

Psychological Burnout and Coping Strategies of Special Education Teachers in the State of Kuwait

Mosaad Abo Al-dyiar¹ & Ashraf Atta M. S. Salem^{2*}

1. Associate Professor of Psychology, Centre of Children Evaluation and Teaching, State of Kuwait
2. PhD TEFL, Institute of Educational Studies, Cairo University, Egypt.

* The corresponding author

Correspondence: Mosaad Abo Al-dyiar, Centre of Children Evaluation and Teaching, State of Kuwait. E-mail: m.refayi@cetkuwait.org. Ashraf Atta M. S. Salem, Kuwait Ministry of Education, State of Kuwait. E-mail: sirashrafams@hotmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the levels of burnout experienced by special education teachers in the State of Kuwait. It also explored the most common coping strategies they adopt to prevent themselves from teacher burnout. The psychometric sample of the study consists of (60) teachers of children with learning disabilities evenly distributed; (30) male teachers and (30) female teachers with mean age (38.85) and standard deviation (1.28) years. The basic sample of the study consists of (108) of teachers of children with learning disabilities in order to make sure of the validity, reliability and the psychometric efficacy of scales used in the study and to validate the correlational hypotheses of the study. This sample consists of (54) male teachers, (54) female teachers with age mean (38.70) and standard deviation (1.33) years. Two main instruments were used in the study; Psychological Burnout scale and Scale of Coping Strategies. Results showed that male teachers are more sensitive to sag feeling and lack of accomplishment motivation than their female counterparts. Also, female special education teachers are more sensitive to physical symptoms, emotional catharsis, weak work relations and the total score of the scale may be due to the overwhelming work and their social context. Female teachers are overwhelmed with pressing feelings and burdens making them subjected to psychological burnout compared with their male counterparts. Therefore, much effort should be exerted to help female teachers to overcome sources of burnout to lead sound life and to be able to endure work burdens. In addition, Results revealed that female teachers are higher than their male counterparts in their feelings with suppression of contradicting ideas and activities, seeking emotional support, planning for coping compressing situations and emotional catharsis. Positive teacher interaction is a result of school administrators and parents praise of his work inside the class and results he/she achieves.

Key words: Psychological Burnout- Coping Strategies- Special Education

1. Introduction

Teachers are the cornerstone of the educational system. Effective and motivated teachers guarantee achieving educational goals successfully. In spite of the change happened these days in the teachers' role which makes teachers as facilitators, guides and counselors, teachers are still responsible of students learning. Teachers have to exert much effort to do multitask that lead them to feel tired, frustrated, stressed and burned out.

Teacher burnout is a relatively new phenomenon as a result of the changing roles of teachers in the modern world. Teachers' burnout may be caused by depression, lack of support and lack of motivation. Teachers' burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal achievement.

According to Martin (2010), burnout leads to decreased level of self-efficacy and contributes to the high attrition rate and increasing demand for highly-qualified special educators all over the world. High attrition rate which is accompanied by the severe shortage of teachers in the fields of special education leads to a downward spiral. Maslach and Lieter (1997) envisage that professionals beginning to experience burnout are spiraling in the wrong direction; they feel out of their control and have no enough effort left to restore their emotional and physical well-being.

Burnout can be defined as a condition of low levels of energy, often accompanied by diminishing (job-related) self-confidence as well as depleted feelings of enthusiasm for a person's career (Espeland, 2006). Bradley (1969) defines burnout "to fail, to wear out, to become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strengths or energy" (Freudenberger, 1974, p. 159-160). Burnout affects individuals in general and teachers particularly as a result of "a discrepancy between reality and their professional aspirations and expectations" (Martin, 2010, p.3). Special education teachers represent a cornerstone in the children rehabilitation process. Therefore, special education teachers' pre-service and in-service preparation is of a paramount importance. Unfortunately, there are certain barriers impeding teachers from performing the job tasks. Despite teachers are competent and effective, they suffer from teachers burnout as a result of many reasons such as job burdens, lack of supporting educational services, administrative work overload, lack of enough time to perform tasks, lack of cooperation between

teachers on the one hand and both parents and school administration on the other, and the lack of human relationships in the school environment.

According to Askar et al., (1986), teachers' lack of interest in his work with students leads to teachers' burnout that makes them to teach students in a careless way. In addition, teachers' burnout causes certain psychological syndromes such as pessimism, carelessness, demotivation, change resistance, lack of creativity in teaching and unjustified absence.

Margaret & Doworkin (1991, p.115) concur that there are certain factors that lead to teachers' burnout: personality traits, experience, loneliness, administration pattern, and students' behavior. These factors lead to a pre-burnout stage which may be exaggerated to the degree of burnout, therefore, destroy teachers' coping styles. At this stage, teachers feel loneliness, lack of support, weak performance; principals don't care about their opinions and experiences, and the lack of support from vocational associations.

