55	26.2
	> 50	6	2.9
	Associate	4	1.9
Educational Background	Undergraduate	192	91.4
	Postgraduate	14	6.7
	0-5	57	27.1
	6-10	33	15.7
Teaching Experience	11-20	73	34.8
	> 20	47	22.4
	Unmarried	52	24.8
Marital Status	Married	158	75.2
	Rural School	92	43.8
School Type	Urban School	118	56.2
	Primary School	60	28.6
Teaching Level	Junior High School	148	70.5
	Senior High School	2	1.0
Administrative Position	No	116	55.2
Administrative Position	Yes	94	44.8
	Unrated	21	10.0
Professional Title	Level 2	77	36.7
Professional little	Level 1	88	41.9
	Senior and Above	24	11.4

Table 1. Basic Information of Teachers

2.2 Research Methods

2.2.1 Questionnaire Survey Method

In this study, the questionnaire was developed based on the Burnout Inventory-Education Survey (MBI-ES). The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), developed by Maslach and Jackson in the early 1980s based on a three-dimensional theoretical model, has been widely used as a standardized assessment tool across multiple occupational groups, including education and healthcare (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Subsequent revisions and cross-cultural validation studies, conducted by scholars such as Bakker and Schaufeli, have further enhanced its reliability and validity (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000). The instrument's psychometric properties and the stability of its factor structure have been empirically supported worldwide. Specifically, questions 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16, and 20 belong to the emotional exhaustion dimension; questions 5, 10, 11, 15, and 22 belong to the depersonalization dimension; and questions 4, 7, 9, 12, 17, 18, 19, and 21 belong to the reduced personal accomplishment part is scored in reverse. The scale uses a Likert 5-point scoring method, with options of "Never = 1", "Rarely = 2", "Sometimes = 3", "Often = 4", and "Always = 5". The average score is obtained by adding up all the scores and dividing by 22, which represents the severity of one's own burnout problem. During the teachers' participation in the training, electronic questionnaires were successively distributed through Wenjuanxing, and a total of 210 valid questionnaires were obtained.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, SPSS was used for reliability and validity tests. In terms of reliability testing, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to test the overall scale and its various dimensions. The results show that the overall reliability coefficient of the scale reaches 0.92, indicating that the scale has good internal consistency. The reliability coefficients of the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment dimensions are 0.90, 0.76, and 0.85, respectively. In terms of validity testing, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test were carried out for this questionnaire survey. The value of the sampling adequacy measure in KMO is 0.91, which is greater than 0.6, and the significance value is 0.00, which meets the condition of being less than 0.05. This proves that this research survey has a high degree of validity. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Indicators	Cronbach's alpha	N
EE	0.90	9
DP	0.76	5
PA	0.85	8
Overall	0.92	22

Table 2. The Reliability of Each Dimension and the Overall Scale

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KMO	0	0.91
	Approximate Chi-Square	2710.54
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	231
	р	0.000

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

2.2.2 Data Statistical Method

This study used SPSS 27.0 to analyze the data of the questionnaire survey. Reliability and validity tests were applied to verify the reliability of the questionnaire; descriptive statistics were applied to analyze the basic situation of teachers, providing a basis for further research; independent samples t-tests and one-way between-groups ANOVA were applied to compare the differences in the three dimensions of teachers' burnout (EE, DP, and PA) and overall burnout among different demographic variables, and to analyze the causes of teachers' burnout.

3. Result

3.1 Current Situation of Burnout among English Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools in Henan Province

To comprehensively explore the overall situation of burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province, this study used descriptive analysis to analyze the relevant data. The specific situation is shown in Table 4. The results show that in the emotional exhaustion dimension, the average score is 2.78, and the standard deviation is 0.80. Taking 1 point as no burnout and 5 points as a very serious burnout problem as the standard, this score indicates that teachers have a certain degree of burnout in emotional exhaustion, but the overall situation is 0.74, indicating that the degree of burnout of teachers in depersonalization is relatively low. In the reduced personal accomplishment dimension, the average score is 2.45, and the standard deviation is 0.67, which means that teachers have a certain degree of burnout in reduced personal accomplishment. From the perspective of overall burnout, the average score of 210 teachers is 2.48, and the standard deviation is 0.62. To sum up, the burnout of English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province is at a medium level on the whole, and it is necessary to pay certain attention and take appropriate measures to improve it.

