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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Other Side of Passion: Examining How Stress and Burnout Affect Life Satisfaction in Primary Teachers

Samire Bllaca Balaj[1], Merita Shala[2*]

[1,2] University 'Isa Boletini' Mitrovice, Faculty of Education. Republic of Kosovo

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***Corresponding Author:**

merita.shala@umib.net

ABSTRACT

Employing a quantitative methodology, this study explores how stress and burnout affect life satisfaction in primary teachers of Pristina. A total of 455 respondents 63.3% of them being female with an age from 25-55 years old (M = 39.95, SD = 9.05) from the capital city of Kosovo voluntarily participated in the study. The demographic variables included age, sex, education level, participation in training, work experience, and responses to two questions about overtime work and work overload. We used he Burnout Assessment Tool, the stress scale of DASS-21 and the Satisfaction with life scale. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's chi-square test, t-test, ANOVA, and linear and multiple regressions were used with p-values < 0.05 considered statistically significant. We found significant statistical differences in the level of burnout, particularly in the exhaustion and mental distance subscales with male teachers demonstrated higher values. Teachers who participated in the training showed statistically significant differences in the exhaustion subscale (p=.04) revealing higher values than those who not attended training to manage stress and professional burnout. Regarding the years of work experience the 39-49 age group frequently faced with symptoms of burnout. The same was for teachers who worked longer hours than their colleagues. Gender significantly predicted burnout scores and contributed to approximately 1.2% of the variance. Stress significantly predicted burnout scores and contributed to approximately 9 % of the variance. The well-being of teachers should be considered a crucial factor influencing the quality of their educational work. Therefore, support programs for high school teachers should be implemented at every level: school, municipal, and policy.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between stress and professional burnout among primary school teachers is an important topic in education in Kosovo. According to Shkëmbi et al., (2015) and Turtulla (2017), most teachers in Kosovo face several challenges and pressures related to their duties, which may affect their level of workplace stress and professional burnout. In Kosovo, as in most other countries, teachers face various work stressors, including a load of teaching tasks, lack of material resources and support, and classroom management challenges (Shkëmbi et al., 2015).

Stress among teachers has been defined by different authors, who relate it to the lack of adaptation between external and internal work demands, or as the experience of negative or unpleasant emotions that come from aspects of work related to some contextual factors, such as time pressure, work overload, lack of resources, excessive workload, self-efficacy and emotional stress, lack of administrative support, and a variety of tasks (Collie, Shapka, and Perry, 2012; Kokkinos, 2007; Fernet et al., 2012; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2011ª; Antoniou et al., 2020).

However, teachers are exposed to various sources of stress; therefore, teaching is considered to be one of the most stressful professions (Nagai et al., 2007; Titheradge et al., 2019). This causes teachers

to show the lowest levels of psychological well-being and job satisfaction, according to some studies (Jonson et al., 2005; Singh and Gautam, 2024).

Burnout is a chronic psychological syndrome that develops in response to prolonged exposure to work-related stress. It is considered a risk factor for poor mental and physical well-being and can negatively affect the health of working individuals (Zhao et al., 2022). Teachers are particularly vulnerable to developing burnout syndrome because of the affective and emotional components of their professional profiles (Vicente de Vera García and Gambarte, 2019). Teacher burnout refers to the emotional and behavioral exhaustion caused by the long hours and high-intensity nature of the daily teaching process (Wu et al., 2016). Professional burnout not only directly affects the quality of teaching and the physical and mental health of teachers (Domitrovich et al., 2016; Capone and Petrillo, 2018), but also has many negative effects on students' academic achievement and social behavior (Klusmann et al. al., 2016; Madigan and Kim, 2021).

Several studies have shown that work-related factors, such as thehigh job demands, load of teaching tasks and working outside schedule, are closely related to the level of professional burnout among teachers (Belay et al., 2023; Magtalas & Eduvala, 2024). Professional burnout is, therefore, a complex phenomenon, often presenting as a feeling of chronic stress, lack of motivation, and inability to cope with work tasks with a sense of satisfaction (Herman et al., 2020; Greenier et al. al., 2021).

Zhao et al. (2022) examined the relationship between professional stress and burnout in teachers, using a sample of 558 teachers from elementary and middle schools. The results showed that work stress is an important predictive factor for occupational burnout.