Factors leading to teachers' burnout make teacher lose their unique vocational identity within the society and lack their social status. According to Khedr (1999, p.91), Holmes Committee, USA, states that students are reluctant to join the college of education and to work as teachers. Teachers' burnout happens as a result of barriers preventing teachers from performing their vocational tasks. Alwaily (1995, p.13) views that customers receiving educational, medical and social services play a vital role in producing teachers' burnout.

To sum up, special education teachers are more sensitive to psychological burnout as they have to exert much effort to teach children with learning disability. Therefore, they feel burnout more than teachers of normal students in the mainstream schools. Special education teachers in Kuwait exert an unparalleled effort to enhance children with learning disabilities. In addition, those teachers lack both financial and emotional rewards. Therefore, they feel stressed and burned out more than teachers of normal children.

Reviewing the related literature revealed that there are numerous studies that investigated teacher's burnout in mainstream schools (Triipken, 2011; Beckett, 2011; Meehan, 2011; Asgari, 2012; Maslach, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980 and, Maslach & Jackson, 1978, 1979, 1980), other studies investigated burnout of special education teachers (Martin, 2010). Therefore no single study was conducted to investigate levels of teachers' burnout of special education teachers in the Arab world, especially in the state of Kuwait. Thus, the current study is hoped to fill the gap in literature of teacher burnout.

1.1 The problem of the study

The researchers' actual experience with teachers of children with learning difficulties as well as with children with learning difficulties themselves make them feel the problem of special education teachers' burnout. In addition, large amount of theoretical constructs state that the concept of teachers' burnout has become common in vocational, academic and administrative fields. It is also argued that role struggle has led to psychological exhaust as well as carelessness as persistent predictors of teachers burnout (Schwab & Iwanicki, 1986; Altun & Iexcl, 2002; Ewig & Whittington, 2008). Moreover, it has been shown that teachers whose age level (20 – 39) suffer from psychological burnout more than those whose age more than 50 years old (Khedr, 1999).

It is worth noting that certain studies focused a group of personal as well as vocational factor leading to psychological burnout of teachers of children with learning difficulties. However, a large amount of these studies has dealt with normal children or a certain category of learning difficulty. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct studies relating teacher's burnout in the field of teaching students with learning difficulties. According to Schwab & Iwanicki (1986), factors initiating teachers' burnout are personality traits as well as some demographic variable such as age, gender and social status (Alsamadony and Al Rabia, 1998).

Overestimation of teachers' performance and the work overload make them feel psychological burnout as there is a discrepancy between tasks targeted and actual performance. Thus, it is of great important to conduct this study to identify psychological burnout of teachers of children with learning difficulties in relation with their coping styles.

1.3 Questions of the study

The study tried to answer the following main questions:

- 1- Are there differences between male and female teachers in psychological burnout symptoms?
- 2- Are there differences between males and females special education teachers in their coping styles?
- 3- Are the coping strategies considered a predictor for ability change according to the change of teachers' burnout total score of males and females?

1.4 Objectives of the study

The current study is hoped to achieve the following objectives:

- 1- Investigating males and female teachers' burnout symptoms.
- 2- Identifying differences between male and female teachers' of children with learning disabilities in psychological burnout symptoms.
- 3- Investigating differences between male and female teachers in coping styles.

- 4- Determining the predictive ability of coping strategies according to the total score of psychological burnout of male and female teachers.

1.5 *The significance of the study:*

1.5.1 Academic Significance.

- The significance of the study emerges from the fact that it is included in various disciplines such as special education psychology, vocational psychology, and positive psychology.
- Special education field is a somewhat new discipline, especially special education teachers, therefore, it is necessary to conduct intensive studies to investigate issues related to this field.
- It is hoped that the current study will open wide horizons for providing an appropriate educational atmosphere for teachers of children with learning disabilities. These efforts is hoped to help these teachers to positively enhance the educational process as whole.

1.5.2 Social significance

- The level of society development is measured through services provided to children with learning disabilities as a global tendency. Moreover, the study is of a paramount importance in the light of the global interest in special education teachers.
- Special education teachers (children with learning disabilities) represent a high percentage in the vocational society. Furthermore, special education teachers are the most sensitive professionals and the most vulnerable to psychological burnout.

1.5.3 Psychometric Significance

The current study helps in diagnosing levels psychological burnout and coping strategies of special education teachers, especially those who work with children with learning disabilities, to identify its sources. It is hoped that this helps policymakers to settle preventive as well as remedial strategies to overcome psychological burnout.

