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The Relationship between the Autonomy of Turkish EFL Teachers and Their Professional Burnout

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Abstract
The aim of this study is to analyze the correlation between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout in a Turkish context. For this study, a correlational research design was used, and the data were collected via the Teacher Autonomy Scale by Pearson and Hall (1993) and the Teacher Burnout Scale by Seidman and Zager (1986-1987). 100 Turkish EFL teachers who teach at high school level in public or private institutions in the center of Edirne and its districts, Uzunköprü, Havsa, İpsala, and Keşan, were chosen as the sample for the study. The findings displayed that the participants had a low level of teacher autonomy and a moderate level of teacher burnout. The participants had a slightly higher curriculum autonomy than general autonomy. All the subcategories of the Teacher Burnout Scale showed moderate levels of teacher burnout. The highest mean was observed in the attitudes towards students subscale, and the lowest mean was observed in the career satisfaction subscale. When it comes to the correlation between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout, the findings revealed that teacher burnout was significantly, inversely, and moderately correlated with teacher autonomy.

Keywords: Correlational research design, EFL teachers, Teacher attitude, Teacher autonomy, Teacher burnout

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Introduction

The globalization of the world made learning a second language necessary to be a part of it. As the significance of teaching became more apparent, various factors affecting teachers' professional lives have also become the subjects of research. The term autonomy can be defined as "the right of an organization, country, or region to be independent and govern itself" and "the ability to make your own decisions without being controlled by anyone else" (The Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Additionally, Kamii (1984) described autonomy as the ability to be self-ruled. She believed that autonomy had a huge role in education. Learner autonomy is a widely known phenomenon in the field of education. Benson and Voller (2014) suggests that the term is used in various ways in education such as "learners being able to gain knowledge by themselves", "learners being responsible for their own learning journey", "learners possessing the right to managing their own learning processes" and "learners possessing skills that can be used for self-directed learning". The current study focuses on teacher autonomy, which is as important as learning autonomy, but is a less-researched area of research in education. Teachers should be more aware of their own autonomy as teachers to promote autonomy for their students' learning.

Another focus of the study is a phenomenon that existed in the minds of the public for a long time before it was recognized as the phenomenon it is today, called burnout. Burnout as a term was coined by Freudenberger (1974), who came up with it after observing the working conditions of the staff working in free clinics. Based on those observations, Freudenberger described burnout as a kind of symptom born out of long-term emotional exhaustion and loss of engagement regarding one's job (as cited in Chang, 2009). Teaching is a highly demanding job that can cause a lot of work-related stress. Various factors, such as lack of control over the material and curriculum, lack of freedom inside and outside the classroom, administrative and collegial problems, and class environment, can cause teacher burnout.

The present study examines the correlation between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout through the lens of a Turkish context. The relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout is not a subject that has just begun to be wondered about. It has become more common to encounter teacher burnout where teacher autonomy is mentioned, and vice versa, especially in the last few decades. However, it has been especially around the last twenty years that the relationship between these two phenomena began to become the focus of studies, thus studies that examine this relationship is still scarce (Esfandiari & Kamali, 2016; Gavrilyuk et al., 2013; Javadi, 2014; Koçak, 2018; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). This study will add to the literature by focusing on a Turkish context.

Teacher Autonomy

Teacher autonomy has been defined by many scholars throughout the world, but there isn't a description that all researchers agree with in its entirety. Frase and Sorenson (1992) argue that teacher autonomy can be perceived individually: One teacher may perceive autonomy as an instrument to be free from supervision and another may perceive it as a chance to establish relationships with their colleagues to achieve projects that go beyond the classroom (as cited in Buğra & Atay, 2020). Little (1995) suggests that autonomous teachers tend to be successful because they constantly self-reflect and therefore are aware of their own teaching processes. They also possess a deep sense of responsibility when it comes to their teaching. Similarly, Teng (2019) describes an autonomous teacher as someone who constantly self-reflects on their teaching process and thinks that various individual, organizational, transactional factors, and freedom from authority play essential roles in teachers being autonomous. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) believe that to become professionals, teachers should have enough autonomy to meet their students' needs, similar to a doctor possessing the autonomy necessary for tending to their patients.