Similarly, Aflakseir and Nemati (2018) evaluated the level of work-related stress and professional burnout syndrome in 107 teachers from primary and secondary schools. The findings showed that most teachers experienced high levels of stress and high average professional burnout. In line with these findings, our study also found that teachers with more experience had higher levels of burnout. Other factors, such as age, work involvement, emotions, discipline, and professional concern were identified as significant predictors of occupational burnout syndrome. Galanakis et al. (2020) analyzed the relationship between work stress and professional burnout syndrome among teachers in primary education. Their findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between job stress and burnout syndrome, although no significant differences in stress levels or burnout syndrome were found between men and women. This study also confirmed that experience was not a predictive factor for teacher burnout.

Matsushita and Yamamura (2022) studied job stress and daily working hours. The results showed that sex (female), age, taking responsibility for the classroom, experience, and long working hours were significantly associated with high levels of stress. Meanwhile, in the study of Kikuchi, et al., (2020) it was also found that overtime hours are related to work stress for both sexes. Another study (Asmaa et al., 2018) aimed to assess work stress among primary school teachers in Cairo. The results showed that 74.3% of teachers experienced moderate stress, 23.8% low stress, and only 1.9% high stress. There was a statistically significant difference between gender and teacher stress with female teachers showing the highest values. Knani (2013) showed that work experience does not have a significant effect on professional burnout and job characteristics but has a significant positive effect on the intention to leave the job. This finding suggests that experienced employees are no longer prepared to stay on the job compared with their less experienced colleagues, while employers may benefit from investing in job resources to support and motivate their employees.

Our study aimed to explore how stress and burnout affect life satisfaction in primary teachers and the influence of demographic variables.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design and procedure

This was a cross-sectional study. The questionnaire comprissed two parts. The first part gathered data regarding demographic questions related to teachers' age, gender, level of education, and participation in training for stress management and burnout at work, together with two questions related to stressful factors at work, overtime, and work overload. The second part contained the BAT burnout questionnaire, the stress questionnaire (DASS-21), and the life satisfaction (SWL)

questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed online, with the first statement seeking informed consent for voluntary participation in the research.

Participants and sampling

Our sample included 455 primary teachers from Pristina, the capital of Kosova, 63.3% of them being female. The age of the participants ranged from to 25-55 years old (M = 39.95, SD = 9.05). For all demographic variables, the chi square test showed significant values. The demographic data and values of chi-square, are presented at Table 1.

Table 1: **Primary teachers demographic variables (N=455)**

Demographic variables		**N**	**%**	**Chi square**
Gender	Female	279	61.3	
	Male	176	38.7	$\chi(1) = 23.32$, $p = .000$
Education level	Faculty	259	56.9	
	Master	127	27.9	$\chi(2)=155.03$, $p = .000$
	More	69	15.2	
Teachers' age	25-31 year old	97	21.3	
	32-39 year old	133	29.2	
	40-49 year old	140	30.8	$\chi(3) = 19.05$, $p = .000$
	50-55year old	85	18.7	
Work experience	0-5 years	174	38.2	
	6-10 years	109	24.0	$\chi(3) = 73.78$, $p = .000$
	11-15 years	126	27.7	
	16-20 years	46	10.1	
Participation in training	Yes	105	23.1	
	No	350	76.9	$\chi(1) = 131.92$ $p = .000$
	No	212	46.6	
Overtime work	Prefer not respond	179	39.3	$\chi(2) = 79.60$ $p = .000$
	Yes	64	14.1	
Overload work	No	250	54.9	
	Prefer not respond	144	31.6	$\chi(2) = 118.34$ $p = .000$
	Yes	61	13.4	

Instruments

Demographic variables: The first part of the questionnaire aimed to gather information on various demographic factors, including age, sex, education level, participation in training, work experience, and responses to two questions about overtime work and work overload.

Burnout was measured using the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT). Taking into account the proposition that BAT can be seen as a stable, alternative measure of combustion that assesses burnout syndrome as such (total score) relying on the proposed reconceptualization of burnout and therefore BAT can contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon (Schaufeli et al., 2020), we have decided to use it as an instrument in this research. The short version of the BAT assesses the four core dimensions—exhaustion (3 items), mental distance (3 items), impaired emotional (3 items), and cognitive control (3 items) and contains in total 12 items. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from never (1) to always (5). As the authors mentioned, "the shortened version of the work-related BAT can, psychometrically speaking, be used just as well as the original longer version" (Schaufeli et al., 2020, p.101).