1.6 *Delimitations of the study*

The current study is limited to the following limits:

- 1- The study sample consists of (108) of special education teachers, distributed equally (54) male teachers and (54) female teachers.
- 2- The current study was conducted on children with learning disabilities in the Centre of Children Evaluation and Teaching and some schools in Assema Educational Area, the state of Kuwait, in October, 2012.
- 3- The study is limited to investigating levels of teachers' burnout and coping styles.

1.7 *Review of Related Literature*

Numerous studies were conducted in the field of psychological burnout in general and teacher's burnout in particular. Afterwards, the need to investigate the special education teacher's burnout pushes researchers to conduct studies dealing with this category of teachers in relation to the coping strategies they follow to alleviate this burnout and perform well their job.

1.7.1 Studies Relating Psychological Burnout of Special Education Teachers

Special Education teachers are the most sensitive category to feel psychological burnout compared with their counterparts who are teaching normal students in the mainstream schools. Therefore, various studies were conducted to investigate causes of burnout felt by special education teachers. Yotanyamaneewong, (2012) conducted a study that aimed to examine the phenomenon of burnout among teachers of pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN) and how this phenomenon relates to a) teacher's career motivations; b) teacher's career motivations in relation to teaching pupils with SEN; c) their perceptions of positive and/or negative aspects of teaching pupils with SEN, and d) teachers' use of coping strategies. The data were collected from SEN teachers working in Chiang Mai province (Thailand) using the burnout inventory, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Two groups of teachers were identified as having the lowest and highest levels of burnout. Sixteen from each group were interviewed and the data analyzed using five categories adapted from Maslow's hierarchy of needs- physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization.

The main findings show that the two groups share similar perceptions in terms of the positive aspects of teaching pupils with SEN. However they differ in their motivations to teach regular pupils and pupils with SEN. The research also delves into the negative aspects of teaching pupils with SEN, and the coping strategies they used when experiencing stressful situations. Based on the five categories, esteem and self-actualization are seen to play a bigger role in differentiating the two groups. As a result, promoting teachers' esteem and self-actualization will be crucial in maintaining or increasing their efficiency. The findings suggest that this can be achieved by enhancing these teachers' skills which will subsequently raise their confidence. Other suggestions include recognizing their performance and providing opportunities for them to be more effective in performing their duties.

Another study was conducted by Martin (2010) to investigate the prediction of teacher burnout and self-efficacy among special education teachers. The sample of the study consists of (101) special educators from four public school districts in Connecticut. Participants were surveyed to investigate correlations and predictive relationships between the dependent variables of the study (emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, depersonalization and self-efficacy) and the independent variables (quantitative demands, cognitive demands, emotional demands, role conflict, quality of leadership, administrative support, coworker support, teacher stressors and, demographic/job-specific characteristics). The researcher conducted correlations and hierarchical regression analyses for all dependent variables. Findings of the hierarchical regression analyses indicated that the variables of Teacher Stressors, Emotional Demands, Quality of Leadership and Quantitative Demands were the best set of predictors of Emotional Exhaustion in special Educator. In addition, it was found that Quantitative Demands, Quality of Leadership, Administrative support and coworker support were the best set of predictors of personal accomplishment. Another multiple regression analysis was conducted which indicated that Learning Disability, School Level, Number of Meetings with an Administrator, Emotional Demands, Role Conflict, and Quality of Leadership were the best set of predictors of self-Efficacy among special educators. There was no hierarchical regression performed for the personalization variable due to low scores and low variability in the preliminary analyses.

Veatch (2006) investigated the effect of new teacher induction programs on feelings of burnout of (69) newly hired special education teachers from two Midwestern metropolitan school districts. The main question of the study was whether there was a significant difference in feelings of burnout between new teachers in a district that uses a special education instructional resource teacher as a key feature of their instruction program and teachers in a district that uses a more traditional induction model. Participants completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator survey. Results of the study revealed that there were, on average, no statistically significant differences in feelings of burnout of newly hired special education teachers in the two groups. Findings of the study suggest that, at least in these districts, special education teachers are staying in the field longer than originally expected, newly hired special education teachers are coming to the job better prepared, and deliverable and responsive induction programs did not influence feelings of burnout.

Also, Al-Homr (2006) investigated levels of psychological burnout of special education teachers compared with normal students' teachers in Bahrain. The study sample consists of (84) teachers; (40) of normal students teachers and (44) of special education teachers. Findings of the study revealed that there are statistically significant differences between special education teachers and normal students teachers in favor of special education teachers.