Even though teacher autonomy is a notion that has been occupying the minds of many researchers throughout the years, there are no fixed answers when it comes to what kind of dimensions it has. For this study, the dimensions of teacher autonomy will be categorized as planning and implementation of educational matters, participation in the organizational processes, and professional development.

Some of the most fundamental roles of teaching include the planning and implementation of the curriculum, teaching methods, and the evaluation of the students. Therefore, having the necessary autonomy in these areas is a pivotal part of teacher autonomy. Bizmiye (2020) examined the dependency of EFL teachers on the textbooks and found that the administrators restrict the teachers' autonomy by not letting them deviate from the Ministry of National Education's (MoNE) curriculum and textbooks, which results in the participants being bound to the English textbooks. Esfandiari and Kamali (2016) believe that an autonomous teacher may feel more motivated and satisfied with their job when they can choose their own teaching materials. Furthermore, the satisfaction they gain will aid them in feeling more accomplished at their job, which in turn will prevent them from burning out

(p.77). When it comes to participation in the organizational processes, possessing authority over the work environment and being able to meaningfully influence decisions regarding the school management encompass a large part of teacher autonomy. Mackenzie (2002) suggested that teachers being able to influence curriculum development is a good starting place to increase teacher autonomy and added that educational institutions that let their teachers influence the curriculum are on the right path to becoming a proper learning institution (as cited in Benson & Huang, 2008). Because teachers often find themselves in a position of being torn between their students and the school administration, the importance of Mackenzie's words becomes even more understandable. Ingersoll (2007) believes that teachers resemble a middleman, stuck between two different groups, the school administration and the students, with different needs and demands. They are given the responsibility to fulfill these needs and demands, but do not receive enough power to make meaningful decisions. Therefore, teacher autonomy is essential in saving teachers from this paradoxical situation. Koçak (2018) agrees with Mackenzie and Ingersoll and emphasizes that the scope of teacher autonomy should not be seen as limited only inside of the classroom. She argues that a key part of teacher autonomy is having authority over the work environment. Additionally, administrators' attitudes play an important role in influencing teacher autonomy (Uğurlu and Qahramanova, 2016). Teachers' professional development has also been a topic of discussion for decades in education. Avalos (2011) thinks that the reason why this topic has been and is continuing to be researched is the common understanding of what professional development is all about: the teachers' gaining knowledge about how to learn and then learning how to turn their knowledge into practice to provide for their students and help them grow. Teacher autonomy plays a critical role in helping teachers develop the necessary skills to fulfill their responsibilities as teachers.

Teacher Burnout

The term burnout has a long history. Schaufeli et al. (2017) believe that certain characters from the books *Buddenbrooks* (1922) and *A Burnout Case* (1960) showed symptoms that are associated with the concept of burnout as we know it. As mentioned before, burnout as a term was coined by Freudenberger (1974). However, Maslach's studies played a huge role in popularizing burnout. Maslach and Jackson (1981) developed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which measured burnout under three subcategories: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Considering the stressful nature of the teaching profession, the term burnout quickly became a talking point in education. Friedman (1993) states that burnout was regarded as a notion encompassing teachers' negative reactions to their work in the early studies of burnout in the teaching profession. In the later years, the research about teacher burnout became more empirical, and previous methods used in measuring teacher burnout have been recontextualized. Teacher burnout scales have been designed and/or recontextualized to be more appropriate for education. Some of them were: MBI-Educators Survey (MBI-ES), which was a version of the original MBI that had been designed for educators. The Teacher Burnout Scale (TBS) was designed by Seidman and Zager (1986-1987), and the Teacher Occupational Burnout Scale was designed by Kaner et al. (2008, as cited in Deneme, 2021). The role of the teacher-student relationship on teacher burnout became a matter of curiosity (Corbin et al., 2019; Pedditzi et al., 2021). Pedditzi et al. (2021) found that 29.9% of their participants had a high level of emotional exhaustion and 33.8% had a high level of depersonalization. Their findings confirmed that there is a correlation between teacher-student dissatisfaction and teacher burnout. Corbin et al. (2019) found similar results, which displayed that teachers who had a perceived negative dynamic with their students were more prone to feeling emotionally frustrated and fatigued, which were signs of teacher burnout. Administrative support is also regarded as an important factor for teacher burnout. It usually refers to the help the administrators can provide for the teachers, such as offering emotional support, involving teachers more in the organizational decisions, and encouraging collaboration among teachers (Ford et al., 2019). Some researchers deem administrative support as an important factor in the teachers' decision about whether to stay in their jobs (Aldosiry, 2022; Ford et al., 2019). Perceived administrative support has been found to have a negative correlation with teacher burnout (Deneme, 2021; Girgin & Baysal, 2005; Yavuz, 2019; Yavuz & Yıkmış, 2021). These studies show that perceived administrative support may play a vital role in preventing and dealing with teacher burnout. Lastly, healthy coping mechanisms are an important part of the discussion regarding preventing and battling teacher burnout. Terry (1997) suggests that teachers should be aware of the requirements of the teaching profession and find stress management techniques according to them. Teachers need to have support systems and coping mechanisms to support them in the long run, so they can avoid burnout.