The stress levels of the primary teachers were measured by the stress scale of DASS-21. The stress scale contains seven items and is sensitive to chronic nonspecific arousal (Lovibond and Lovibond, 1985). Stress scores are calculated by summing the scores for relevant items and are based on a dimensional rather than a categorical concept. The total scores ranged from 0 to 21 and were computed by summing the responses to the relevant items and multiplying by 2 to calculate the final score.

Satisfaction with life was measured using the SWL Scale, a short 5-item instrument designed to measure global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life (Diener et al., 1985). Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Data analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to organize and summarize the data of all respondents, including the variables of interest. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's chi-square test, t-test, ANOVA, and linear and multiple regressions were used. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 25.0, was used to analyze the data. All p-values (< 0.05, two-tailed test) were considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

Reliability analysis and intercorrelations

Most of the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the BAT total scores and subscales as presented at table 2, demonstrated a good internal consistency: α =.92 for BAT (12 items); α =.67 for Exhaustion (3 items); α =.71 for Mental distance (3 items); α =.71for Cognitive impairment (3 items), α =.74 for Emotional impairment (3 items). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the stress questionnaire and life satisfaction questionnaire also demonstrated good internal consistency: α =.86 for stress (7 items); α =.92 for SWLS (5 items). The subscales of the BAT demonstrated moderate to strong correlations, with values ranging from .561 to .871. Additionally, stress and BAT exhibited significant positive correlations, while life satisfaction showed significant negative correlations, though these were weak.

Table 2: Reliabilities and correlations for the BAT scales and stress and life satisfaction

BAT	Cronbach's α	BAT total	Exhaustion	Mental distance	Emotional impairment
BAT total	.87	-			
Exhaustion	.67	.809**	-		
Mental distance	.71	.841**	.583**	-	
Emotional impairment	.74	.861**	.561**	.606**	-
Cognitive impairment	.71	.876**	.609**	.613**	.769**
Stress	.86	.316**			
Life satisfaction	.92	-.095*			

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; * at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Differences in burnout, stress and life satisfaction according to demographic variables

The mean and standard deviation for BAT, BAT Subscales, Stress and SWLS, as a total and according to the demographic variables, are presented in Table 3. To examine gender differences in burnout, stress, and life satisfaction levels, we conducted the t-test. The results, presented in Table 4, indicated significant statistical differences only in the level of burnout, particularly in the exhaustion and mental distance subscales. Male teachers demonstrated higher values than female teachers (Table 3). No significant statistical differences were found for the other scales according to the gender of the primary teachers.

Table 3: MA and standard deviation for BAT, BAT subscales, stress and SWLS according to demographic variables of the study

Variables			BAT Total	E	MD	EI	CI	LSWS	Stress
Total (455)		*Mean*	3.08	3.03	3.20	3.08	3.01	20.70	17.07
		SD	.752	.86	.99	.86	.85	7.80	4.98
Gender	Female (279)	*Mean*	3.01	2.94	3.12	3.04	2.95	21.04	17.10
		SD	.722	.85	.946	.83	.813	7.54	4.93
	Male (176)	*Mean*	3.19	3.17	3.33	3.14	3.10	20.15	17.00
		SD	.788	.85	1.04	.89	.89	8.18	5.01
Age	25-31 (97)	*Mean*	3.07	3.00	3.10 1.09	3.06	3.10	20.43	17.09
		SD	.819	.88		.87	.89	7.67	5.05
	32-39 (133)	*Mean*	3.08	3.05	3.16	3.10	2.99	21.75	17.01
		SD	.72	.88	.95	.86	.84	7.87	4.73
	40-49 (140)	*Mean*	3.13	3.11	3.32	3.07	3.00	19.50	16.64
		SD	.74	.80	.99	.86	.82	7.60	4.60
	50-55 (55)	*Mean*	3.02	2.89	3.18	3.06	2.93	21.31	17.82
		SD	.745	.88	.91	.85	.83	7.973	5.70
	0-5 (174)	*Mean*	3.04	2.99	3.13	3.06	2.95	19.94	17.20