In addition, Farah (2001) explored levels of psychological burnout of individual working with people with special needs in Qatar. The researcher used Maslach scale of teachers' burnout. Findings of the study indicated that teachers' burnout level was average. It is shown that males are more sensitive to lack of personal achievement feeling. For non-Qatari (residents), they suffer from psychological burnout more than their Qatari counterparts. Results showed that counselors training people with special needs are the most sensitive to psychological burnout. Individuals working with people with multiple handicaps suffer from sag feelings more than those working with people suffering from mental retardation and sensory motor retardation. Results revealed that there are no statistically significant differences due to educational level or years of experience whether with the total score of Maslach scale of teacher burnout or the three dimensions of the scale.

Antoniou, Polychroni & Walters (2000) investigated sources of psychological burnout of special education teachers in Greece. The study sample consists of (110) teachers in Greece; (68) male and (42) female special education teachers with age level (31-51) years old. The researcher developed psychological pressures inventory and used Maslach Teacher burnout scale. Findings revealed that the first source of pressure leading teachers to feel psychological burnout is the students' low achievement, teaching overloading, increasing numbers of students inside classroom and the lack of cooperation among teachers. In addition, it is revealed the most recurrent dimensions of psychological burnout is emotional fatigue, then lack feeling of personal achievement. Results also indicated that there are no statistically significant differences between male and female special education teachers in sag feeling and lack of feeling of personal achievement.

In their study, Al Qarioty and Abdul Fattah (1998) used Shrunk scale of teachers' burnout in order to compare normal students' teachers and special education teachers in the United Arab Emirates. The sample of the study consists of (224) special education trainers; (149) special education teachers and (95) of normal students teachers. Findings showed that there an increase in levels of psychological burnout of normal students teachers compared with special education teachers. It is also indicated that there are differences in teachers' burnout levels due to differences in years of experience. In addition, results shows that teachers burnout levels of special education male teachers compared with their female counterparts.

In addition, Aldabasa (1993) investigated psychological burnout levels of special education teachers in Jordan. The sample of the study consists of (308) male and female soecial education teachers. The researcher used

Maslach scale of teachers' burnout standardized for Jordanian environment. Results of the study revealed that special education teachers suffer moderately from psychological burnout. It is also revealed that almost all statistically significant differences relate to emotional fatigue dimension due to teachers' major in favor of bachelor degree holders, to gender in favor of male teachers, to years of experience in favor of new recruits, to the type of handicap teachers deal with in favor of children suffering from movement handicap and to monthly income (salary) in favor of teachers receiving high monthly salary.

1.7.2 Psychological Burnout in relation to coping strategies of special Education Teachers

There are a large amount of literature dealt with the relationship between teacher's burnout and coping strategies. Coping strategies is the approach that teachers use to alleviate teachers burnout. One of these studies was conducted by Cicognani, Pietrantonio, Palestini & Prati (2009) to explore the relationship coping strategies and incorrect beliefs in the light of sound life. The sample of the study consists of (764) teachers. The researchers used coping strategies scale as well as sound life scale. Findings of the study revealed that there are positive statistically significant relationships between teachers' coping strategies and the soundness of life. In addition teachers coping strategies were revealed to be good predictors for teachers' feeling of sound life.

Another study was conducted by Cenkseven – Onder & Fulya (2009) to investigate the school environment and psychological burnout as a predictor of sound life of teachers. The sample of the study consists of (161) teachers; (93) female teachers and (68) male teachers. The researchers used Diner & Larsen (1985) good life scale, Waston and Tellagen (1988) coping strategies scale and Zager & Seidman (1986) Psychological Burnout Scale. Findings showed that there are high levels of teachers' burnout. Stepwise Regression Analysis revealed that the type of life as well as psychological burnout is strong predictors of sound life of teachers.

In addition, Devereux, Hasting, Noone, Firth & Totsika (2009) investigated social support and coping strategies as predictors of pressures and psychological burnout. The sample of the study consists of (22) children with developmental difficulties as well as their parents. Results indicated that there is a negative correlation between psychological burnout and coping strategies. It is also indicated that there is a positive correlation between positive coping strategies and social support. Also it is revealed that low scores in social support and coping lead to individuals' psychological burnout.

2. Methods

The current study used the descriptive research design. This research design helps in describing the phenomenon and holding comparisons among subjects of the study based on the study variables (psychological burnout and coping styles).

2.1 Sample of the study

The psychometric sample of the study consists of (60) teachers of children with learning disabilities evenly distributed; (30) male teachers and (30) female teachers with mean age (38,85) and standard deviation (1. 28) years.

The basic sample of the study consists of (108) of teachers of children with learning disabilities in order to make sure of the validity, reliability and the psychometric efficacy of scales used in the study and to validate the correlational hypotheses of the study. This sample consists of (54) male trainers, (54) female trainers with age mean (38.70) and standard deviation (1.33) year.