Dimensions	Ν	М	SD
EE	210	2.78	0.80
DP	210	1.99	0.74
PA	210	2.45	0.67
Overall	210	2.48	0.62

Table 4. Overall Status of Teacher Burnout

3.2 Demographic Variable Analysis of Burnout among English Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools in Henan Province

3.2.1 Gender Differences in Teacher Burnout

An independent samples t-test was used to examine the burnout scores of teachers of different genders and explore whether there were significant differences in each dimension. The analysis results are shown in Table 5. The results show that there are no significant differences in the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions and overall burnout among teachers of different genders (p > 0.05). However, there is a significant difference in the reduced personal accomplishment dimension (p < 0.05), and male teachers have a stronger sense of job accomplishment than female teachers. From the perspective of the mean value, the overall burnout of male teachers is lower than that of female teachers, but there are differences in the other three dimensions. Overall, gender is not a demographic variable that affects burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province.

	Gende	¢ (208)		
	Male (<i>n</i> = 28)	Female (<i>n</i> = 182)	- t (208)	р
EE	2.77 ± 0.95	2.78 ± 0.78	-0.09	0.92
DP	2.12 ± 1.04	1.97 ± 0.68	0.74	0.46
PA	2.17 ± 0.74	2.49 ± 0.66	-2.37	0.02
Overall	2.40 ± 0.65	2.49 ± 0.62	-0.70	0.48

Table 5. Differences in Teacher Burnout Based on Gender

3.2.2 Age Differences in Teacher Burnout

As shown in Table 6, one-way between-groups ANOVA shows that there are significant differences in the depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment dimensions and overall burnout among teachers of different ages (p < 0.05). Specifically, the older the teachers are, the lower their burnout. Young teachers aged 20-30 have the higher level of burnout, which is consistent with previous studies. However, there is no significant difference in the emotional exhaustion dimension among teachers of different ages (p > 0.05). Therefore, age is a demographic variable that affects burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province.

	Age $(M \pm SD)$			F	72	
	20-30 (<i>n</i> = 61)	31-40 (<i>n</i> = 88)	41-50 (<i>n</i> = 55)	> 50 (n=6)	(3,206)	р
EE	2.92 ± 0.81	2.84 ± 0.72	2.56 ± 0.90	2.42 ± 0.55	2.70	0.47
DP	2.23 ± 0.72	2.04 ± 0.65	1.70 ± 0.81	1.53 ± 0.37	6.26	< 0.001
PA	2.76 ± 0.58	2.48 ± 0.60	2.12 ± 0.74	1.92 ± 0.32	11.76	< 0.001
Overall	2.71 ± 0.56	2.53 ± 0.58	2.20 ± 0.66	2.04 ± 0.41	8.28	< 0.001

Table 6. Differences in Teacher Burnout Based on Age

3.2.3 Educational Background Differences in Teacher Burnout

As shown in Table 7, one-way between-groups ANOVA shows that there are no significant differences in the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment dimensions and overall burnout among teachers with different educational backgrounds (p > 0.05). Therefore, the educational background factor is not a demographic variable that affects burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province.

	Educational Background (M ± SD)			F	12
	Associate $(n = 4)$	Graduate ($n = 192$)	Postgraduate ($n = 14$)	(2,207)	р
EE	3.00 ± 1.09	2.79 ± 0.81	2.63 ± 0.54	0.41	0.67
DP	2.65 ± 0.98	1.97 ± 0.74	2.13 ± 0.57	1.97	0.14
PA	2.90 ± 0.26	2.45 ± 0.68	2.40 ± 0.70	0.95	0.39
Overall	2.89 ± 0.71	2.48 ± 0.63	2.43 ± 0.51	0.89	0.41

Table 7. Differences in Teacher Burnout Based on Educational Background

3.2.4 Teaching Experience Differences in Teacher Burnout

One-way between-groups ANOVA was used to examine the overall burnout scores of teachers with different teaching experience and whether there were significant differences in each dimension. The analysis results are shown in Table 8. The results show that there are significant differences in the depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment dimensions and overall burnout among teachers with different teaching experience (p < 0.05), that is, the longer the teaching experience, the lower the level of burnout. However, there is no significant difference in the emotional exhaustion dimension among teachers with different teaching experience (p > 0.05). This result is the same as that of examining the impact of teachers' age on burnout. To sum up, the teaching experience factor is a demographic variable that affects burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province.