Previous Research on the Correlation Between Teacher Autonomy and Teacher Burnout

In this section, five selected studies will be examined shortly in order to paint a clear picture of the findings regarding this topic. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) investigated the dynamic between teacher autonomy and job stress along with factors such as work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism. The findings of the study

showed that there was a negative correlation between teacher autonomy and job stress levels of the teachers. Particularly, curriculum autonomy showed a significant relationship with job stress.

Gavrilyuk et al. (2013) designed a study to see whether the improvement in the perceived level of teacher autonomy reduces the perceived level of burnout in Russian university teachers. Their sample consisted of 91 teachers who were working at Krasnoyarsk State Medical University in Russia. The results of the study showed a significant and negative correlation between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout. They observed that participants who did not show any symptoms of burnout had a high level of autonomy. Correspondingly, almost 90% of the participants who were having problems coping with job-related stress had a low level of autonomy. It should also be added that more than 73% of the participants found teaching taxing.

The aim of Javadi's (2014) study was to investigate the relationship between burnout and autonomy among ELT teachers in Iran. Her sample consisted of 143 teachers. Javadi had also found a significant and inverse correlation between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout. The findings showed that the dimensions of burnout predicted 31% of teachers' perceived sense of autonomy. An imperative result that should be highlighted is that participants who believed they possessed more authority regarding their teaching stated that they felt less sense of burnout in their teaching experiences. Additionally, the study implies that contextual factors such as job dissatisfaction and the perception of a lack of authority play a major role in triggering teacher burnout. Javadi believes that by figuring out what kind of factors are causing a decrease in teacher autonomy and an increase in teacher burnout, the necessary systemic and organizational changes that will better support teachers and enhance teacher autonomy can be made.

The purpose of Esfandiari and Kamali (2016) was to explore the dynamic between job satisfaction, teacher burnout, and teacher autonomy. The findings of the study show that there is a weak, negative correlation between teacher job satisfaction and teacher burnout and a weak, negative correlation between teacher job satisfaction and teacher autonomy. Interestingly, though, Esfandiari and Kamali did not find a statistically significant relationship between teacher burnout and teacher autonomy.
Koçak (2018) investigated the dynamic between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout among EFL teachers at the middle school level in Van, Turkey. The results of the study showed a significant and inverse relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout. The participants had a moderate level of teacher autonomy and a low level of teacher burnout. Koçak thinks these results may have stemmed from the centralized structure of the Turkish education system.

Method

In this section, information regarding the research design, research questions, participants, data collection tools, data collection procedure, and analysis will be presented.

Research Design

This study aims to examine the dynamic between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout. To do that, the correlational research design was chosen. Fraenkel and Wallen (2012) describe correlational research as the study that explores the relationship between two or more variables without trying to influence them. Additionally, the data for this study were collected via a quantitative research design.

Research Questions

The study's purpose is to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the perceived level of teacher autonomy of Turkish EFL teachers who teach at high school level?

2. What is the perceived level of teacher burnout of Turkish EFL teachers who teach at high school level?

3. Is there a significant correlation between the perceived level of teacher autonomy and the perceived level of teacher burnout of Turkish EFL teachers who teach at high school level?