2.2 Instruments of the study

2.2.1 Psychological Burnout scale

2.2.1.1 Scale description

The psychological Burnout scale was prepared by Abu Al-diyar (2006). It consists of (33) items distributed on five subsidiary dimensions which aims at investigating psychological burnout perceived by special education teachers. These dimensions are:

1. Physical Symptoms

This dimension is measured by items (1-7), it refers to unusual physical changes teachers feel such as physical stress, headache and Sickness.

2. Emotional Exhaustion

This dimension is measured by items (8-14). It refers to exhaustion o emotional energy of teachers and shortage of physical power as a result of complex responsibilities whether quantitatively and qualitatively in personal, social and vocational context leading to psychological burnout.

3. Sag feelings (carelessness)

This dimension is measured by items (15 -21). It refers to teachers' professional stiffness towards their colleagues and supervisors as a result of lack of rapport and friendliness, reluctance to deal with them and emotional estrangement in work environment.

4. Low Personal Accomplishment

This dimension is measured by items (22-27). It refers to teachers lack of self positive assurance and lack of achievement motivation.

5. Weak Co-worker relationship

This dimension is measured by items (28 – 33). It refers to lack of relationship with other teachers, lack of effective dialogue with others which leads to professional loneliness, lack of ability to interact with other teachers, and reluctance to discuss topics with others.

2.2.1.2 Scale Marking Rubric

The scale follows Lickert scale which ranges from (5) the item applies strongly to teachers, (4) the item applies to teachers, (3) the item applies to some extent, (2) the item applies to teachers, to little degree, (1) the item applies to teachers with very little degree.

2.2.1.3 Scale psychometric efficacy verification:

Abu Al-diyar (2006) assessed validity and reliability of teacher psychological Burnout scale.

2.2.1.4 Scale Validity

1. Criterion – referenced validity

The researchers calculated the correlation coefficients of pilot sample subjects (N= 60) of the psychometric sample in psychological burnout using the first author's burnout scale and Maslach scale teachers Burnout (translated by Swail, 1998). The researchers used Maslach scale of teacher's Burnout because it is widely used for special education teachers (Dababsa, 1993, Antoniou, Polychroni & Walters, 2000), also there is a consistency between items of the two teacher's burnout scales correlation coefficient was statistically significant (0.75) which means that teacher's burnout scale is highly valid.

2. Reliability

Reliability was calculated in various methods:

1. Alpha Cronbach (Internal Consistency)

This method depends on the correlation coefficients between items of each scale as well as the correlation coefficients between each item and the total score of the scale.

2. Test – retest

The test was administered for two times with time interval of 20 days in order to get rid off memory effect. This procedure to determine stability coefficient which is affected by contrast error resulting from temporary fluctuations. (Abu Hatab, Othman and Sadek, 1999).Table (1) shows results of reliability and validity of teachers' burnout scale.

Table (1) Reliability and Validity Coefficients of Teacher's Psychological Burnout Scale.

Scale dimensions	No of items	Male (N=30)			Female (N=30)		
		Alpha Cronbach's	Test retest	Criterion referenced validity	Alpha Cronbach's	Test retest	Criterion referenced validity
Physical symptoms	7	0.87	0.94	0.77**	0.92	0.91	0.78**
Emotional Exhaustion	7	0.82	0.76	0.75**	0.80	0.78	0.69**
Sag feelings	7	0.75	0.82	0.58**	0.79	0.72	0.49**
Low Personal accomplishment	6	0.70	0.88	0.48**	0.78	0.76	0.37**
Weak Co-workers relations	6	0.90	0.77	0.39**	0.87	0.81	0.49**
Total	33	0.84	0.79	---	0.87	0.85	---

* Statistically Significant at level (0.01) coping strategies scale

2.2.2 Scale of Coping Styles

Abo Al-diyar (2011) developed the Scale of Coping Styles in order to provide a valid and reliable psychometric tool derived from Arabic environment in general and Egyptian culture in particular for estimating special education teachers' coping style towards problems of children with learning difficulties. The author modified and paraphrased the scale items in order to be suitable for teachers of children with learning difficulties. The scale consists of (102) items divided into two subscales:

A. The Scale of Internal Coping Strategies:

The items of this subscale are distributed as follows:

1. Suppression of Contradictory Ideas and Activities: It is represented by items (1,3,6,10,13,15,18,26,29,36,45,50)
2. Seeking Emotional Support: It is represented by items (2,7,9,17,20,23,24,27,30,32,39)
3. Positive Evaluation of Compressing Situations: It is represented by items (4,14,11,22,31,34,39,44,47,52).
4. Emotional Catharsis: It is represented by items (21,12,25,28,37,41,43,46,48,51,55,57)