Work Experience in years		*SD*	.75	.83	.97	.86	.84	8.18	4.72
	6-10 (109)	*Mean*	3.07	3.05	3.20	3.03	3.00	21.44	17.24
		SD	.78	.91	.98	.92	.85	7.76	5.55
	11-15 (126)	*Mean*	3.09	3.00	3.27	3.05	3.05	20.92	16.87
		SD	.77	.88	1.03	.85	.87	7.61	4.66
	16-20 (46)	*Mean*	3.23	3.18	3.28	3.33	3.13	21.21	16.67
		SD	.63	.75	.99	.677	.72	6.84	5.25
Participation in trainings	Yes (105)	*Mean*	3.13	3.17	3.18	3.12	3.06	19.96	17.03
		SD	.743	.812	.98	.89	.84	8.13	5.25
	No (350)	*Mean*	3.06	2.98	3.20	3.06	2.99	20.92	17.07
		SD	.75	.86	.99	.85	.84	7.69	4.87

Note: BAT- burnout assessment Tool; CI-cognitive impairment; EI- emotional

Impairment; MD- mental distance, E- exhaustion; LSWS- life satisfaction questionnaire

Table 4: **T-test for gender**

	t	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
BAT_Total	-2.33	347.85	.021
Exhaustion	-2.79	45	.005
Mental_Distance	-2.15	344.82	.032

We also developed a t-test to identify possible differences in these scales among teachers who had and had not attended training to manage stress and professional burnout. The results showed statistically significant differences only in the exhaustion subscale (t=2.001, df=180.84, p=.047). Participants who participated in the training showed higher exhaustion values. This could be a result of increasing the level of knowledge and skills needed to recognize and manage the symptoms of burnout. ANOVA did not show statistically significant differences in the level of burnout and its subscales for the years of experience and age of primary teachers.

Teachers showed differences in the level of burnout according to the years of work experience (figure 1), their age (presented in figure 2) and the overtime working, presented in figure 3. Figure 1 demonstrates that the 39-49 age group is most frequently faced with symptoms of burnout. The level of burnout over the years of experience shows that the highest level was exhibited by teachers with more years of experience. Even though resistance was noticed in response to working overtime, teachers who worked longer hours than their colleagues showed higher levels of burnout than those who reported that they did not work extended hours. However, no significant differences were observed between the groups. The other demographic variables did not showed significat differences.