Participants

The sample of this study consists of 100 EFL teachers who teach in the public and private high schools of the center of Edirne and its districts, Uzunköprü, Havsa, İpsala, and Keşan during the 2021-2022 school year. The participants were selected based on convenience sampling. Etikan et al. (2016) describe convenience sampling as a kind of sampling where the target population is selected based on factors such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, and the willingness to participate. The sample was chosen based on their willingness to participate and geographical proximity for this study. Demographic information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Participant Demographics (N = 100)

Variable	Category/Range	N	%
Gender	Female	63	63.0%
	Male	37	37.0%
	Other / Prefer not to say	2	2.0%
Age (years)	Range	23–61	—
Teaching Experience	Range (in years)	2–35	—
	Mean (approximate)	—	16.5

According to the table, 63% of the participants identified as female, 37% as male, and 2% preferred not to mention their gender. Their ages ranged from 23 to 61 years, and teaching experience varied from 2 to 35 years.

Data Collection Tools

The Teacher Autonomy Scale (TAS), designed by Pearson and Hall (1993), and the Teacher Burnout Scale (TBS), designed by Seidman and Zager (1986-1987), were used to collect data for the study.

TAS: It was developed by Pearson and Hall (1993). The scale is a 4-point Likert-type scale (1= Definitely True, 2= More or Less True, 3= More or Less False, 4= Definitely False). It examines the general autonomy and the curriculum autonomy of the participants. The scale consists of 20 items.

TBS: It was developed by Seidman and Zager (1986-1987). The scale is a 6-point Likert-type scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Moderately Disagree, 3= Slightly Disagree, 4= Slightly Agree, 5= Moderately Agree, 6= Strongly Agree). It explores teacher burnout in four categories: career satisfaction, perceived administrative support, coping with job-related stress, and attitudes towards students. The scale consists of 21 items.

Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

The data collection tools were distributed to the participants via papers that contained QR codes leading to the questionnaires and as papers that contained the questionnaires in a physical form. Then, the data collection tools were collected after being completed. The data collection process lasted four months, and then the data were analyzed. The data that were collected via TAS and TBS were analyzed through IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. The third research question aimed to find out if teacher autonomy and teacher burnout were correlated. The assumption of distribution normality was tested to understand if parametric correlation coefficients could be computed. The preliminary findings showed that all skewness and kurtosis values were between -0.78 and 1.15, meaning that parametric analyses could be run. After that, Pearson's Correlation Coefficients were calculated to answer the third research question.

Ethics approval notification

Ethical permission (01.02.2022/E-56569733-44-42483014) was obtained from Trakya University for this research.

Results and Discussion

In this section, every single research question will be answered, the results will be displayed, and then discussed in detail.

The first research question's purpose was to figure out the perceived level of teacher autonomy of Turkish EFL teachers who teach at high school level. The descriptive findings for TAS and its subscales are provided below.

Table 2. Descriptive Findings of TAS and Its Subscales

Scale	M	SD	Min	Max
Teacher Autonomy	2.610	0.380	1.450	3.750
Curriculum Autonomy	2.613	0.457	1.000	3.780
General Autonomy	2.606	0.429	1.820	3.820

According to the findings, teacher autonomy had a mean of 2.61 (SD = 0.38) out of 4.00. When the scale was broken down into its subscales, it was seen that the curriculum autonomy subscale of teacher autonomy (M = 2.61, SD = 0.46) had a slightly higher mean than the general autonomy subscale (M = 2.61, SD = 0.43).

The results revealed that the participants possess an overall low level of teacher autonomy, with their curriculum autonomy being slightly higher than their general autonomy. At the end of the Teacher Autonomy Subscale, there was a short section where the participants could add some additional information. The comments from the participants played a major role in elucidating the results of the study. Upon reviewing, the comments indicate that the administrators are a huge factor when it comes to restricting teacher autonomy. A comment from the participants can be paraphrased as*: "The administrators are too invasive when it comes to what we (teachers) are going to teach in the classroom. They want to make sure the teachers teach their classes "by the book"".* The descriptive results of items 2 and 18 seem to be in line with this comment.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Items #2, #18 in TAS

Item	N	Min	Max	M	SD
2. The selection of student-learning activities in my class is under my control	100	1	4	2.67	0.865
18. I select the teaching methods and strategies I use with my students.	100	1	4	2.86	0.841