5. Self – regulation: It is represented by items (5,8,16,19,33,38,40,42,49,54,56)

B. The Scale of External Coping Strategies:

The items of this subscale are distributed as follows:

1. Planning for Coping Compressing Situations: It is represented by items (1,4,6,9,11,13,16,18,20,23,25,46)
2. Community Environmental Adaptability : It is represented by items (2,7,12,22,24,26,28,31,35,37).
3. Seeking Social support. : It is represented by items (3,8,14,19,29,33,36,38,40,42,44).
4. Seeking Alternative Activities: It is represented by items (5,10,15,17,21,27,30,32,34,39,41,43,45)

2.2.2.1 Scoring the Scale:

Scoring the scale is based on a rubric of three grades (Never Apply, Sometimes Apply, and Apply), positive items got marks (3, 2-1) successively and vice versa. Thus, the total score of the scale ranges between (102) and (306) marks. High score refers to high rate of coping strategies and vice versa. It is worth noting that this scale is not a timed scale; no time limit for responding.

2.2.2.2 Psychometric efficacy of the scale:

1. Reliability of the scale

The scale reliability was calculated through two methods; test retest and split half method. Test retest method was used; the scale was administered twice with time interval of two weeks. The sample used in test retest consists of (50) participants. Test retest reliability coefficient ranges (0.75 – 0.86). Split – half method was also used to figure out reliability of the scale. Correlation coefficient between single and paired halves of the scale ranges (0.71 – 0.87).

2. Validity of the Scale

The scale validity was calculated through the following methods:

1. Criterion – referenced validity:

It is represented by correlation coefficients between teachers’ burnout scale and the observation from of the Coping Inventory (Shirley Zeiltin, 1994). This inventory was used because of its suitability and appropriacy for measuring coping styles. In addition, items and components of this inventory are similar to those of the scale. Also, the authors want to make sure of its psychometric efficacy. Correlation coefficients – according to criterion – referenced method – ranges (0.71 – 0.69). Table (2) shows both reliability and validity coefficients of coping strategies scale.

Table (2) Reliability and validity coefficient of coping strategies scale

Tests	Male (N=30)			Female (N=30)		
	Split half	Test retest	Criterion referenced validity	Split half	Test retest	Criterion-referenced validity
Suppression of contradictory ideas	0.82	0.90	0.70**	0.92	0.88	0.56**
Seeking Emotional support	0.80	0.73	0.75**	0.80	0.71	0.68**
Positive evaluation of compressing situations	0.79	0.81	0.79**	0.79	0.70	0.53**
Emotional catharsis	0.74	0.84	0.58**	0.78	0.77	0.44**
Self – regulation	0.89	0.73	0.47**	0.87	0.86	0.63**
Planning for coping compressing situation	0.66	0.70	3.69**	0.69	0.72	0.48**
Community environmental adaptability	0.81	0.77	4.26**	0.78	0.69	0.60**
Seeking social support	0.77	0.71	2.98**	0.82	0.72	0.47**
Seeking alternative activities	0.80	0.89	4.02**	0.90	0.83	0.43**
Total score	0.82	0.73	---	0.81	0.77	---

** Significance level (0.01)

2.3 Administration procedures

Administration procedures were done through certain successive stages:

1. The first stage includes selecting the sample of the study which consists of special education teachers. The sample was selected intentionally. Afterwards, the authors made sure of the psychometric efficacy of the scale.
2. The second stage includes the implementation of diagnostic instruments of the study; teachers’ burnout scale and coping strategies scale. The scales were administered in October 2012.

2.4 Statistical Treatment

The following statistical methods were used:

1. Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviation, Alpha Cronbach's coefficient, Pearson correlation coefficient.

2. Inferential statistics

T-test and multiple regression analysis.

3. Results

The first hypothesis: Psychological burnout symptoms differ according gender (males and females)

In order to test differences between the two groups using independent samples T-test and to determine the direction of these differences, authors examined descriptive statistics results of the two groups according to psychological burnout symptoms. Table (3) shows differences of males and females in psychological burnout scale.

Table (3) Differences of males and females in psychological burnout scale

Psychological Burnout symptoms	Males		Females		T-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Physical symptoms	27.04	3.42	43.44	13.17	6.03**
Emotional Exhaustion	23.08	4.70	38.60	14.23	5.18**
Sag feelings	40.36	12.83	23.44	8.41	5.51**
Low Personal accomplishment	35.36	16.30	19.00	6.91	4.62**
Weak Co-workers relations	18.88	6.80	35.88	17.29	4.57**
Total	111.44	23.34	193.64	52.70	7.13**

** Significance level (0.01)

Close inspection of table (3) shows that there are statistically significant differences between male and female special education teachers (teachers of children with learning disabilities) concerning physical symptoms, emotional exhaustion, weak work relations, and the total score of the scale in favor of female teachers. This means that female trainers are more sensitive to these dimensions that their males counterparts.