_	Teaching Experience $(M \pm SD)$			F		
	0-5 (<i>n</i> = 57)	6-10 (<i>n</i> = 33)	11-20 (<i>n</i> = 73)	> 20 (n = 47)	(3,206)	р
EE	2.86 ± 0.76	2.91 ± 0.68	2.76 ± 0.85	2.63 ± 0.83	1.08	0.36
DP	2.20 ± 0.69	2.07 ± 0.66	2.01 ± 0.77	1.65 ± 0.68	5.45	0.001
PA	2.70 ± 0.58	2.63 ± 0.60	2.41 ± 0.70	2.09 ± 0.64	9.02	< 0.001
Overall	2.65 ± 0.54	2.62 ± 0.55	2.46 ± 0.65	2.21 ± 0.64	5.32	0.001

Table 8. Differences in Teacher Burnout Based on Teaching Experience

3.2.5 Marital Status Differences in Teacher Burnout

As shown in Table 9, the results of the independent samples t-test indicate that there are significant differences in the reduced personal accomplishment dimension and overall burnout among teachers with different marital statuses (p < 0.05). Unmarried teachers have a higher level of burnout, while married teachers have a lower level of burnout. However, there are no significant differences in the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions among teachers with different marital statuses (p > 0.05). Overall, marital status is still a demographic variable that affects burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province.

	Marital Status (M ± SD)		<i>+ (208)</i>	12
	Unmarried ($n = 52$)	Married $(n = 158)$	- t (208)	р
EE	2.84 ± 0.74	2.76 ± 0.82	0.60	0.55
DP	2.15 ± 0.67	1.94 ± 0.75	1.76	0.08
PA	2.75 ± 0.55	2.35 ± 0.68	3.76	0.01
Overall	2.65 ± 0.51	2.43 ± 0.65	2.34	0.03

Table 9. Differences in Teacher Burnout Based on Marital Status

3.2.6 School Type Differences in Teacher Burnout

As shown in Table 10, the results of the independent samples t-test show that there are no significant differences in the three dimensions of burnout and overall burnout among teachers in different types of schools (p > 0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that the type of school where teachers teach is not a demographic variable that affects burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province.

	School Type (M \pm SD)			
	Rural School ($n = 92$)	Urban School ($n = 118$)	- t (208)	р
EE	2.70 ± 0.75	2.84 ± 0.84	-1.29	0.20
DP	2.02 ± 0.76	1.97 ± 0.72	0.41	0.68
PA	2.50 ± 0.67	2.41 ± 0.69	0.92	0.36
Overall	2.47 ± 0.58	2.49 ± 0.66	-0.21	0.84

Table 10. Differences in Teacher Burnout Based on School Type

3.2.7 Teaching Level Differences in Teacher Burnout

One-way between-groups ANOVA was used to examine the overall burnout scores of teachers at different teaching levels and whether there were significant differences in each dimension. The analysis results are shown in Table 11. The results show that there are no significant differences in the three dimensions of burnout and overall burnout among English teachers at different teaching levels (p > 0.05). From the perspective of the mean value, although the English teachers at the senior high school stage have higher scores in all dimensions of burnout and overall burnout and overall burnout than those at the other two teaching levels, the English teachers at these two teaching levels also face pressure in their work. Therefore, it can be concluded that the teaching levels where teachers teach is not a demographic variable that affects burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province.

			-		
		Teaching Level (M \pm SD)	F	n
	Primary $(n = 60)$	Junior High ($n = 148$)	Senior High $(n = 2)$	(2,207)	р
EE	2.79 ± 0.77	2.77 ± 0.82	2.94 ± 0.86	0.05	0.95
DP	2.00 ± 0.74	1.97 ± 0.73	2.90 ± 0.14	1.58	0.21
PA	2.43 ± 0.60	2.46 ± 0.71	2.69 ± 0.44	0.15	0.86
Overall	2.48 ± 0.62	2.48 ± 0.63	2.84 ± 0.55	0.34	0.72

Table 11. Differences in Teacher Burnout Based on Teaching Level

3.2.8 Administrative Position Differences in Teacher Burnout

As shown in Table 12, the results of the independent samples t-test show that there are no significant differences in the three dimensions of burnout and overall burnout among English teachers with or without administrative positions such as class teacher or other administrative positions (p > 0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that the administrative position is not a demographic variable that affects burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province.