As the results were analyzed and interpreted, two reasons for this restriction from the administrators surfaced: the parents' control and the curriculum set by the MoNE. Two comments from the participants reveal how the parents' control affects their autonomy. They can be paraphrased as: *"Due to the nature of private educational institutions in Turkey, while the parents do not technically have authority over how we are going to teach our classes, their complaints to the administrators undoubtedly affect the nature of said classes."* and *"Some parents seem to not like it if we teach our classes in a creative way and accuse us of "playing around" instead of teaching the class "in a normal way"".* The descriptive results of items 6, 8, and 14 seem to be in line with these comments.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Items #6, #8, #14 in TAS

Item	N	Min	Max	M	SD
6. Standards for my classroom are set primarily by myself.	100	1	4	2.48	0.772
8. In my teaching, I use my own guidelines and procedures.	100	1	4	2.70	0.659
14. What I teach in my class is determined for the most part by myself.	100	1	4	2.43	0.807

The contents of the textbooks chosen by the MoNE constitute a large part of the high school and university entrance exams. This means that teachers must adhere to these books for their students to score high on these exams. Bizmiye's (2020) findings also reflect this statement.

The second research question's purpose was to find out the perceived level of teacher burnout of Turkish EFL teachers who teach at high school level. The descriptive findings for the Teacher Burnout Scale and its subscales are presented below.

Table 5. Descriptive Findings of TBS and Its Subscales

Scale	M	SD	Min	Max
Teacher Burnout	3.249	0.879	1.480	5.330
Attitudes towards Students	3.405	1.083	1.000	5.500
Perceived Administrative Support	3.357	1.117	1.000	6.000
Coping with Job-related Stress	3.220	1.109	1.000	5.500
Career Satisfaction	3.024	1.152	1.000	5.600

According to the findings, teacher burnout had a mean of 3.25 (SD = 0.88) out of 6.00. When the scale was broken down into its subscales, it was seen that all the subscales showed a moderate level of teacher burnout. The highest mean was detected in the attitudes towards students subscale (M = 3.41, SD = 1.08), and the lowest mean was found in the career satisfaction subscale (M = 3.02, SD = 1.15).

The findings demonstrated that the participants had a moderate level of teacher burnout. Since the subscale was reverse-coded, the lowest mean in the career satisfaction subscale indicates that the participants are not satisfied with their jobs. The highest mean of the attitudes towards students subscale showed that the participants have a cynical attitude towards their students. The results of each subscale of the Teacher Burnout Scale were analyzed and interpreted to understand the findings better. The findings of items 5 and 12 suggest that a large portion of the participants regret their career choices and would not want to work as a teacher if they had the opportunity.

Table 6. Descriptive Findings of Items #5, #12 in TBS

Item	N	Min	Max	M	SD
5. I am glad that I selected teaching as a career.	100	1	6	2.79	1.731
12. If I had it to do all over again, I would not become a schoolteacher.	100	1	6	3.15	1.731

The results of items 6 and 21 show that the participants have a cynical attitude towards their students. At the end of the Teacher Burnout Subscale, there was also a short section where the participants could add additional information. Two comments from the participants highlight the effect the control of the parents has on teacher burnout. They can be paraphrased as: *"Because of the unconcerned attitudes of their parents, students lack the understanding of how important education is and misbehave in the classroom, which overwhelms me,"* and *"I was surprised at the carefree attitude of the parents when I started teaching first. They felt free to call and tell me how to run my classroom. This attitude affected the decisions of the administrators when it comes to the teaching methods for the classes."* The results of the study seem to be in line with these comments.

Table 7. Descriptive Findings of Items #6, #21 in TBS

Item	N	Min	Max	M	SD
6. The students act like a bunch of animals.	100	1	6	2.77	1.651
21. Students come to school with bad attitudes.	100	1	6	3.99	1.611

The results of items 4, 7, and 9 reveal that the participants find the working days quite demanding and stressful. They seem to agree that their physical illnesses may stem from their work environment. These findings show the importance of finding meaningful coping strategies to prevent and/or deal with teacher burnout.

Table 8. Descriptive Findings of Items #4, #7, #9 in TBS

Item	N	Min	Max	M	SD
4. The teaching day seems to drag on and on.	100	1	6	3.36	1.460
7. My physical illnesses may be related to the stress in this job.	100	1	6	3.23	1.523
9. I find it difficult to calm down after a day of teaching.	100	1	6	3.16	1.529

The findings of items 8, 11, and 18 show that the participants do not have a healthy relationship with their administrators and do not feel like they can receive the support they need if necessary.