In addition, there are statistically significant differences between male and female special education teachers concerning sag feelings, and lack of accomplishment motivation in favor of male teachers. This means that male teachers lack enthusiastic feelings and lack motivation for accomplishment compared with their female counterparts.

The second hypothesis: Teachers' coping strategies differ according to gender (males and females).

Table (4) shows T-value significance between male and female teachers in coping strategies scale

Coping styles		Male		Female		T-value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Self coping strategies	Suppression of contradicting ideas	21.80	4.30	29.64	5.88	5.33**
	Seeking emotional support	23.08	4.89	26.80	6.45	2.30*
	Positive evaluation of compressing situations	28.08	6.54	22.36	4.33	3.64**
	Emotional catharsis	23.20	5.35	30.04	6.67	4.00**
	Self-regulation	26.56	6.20	22.36	4.32	2.77**
Environment coping styles	Planning for coping compressing situations	23.20	5.34	27.60	7.12	2.47**
	Community environmental adaptability	35.24	10.24	26.54	6.54	3.99**
	Seeking social support	27.64	5.31	22.34	6.25	2.89**
	Seeking alternative activities	33.44	11.88	24.84	5.85	3.24**
Total score		196.28	22.90	160.84	21.60	5.62**

* Significance level (0.05)

** Significance level (0.01)

Close inspection of table (4) reveals that there are statistically significant differences between male and female special education teachers (teachers of children with learning difficulties) concerning suppression of contradicting ideas, seeking emotional support, planning for coping compressing situations and emotional catharsis in favor of female teachers. This means that the most concurrent coping strategies female teachers use are suppression of contradicting ideas, seeking emotional support, planning for coping compressing situations, and emotional catharsis compared with their male counterparts.

In addition, there are statistically significant differences between male and female special education teachers (teachers of children with learning difficulties) concerning positive evaluation of compressing situations, self-regulation, seeking social support, community environmental adaptability, seeking alternative activities, and the total score of the scale in favor of male teachers. This means that the most recurrent coping strategies male teachers use are positive evaluation of compressing situations, self-regulation, seeking social support, community environmental adaptability, seeking alternative activities, and the total score of the scale compared

with their female counterparts.

The Third Hypothesis: coping strategies prediction ability differs according to the total score of psychological burnout scale of male and female teachers. Table (5) shows results of multiple regression analysis of psychological burnout of male and female teachers.

Table (5) Multiple Regression Analysis of psychological burnout of male and female teachers.

Scale	Sample	Predictors	B	R square	F	Beta	T-value
Total score of psychological burnout	Male (N=54)	Self – regulation	3.64	0.99	1193.18	0.429	2.22*
		Self – regulation	0.12				2.31*
		Planning for coping compressing situations	1.8				35.33**
		Suppression of contradicting ideas and activities	0.84				11.11**
		Emotional Catharsis	1.02				22.06**
		Positive evaluation of compressing situations	1.03				11.71**
		Constant	12.24				
	Female (N=54)	Seeking emotional support	2.70	0.97	10.84**	0.57	3.29**
		Seeking emotional support	0.56				2.34
		Positive evaluation of compressing situations	1.49				8.90**
		Planning for coping compressing situations	1.00				9.17**
		Suppression of contradicting ideas and activities	1.01				5.70**
		Emotional catharsis	0.98				4.53**
		Constant	12.72				

* Significance level (0.05)

** Significance level (0.01)

Close inspection of table (5) reveals that self-regulation affects greatly on psychological burnout. Self regulation is a statistically significant predictor for male sample which refers to its prediction ability of psychological burnout.

In addition, seeking emotional support has a statistically significant effect on male teachers' psychological burnout which denotes its ability to predict psychological burnout.

Also, self-regulation, planning for coping compressing situation, suppression of contradictory ideas and activities, emotional catharsis, and positive evaluation of compressing situations has a strong statistically significant effect on psychological burnout for male teachers. It represents 99% of total variance in psychological burnout score which is a large amount of variance explained through these two variables as it denotes high ability to predict psychological burnout. Female teachers are different from their males counterpart. Seeking emotional support, positive evaluation of compressing situations, planning for coping compressing situations, suppression of contradicting ideas and activities and emotional catharsis have a strong statistically significant effect of female teachers.

It represents 97% of the total variance of psychological burnout scores which denotes a large amount of explained variance through these variables as predictors of psychological burnout.