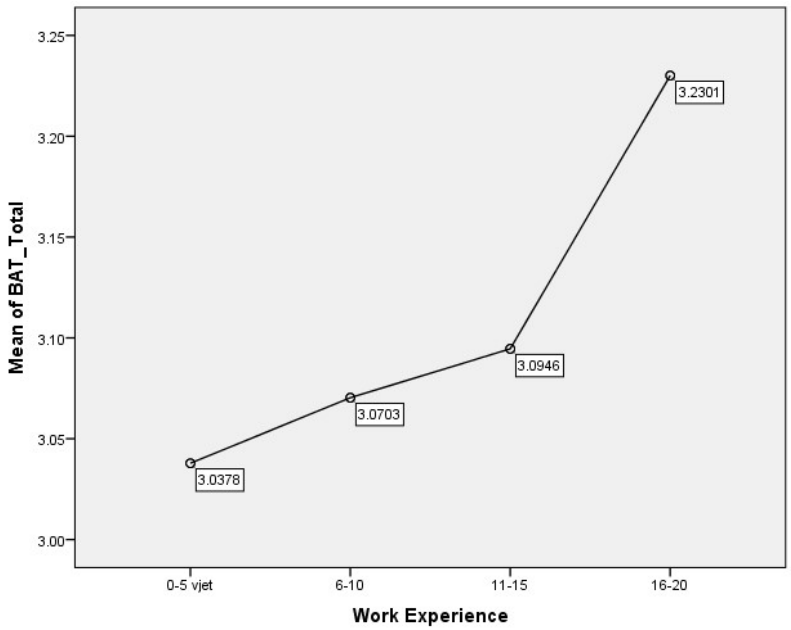

Figure 1: Burnout level according to the work experience

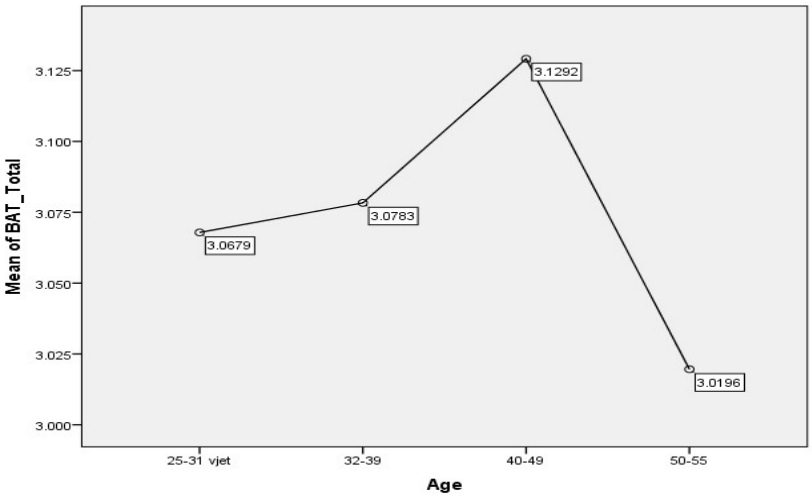

Figure 2: Burnout level according to the age group

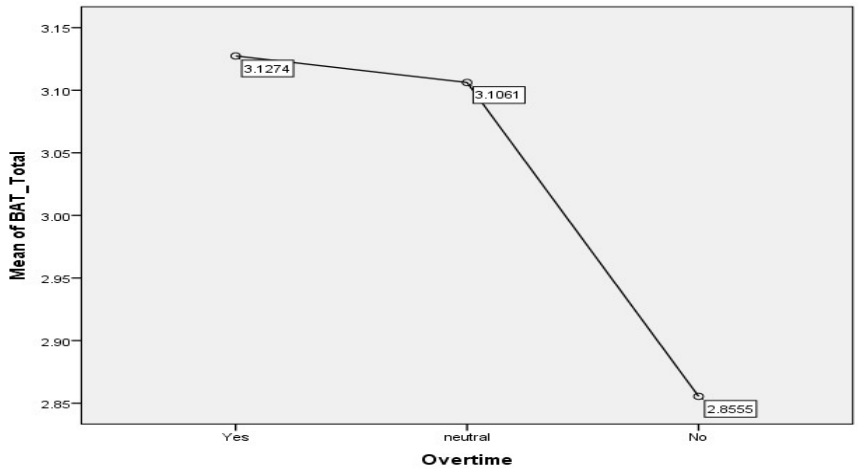

Figure 3: Burnout level according to the overtime working

Burnout and stress predictors

Regarding factors predicting burnout, we entered groups of sociodemographic variables into a linear regression analysis, as presented in table 5. In the first model, we included gender and age, and only gender significantly predicted burnout scores (β = .186; P = .011) and contributed to approximately 1.2% of the variance. The second model included stress and life satisfaction. Only stress significantly predicted burnout scores (β = -.044; P = .000) and contributed to approximately 9 % of the variance. In addition, the linear regression analysis was used to find out the predictors for stress and life satisfaction. None of the variables demonstrated predictive values for life satisfaction. For stress, among all the variables included in the model, only BAT showed predictive values.

Table 5: Linear regression analyses predicting burnout and stess.

	Model 1 (Burnout)			**Model 2 (Burnout)**			**Model 3 (Stress)**		
	B	St. err	Beta	B	St.err	Beta	B	St.err	Beta
Gender (1=female)	.186	.073	.120*						
DAS_Stress				-.044	.007	-.292*			
SWLS_Life_Satisfaction				-.007	.004	-.072			
BAT							-1.935	.297	-.293*
R^2	.012			.093			.089		
F for change in R^2	5.63*			23.19*			22.096*		

DISCUSSION

This study offers interesting findings for understanding the prevalence of burnout values, stress, life satisfaction and demographic factors among elementary school teachers in the capital of Kosovo, Pristine. Our findings showed that male teachers had higher values than female teachers in total BAT scores as well as in the Exhaustion and Mental Distance subscales. Our results are not in line with Pavlidou et al. (2020) where men have a lower average compared to women, with a statistically significant difference. Similarly, our study differs from Allwood et al. (2020) where women showed statistically higher values of BAT compared to men. On the other hand, the results from Bllaca Balaj (2024) did not show statistically significant differences in burnout according to gender in the same population. Gender differences in professional experience and work environments may have played a role in these findings. Men may face more competition or pressure to perform in their workplace, which may contribute to higher levels of burnout. Conversely, women are more likely to seek and accept support in the workplace, which may help reduce stress and burnout. These results may also reflect differences in stress level and ways of coping between genders.