Table 9. The Descriptive Findings of Items #8, #11 and #18 in Teacher Burnout Scale

Item	N	Min	Max	M	SD
8. I feel that the administrators are willing to help me with classroom problems, should they arise.	100	1	6	3.17	1.443
11. I believe that my efforts in the classroom are underappreciated by the administrators.	100	1	6	3.89	1.510
18. I feel that the administrators will not help me with classroom difficulties.	100	1	6	3.39	1.442

The third research question's purpose was to figure out if there is a significant correlation between the perceived level of teacher autonomy and the perceived level of teacher burnout of Turkish EFL teachers who teach at high school level. The correlation computations are presented below.

Table 9. Correlation Computations

Scale	Value	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Teacher Autonomy (1)	r	1.000					
	p	-					
	r^2	-					
General Autonomy (2)	r	.879	1.000				
	p	< .001	-				
	r^2	.773	-				
Curriculum Autonomy (3)	r	.837	.474	1.000			
	p	< .001	< .001	-			
	r^2	.701	.225	-			
Teacher Burnout (4)	r	-.522	-.579	-.298	1.000		
	p	< .001	< .001	.003	-		
	r^2	.272	.335	.089	-		
Career Satisfaction (5)	r	-.483	-.523	-.291	.803	1.000	
	p	< .001	< .001	.003	< .001	-	
	r^2	.233	.274	.085	.645	-	
Perceived Administrative Support (6)	r	-.397	-.434	-.234	.738	.433	1.000

The correlation analysis showed that teacher burnout had a negative and moderate correlation with teacher autonomy ($r = -.522$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that there is a significant, moderate, and inverse relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout among the participants of this study.

When it comes to the correlation between the subscales of the Teacher Autonomy Scale and the Teacher Burnout Scale, the findings are as follows:

1. Career satisfaction subscale has a negative and moderate correlation with general autonomy subscale ($r = -.523$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .274$) and has a negative and weak correlation with curriculum autonomy subscale ($r = -.291$, $p < .01$, $r^2 = .085$).

2. Perceived administrative support subscale has a negative and weak correlation with general autonomy subscale ($r = -.434$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .188$) and curriculum autonomy subscale ($r = -.234$, $p < .05$, $r^2 = .055$).

3. Coping with job-related stress subscale has a negative and moderate correlation with general autonomy subscale ($r = -.499$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .249$) and does not have a significant correlation with curriculum autonomy subscale ($r = .081$, $p > .05$, $r^2 = .031$).

4. Attitudes towards students subscale has a negative and weak correlation with general autonomy subscale ($r = -.339$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .115$) and curriculum autonomy subscale ($r = -.257$, $p = .01$, $r^2 = .066$).

The findings of this study showed that the participants had a low level of teacher autonomy. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) found contrasting results, which showed high levels of teacher autonomy among their participants. Koçak's (2018) study stood in the middle ground, meaning that her participants showed moderate levels of teacher autonomy. The reasons for these different outcomes may be due to various personal, organizational, and even systemic factors. When Pearson and Moomaw's study is examined, it can be seen that their participants showed high levels of job satisfaction and perceived empowerment. The results indicated that the participants believed their opinions and concerns were taken seriously by the administrators, and they had a say in the development of school policies. On the other hand, both the participants of this study and Koçak's study perceived themselves as lacking when it comes to having meaningful control over the selection of the materials, skills, and methods they would like to cover in their classes. When it comes to the general autonomy subcategory and the curriculum autonomy subcategory, this study found that the participants had slightly higher curriculum autonomy than general autonomy, which contrasted with Koçak's results. Even though this study's participants showed a slightly higher curriculum autonomy, the complaints of both groups of participants are still significant.