	Administrative Position (M \pm SD)		¢ (208)	~
	No (<i>n</i> = 116)	Yes (<i>n</i> = 94)	t (208)	р
EE	2.71 ± 0.80	2.86 ± 0.80	-1.33	0.18
DP	2.03 ± 0.75	1.94 ± 0.72	0.83	0.41
PA	2.49 ± 0.63	2.41 ± 0.73	0.87	0.39
Overall	2.48 ± 0.60	2.49 ± 0.65	-0.14	0.89

Table 12. Differences in Teacher Burnout Based on Administrative Position

3.2.9 Professional Title Differences in Teacher Burnout

One-way between-groups ANOVA was used to examine the overall burnout of teachers with different professional titles and whether there were significant differences in each dimension. The specific analysis results are shown in Table 13. The results show that there are significant differences in the three dimensions of burnout and overall burnout among teachers with different professional titles (p < 0.05). English teachers with lower professional titles have a higher level of burnout, while teachers with higher professional titles have a lower level of burnout. Therefore, it can be concluded that the professional title is a demographic variable that affects burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province.

	Professional Title ($M \pm SD$)					
	Unrated	Level 2	Level 1	Senior and Above	- F	р
	(<i>n</i> = 21)	(<i>n</i> = 77)	(<i>n</i> = 88)	(<i>n</i> = 24)	(3,206)	
EE	2.69 ± 0.84	2.87 ± 0.76	2.84 ± 0.84	2.34 ± 0.63	3.08	0.03
DP	2.25 ± 0.79	2.07 ± 0.66	1.98 ± 0.79	1.55 ± 0.56	4.40	0.01
PA	2.92 ± 0.72	2.56 ± 0.54	2.40 ± 0.71	1.89 ± 0.50	11.54	< 0.001
Overall	2.67 ± 0.63	2.58 ± 0.56	2.48 ± 0.65	2.00 ± 0.50	6.77	< 0.001

Table 13. Differences in Teacher Burnout Based on Professional Title

4. Conclusion

The above research shows that the burnout of English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province has reached a medium level, especially in terms of emotional experience at work, which has been negatively affected to a relatively serious extent. In terms of influencing factors, age, teaching experience, marital status, and professional title are the main factors contributing to burnout among English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Henan Province. Younger, less experienced, and lower-ranked growth-oriented English teachers often lack teaching experience at the onset of their careers. Consequently, they tend to be hesitant when dealing with unexpected classroom incidents and managing unruly students. Moreover, the necessity to navigate complex interpersonal relationships, friendships, and family ties further compounds the challenges they face. As a result, these teachers are required to devote substantial time and effort to their work, thus resulting in a higher level of burnout. At the same time, married English teachers receive support and care from their partners and children. When they encounter stress and troubles at work, the understanding and encouragement from their families can relieve negative emotions and enable them to engage in work with a better state, so their level of burnout is lower than that of unmarried teachers. Moreover, professional title evaluation is closely related to teachers' career development and salary. In order to meet the requirements of professional title evaluation, young teachers often have to take on more teaching tasks and participate in scientific research projects, which increases their pressure. Teachers with higher professional titles have relatively stable career development, reduced pressure in teaching and scientific research, higher job satisfaction, and thus a lower level of job burnout.

Therefore, for teachers, especially novice teachers, it is necessary to actively engage in their own professional development, adapt to the characteristics of the education industry as soon as possible, learn to actively cope with stress, take the initiative to seek help when encountering difficulties and problems, enhance positive emotional experiences, develop positive psychological qualities, improve overall well-being, and reduce burnout (Wang, 2015). Education policymakers and school administrators in Henan Province should also actively respond to the teacher burden-reduction policy. It is necessary to optimize the professional title evaluation system, reduce the burden of non-teaching tasks on teachers, and improve the teacher training system. Hierarchical and classified training plans should be developed for teachers at different ages, teaching years, and professional title stages. Only when all relevant parties truly care about the development of primary and secondary school teachers, create a good educational and teaching environment, and implement effective intervention measures to enhance teachers' work motivation can the burnout among teachers be effectively reduced.

Of course, this study has certain limitations in sample selection and other aspects. For instance, teachers with an associate degree account for only 1.9%, and those teaching at the high school level represent merely 1.0%. These figures are insufficient to adequately characterize the features and burnout status of this particular group. Uneven sample distribution may reduce the universality and accuracy of the results, which is not conducive to comprehensively grasping the overall situation. Future research should expand the scope of the sample, reasonably increase the number of participants with an associate degree and those teaching at the high school level, and enhance the reliability and validity of the results. This will enable a more precise revelation of the overall picture and the influencing factors.

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