4. Discussion

4.1 Concerning the first Hypothesis:

In the light of the study results, the current study coincided partially with the study of Al Farah (2001) which revealed that male teachers working with children with learning disabilities are more sensitive to lack of achievement motivation. On the other hand, this study contradicts with the study conducted by Antoniou, Polychroni & Walters (2000) about pressure sources and teachers burnout of special education teachers in Greece. The study results showed that male teachers suffer from emotional catharsis, sag feelings, and low personal achievement. It is worth noting that female teachers are more sensitive to physical symptoms because of the physical nature of women and the inability to endure excess burden. Therefore, female teachers are more

sensitive to organic symptoms than their male counterparts so it is necessary to provide them with guidance concerning organic symptoms they may suffer. Male teachers are more sensitive to sag feeling and low personal accomplishment than their female counterparts.

Also, female special education teachers are more sensitive to physical symptoms, emotional catharsis, weak co-workers relations and the total score of the scale may be due to the overwhelming work and their social context. Female teachers are overwhelmed with pressing feelings and burdens making them subjected to psychological burnout compared with their male counterparts. Therefore, much effort should be exerted to help female teachers to overcome sources of burnout to lead sound life and to be able to endure work burdens.

Structural Relations Model (SRM) may provide another justification to the beforehand mentioned result SRM describes a clear description of the mutual relationships among psychological burnout dimensions namely; personal achievement, and feelings of exhaustion. According to this model, low personal achievement affects emotional exhaustion meaning that the higher individuals achievement, the lower they feel psychological burnout and sag feelings.

4.2 Concerning the second Hypothesis:

Results show that female teachers are higher than their male counterparts in their feelings with suppression of contradicting ideas and activities, seeking emotional support, planning for coping compressing situations and emotional catharsis. Many researchers (Paul, 1997, Groden, Cautela, Prince & Berrvman, 1994). View that female teacher lack certain coping strategies leading to their deficiency communicating with the surrounding world, oversensitivity to problems, aggression and self-aggression fits. Female teachers use the beforehand mentioned coping strategies because they possess certain adaptive abilities to keep balance such as equilibrium, renovation, flexibility, conciliation, sticking to traditions (Timothy, 1994). In addition, female teachers possess certain coping strategies such as conflict management, desensitization, dreams, exercises, fun, imagination, self-reflection, self praise, self-talk, social support, concept increase and sleeping (Cartar, 1994).

Male teachers results coincides with results obtained by Rotter (1981) denoting that male teachers exceed in the positive evaluation of compressing situations, self-regulation, seeking social support and community environmental adaptability, seeking alternative activities and the total score of the scale. This is due to male teachers' ability to modify pressure sources or even they modify their evaluation for the pressure sources. Therefore, coping strategies necessitate the effective problem solution, emotional regulation of the sources of pressure which include modifying both the surrounding environment and the inner psychological processes.

On a related context, Caplan, Naidu & Tripathi (1984) view that there are various coping strategies such as self-modification, modifying abilities and needs, and modifying the environmental necessities. Fleshman (1984) argues that male teachers differ in their use of coping strategies according to their implicit as well as explicit behaviors for modifying sources of pressure or even eliminating its effects.

4.3 Concerning the third Hypothesis:

In the light of vocational interaction happens between special education teachers on the one hand and both school administrators as well as parents on the other is one of the vital elements leading to stability and success may be a reason for psychological burnout. Positive teacher interaction is a result of school administrators and parents praise of his work inside the class and results he/she achieves.

Special education teachers sometimes fail to establish positive interaction with others due to reasons out of their command. In certain cases, special education teacher faces problems with his/her colleagues when he/she tries to merge pupils he/she teachers in various activities inside the school. Teachers sometimes think that students' failure to acquire the necessary skills may be due to the lack of teaching aid, the increasing number of students inside the classroom, or to certain obstacles which affects their ability to teach those students. In addition, one of the most prominent elements having an adverse effect on their performance is the inability to cope with up-to-date technological innovations in teaching/learning strategies as well as the lack of planning for cope sources of pressure.

According to pines and Aronson (1988) self-regulation, planning for coping the compressing situations, suppression of contradictory ideas and activities, emotional catharsis, and positive evaluation of the compressing situations help to some extent in avoiding both outer and inner sources of pressure and in establishing sound work relations.

The previous result coincides with the Structural Relations Model which denotes that coping strategies have an impact on psychological burnout whether they are effective or ineffective strategies. Results revealed that effective coping strategies correlate with low personal achievement, sag feelings and emotional catharsis. This denotes that there are mutual relations between the two types of coping strategies on the one hand and the psychological burnout (Dabrowska & Pisula, 2010).

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