The additional information that was received from the participants revealed that they do not see themselves autonomous as teachers. Especially in the private institutions, the administrators have a significant power over the content, methods, and materials that teachers implement in their classrooms; therefore, it is not surprising that they possess a notable effect on teacher autonomy. Uğurlu and Qahramanova (2016) found that their participants perceived their administrators' attitudes as obstacles when it comes to their autonomy. This seems to be in line

with the thoughts of the current study's participants. The results and the comments from the participants suggest that the Turkish education system itself plays a role in restricting and decreasing teacher autonomy. The obligation to obey the MoNE's curriculum strictly lessens the teachers' options in the classroom. As it was shown in Bizmiye's (2020) study, the fact that important exams such as high school and university exams are so dependent on the curriculum of the MoNE leaves them in a rather helpless position. These point out the fact that the Turkish education system puts the teachers in such a position that if the teachers prefer to use alternative and creative methods in their classes, they risk falling behind on the curriculum, thus potentially affecting the future of their students. Alternatively, if they choose to strictly obey the curriculum set by the MoNE, they risk feeling less autonomous as a teacher by the day and potentially experience teacher burnout. Koçak (2018) came to a similar conclusion and said that she believes the centralized structure of the Turkish education system may be the reason for the low level of teacher autonomy because teachers do not possess a significant role in curriculum development processes and therefore cannot make any meaningful decisions about the content they teach.

The results of this study revealed that the participants had a moderate level of teacher burnout. The findings of Gavrilyuk et al. (2013) and Javadi (2014) seem to be in line with the results of the current study, meaning they found moderate to high levels of teacher burnout among their participants. When the reasons for these results are investigated, some common factors come to the surface, such as work overload, obligation to conform to constraining programs, lack of administrative leadership, and participation in decision-making. In contrast to these studies, Koçak (2018) found a low level of teacher burnout among her participants. While there could be a variety of reasons as to why her participants may not feel burned out, her study seems to indicate that her participants possess the necessary personal and administrative support systems that allow them to deal with job-related problems and stress.

The results of both the Teacher Autonomy Scale and the Teacher Burnout Scale suggest that the parents of the students have a critical role in both teacher autonomy and teacher burnout. The comments from the participants give glimpses of how the parents affect the autonomy of the teachers. Some participants could not help but mention how normalized it is for the parents to complain to the administrators about how the teachers manage their classes. This seems to lead the administrators to limit the teachers' creativity and restrict their decisions both inside and outside the classroom. Some participants emphasized the indirect effect the parents have. They believed that the lack of respect that exudes from the parents' attitudes affects how the students perceive them. This attitude leads to disrespect from their students, which influences the quality of the classes and therefore nurtures the aspects of teacher burnout.

The participants of this study showed a cynical attitude towards their students and their job, which is a clear sign of burnout. These results are in line with the findings of Pedditzi et al. (2021) and Corbin et al. (2019). All of these results highlight the importance of the teacher-student relationship when it comes to examining teacher burnout and are certainly vital stepping stones in research regarding preventing teacher burnout.

Most participants picked out the options that state they do not trust they will receive the help they require from their administrators. This is in line with the findings of Deneme (2021), Girgin and Baysal (2005), Yavuz (2019), and Yavuz Yıkmış (2021). The participants who felt like they could rely on the guidance of their administrators when they needed it showed fewer signs of being burned out.

Additionally, the study highlighted the importance of awareness of healthy coping mechanisms when it comes to preventing and battling teacher burnout. The participants of this study showed that they have a hard time regulating their emotions at the end of the teaching day. The results of various items implied that the participants seem to be emotionally worn out and believe that even some of their physical illnesses may be related to the stress they face as teachers. This indicates that many participants lack the resources and/or are unaware of meaningful and healthy coping mechanisms necessary to deal with the stress of being a teacher.

The main goal of this article was to examine the dynamic between autonomy and burnout of the participants. This study showed that there is a significant, inverse, and moderate correlation between the perceived level of teacher autonomy and the perceived level of teacher burnout. The findings of Pearson and Moomaw (2005), Gavrilyuk et al. (2013), Javadi (2014), and Koçak (2018) seem to be in line with the current study, meaning they have also found a significant and inverse relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout among their participants. Esfandiari and Kamali (2016) found contrasting results to these studies, meaning they found no significant relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout. They believe that there might be a couple of reasons for this result. One of them is that it takes a long time to observe symptoms of teacher burnout, and

since 96 participants of this study were teachers with 1 to 5 years of teaching experience, they might not have shown symptoms of teacher burnout yet. Another reason may be that since the perception of disappointment is a crucial part of feeling burnout, if the participants do not perceive disappointment, they may not show signs of burnout. Additionally, they think the perception of freedom each teacher has may not correlate with their working environments.

Conclusion

The results of the first research question showed that the participants have a low level of teacher autonomy. They also have a slightly higher curriculum autonomy than general autonomy. When it comes to the participants' control over their freedom in choosing the teaching methods and activities they implement, the participants do not perceive themselves much autonomous in this area. It is clearly examined that they felt restricted creatively by their administrators. The findings demonstrate that the participants have a low perception of teacher autonomy, which shows that the participants don't believe they have much autonomy over how they manage their classrooms. These results make a point about the considerable effect the parents have on the Turkish education system and teacher autonomy. The findings of the second research question showed that the participants have a moderate level of teacher burnout. When the subcategories of teacher burnout were examined, it was found that all the subcategories indicated a moderate level of teacher burnout, although the highest mean was observed in the attitudes towards students subscale and the lowest mean was observed in the career satisfaction subscale. The participants show dissatisfaction towards their jobs and have a scornful attitude towards their students. Additionally, the participants did not have a positive relationship with their administrators and did not perceive enough support from them. The results of the third research question demonstrated that teacher burnout was significantly, negatively, and moderately correlated with teacher autonomy.

Limitations

The sample of this study was 100 Turkish high school teachers who teach English at public or private institutions in Edirne. The sample size and the nature of the population restrict generability.

Recommendations

The study was limited to 100 participants. Future studies may increase the number of participants to achieve more comprehensive results.

As previously mentioned, the administrators have a meaningful influence on the content and skills the teachers teach in their classrooms. This means that the researchers exploring teacher autonomy should consider the administrators as an important factor for further studies.

The centralized structure of the Turkish education system may restrict the autonomy of the teachers and, in the long term, cause teacher burnout. This means that when it comes to both teacher autonomy and teacher burnout, the Turkish education system itself must not be overlooked as a potential source of multiple factors that affect both of these notions.

It was clearly seen how the parents of the students could affect the order in the classroom through the pressure they put on the administrators, and how they could lead to teacher burnout through their behavior, both directly to the teachers and indirectly to the teachers through the way they raised the students. These point out that parents should be a crucial factor for studies researching the relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout.
When it comes to perceived support from the administrators, the participants showed a clear distrust towards their administrators. This lack of trust should be investigated more in future studies because this study indicates that a lack of support from the administrators can be a prominent factor in increasing teacher burnout; therefore, longitudinal studies researching the dynamic between teacher burnout and the support from the administrators are advised.

The topic of the coping mechanisms of the teachers should also not be forgotten. To make sure they have the necessary support they need, individual and systemic steps need to be taken. The teachers should actively seek out healthy coping mechanisms that suit their individual needs, and the Turkish education system itself should be modified to support the teachers' needs and thus prevent and battle teacher burnout in the long term. When it comes to further studies researching teacher burnout, the awareness of healthy coping mechanisms should be an important factor to keep in mind.

Lastly, the results of the current study showed that as the level of autonomy increased, the participants' level of burnout decreased. This means that to prevent and battle teacher burnout, taking steps to increase teacher autonomy is a vital approach. This study revealed what kind of restrictions may hinder teacher autonomy, so to nurture teacher autonomy, the need for organizational and systemic changes should be pointed out. Throughout the study, potential factors that affect teacher burnout have been mentioned. To battle teacher burnout, the factors that cause and develop teacher burnout should be identified by authoritative figures in education so that the teachers can receive the support and care they need. The more awareness of teacher burnout is recognized, the easier it will be to battle it in the long run, and perhaps even more importantly, the teachers who already battle teacher burnout can receive help during this hard period in their careers. This study showed that being aware of the dynamic between teacher autonomy and teacher burnout is quite valuable for the well-being of teachers. Increasing teacher autonomy will help teachers feel more in control and happy both inside and outside the classroom, and will result in decreasing and even preventing teacher burnout.

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Authors Contribution Rate

The first author wrote the thesis from which this article was produced under the supervision of the second author. During the article preparation process, the second author reviewed the entire manuscript, making necessary additions and corrections to prepare it for submission.

Ethical Approval

Ethical permission (28.03.2022/E-29563864-050.04.04-232336) was obtained from Trakya University for this research.

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