In terms of stress levels and life satisfaction, no statistically significant differences were found according to gender. In our research, stress was identified as the primary predictor of burnout levels, accounting for 9% of the variance. Our finding that male teachers showed almost the same stress values as female teachers, is not in line with the findings of Geng and Midford (2016) and Cruickshank (2019) who reported that Mediterranean men are more stressed than women. Nonetheless, there are a considerable number of studies that show that women tend to report higher levels than men (Prowse et al., 2021; Parveen, 2018). Klapproth et al. (2020) also found that stress levels were higher among female teachers. Our result is in line with a few studies that have reported the lack of differences in the level of stress in the workplace between women and men (Reilly et al. 2014; Beno et al., 2021; Xhelilaj et al., 2021). In order to have a deeper and broader understanding of our findings, more in-depth studies with the inclusion of cultural variables are required.

Stress has also been shown to be a predictor of burnout in the study by Zhao et al. (2022) Bittiniani et al. (2019). Meanwhile, in Torkaman's (2017) study, burnout was found to have a negative statistical relationship with stress dimensions. Additionally, social and cultural factors may influence how men and women experience stress and life satisfaction. Women may experience more stress owing to multiple obligations, both at work and in family life. However, men may have more resources or support for managing stress, which may affect their life satisfaction. Women may be more likely to report higher levels of stress owing to different perceptions of daily pressures and challenges. However, men may report higher levels of life satisfaction because of social expectations and norms that may influence their report.

Our results showed that the participants who participated in the training had statistically higher values on the exhaustion subscale. Similar results were also found in other studies. For example, in the study by Fiorilli et al. (2020), burnout was an important factor in predicting teachers' confidence in training. In addition, Sneyers et al. (2016) found that training participants showed greater awareness of their mental states. Therefore, teachers who received training experienced less stress and burnout. This suggests that training can be an effective mechanism for reducing the perceived levels of burnout and stress among primary school teachers. Training often includes techniques and strategies for managing stress and helping teachers cope better with the daily challenges of their professions. Many training programs focus on strategies for maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life. This helps teachers better manage their time and energy, and reduces stress and burnout. Such training usually contains not only the clarification of concepts but also simple strategies for managing stress or burnout. Therefore, the findings of our study could raise the level of knowledge and skills needed for the recognition and management of burnout symptoms.

In terms of age, our results showed an increasing trend in BAT and its subscales averages with age. For example, the 40-49 and 50-55 age groups had higher averages on most of the BAT subscales, indicating that age may influence teachers' levels of burnout and stress. The same results are offered by the study of Agyapong et al. (2024), which shows that the age group of 41-60 years is more affected by burnout than other age groups. Similarly, Pavlidou et al. (2020) found that the average age most affected by burnout and stress was 44.2 years. Asmaa et al. (2018) also found a statistically significant positive correlation between teachers' age and stress. Titheradge et al. (2019) showed that older

teachers experienced higher levels of clinically significant distress. Also of interest are the findings of Asaloei et al. (2020), which showed that teachers with teaching experience between 11-15 years' experience more stress, and teachers aged 31-50 years' experience more stress compared to the younger age group (20-30 years old) and the oldest age group (51-60 years old).

As expected, work experience was associated with an increasing trend in burnout and stress levels. Teachers with work experience of 16-20 years have higher averages on most BAT subscales, while those with less experience (0-5 years) had lower averages. Similar results were also presented in a study by Agyapong et al. (2024), it results that teachers with more than 20 years of work experience showed a higher tendency towards high levels of burnout, represented by a percentage of 28.2% of high burnout cases. Whereas teachers with less experience showed medium and low levels of burnout. Among teachers with five years or less of experience, the percentage of high burnout cases was 14.3%. These results suggest that work experience can have a significant impact on teacher stress and burnout. Our findings are consistent with those of Aflakseir and Nemati (2018), who showed that teachers with more experience have higher levels of professional burnout. Also in the study of Huseth-Zosel, Crary and Orr (2024), it was found that teachers with more than ten years of work experience had a lower level of work stress compared to other groups. But, our findings are not consistent with Kume's (2024) study, which showed that teachers with more work experience had lower levels of job stress.

Our results can be explained by the fact that teachers with more experience have spent more years facing the constant demands of their profession, especially in the last decade, which was characterized by frequent reforms. Likewise, the situation of COVID, just like in other countries, has affected the general well-being of teachers. Our findings are also supported by the results of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) who explained that teachers of all ages cope well with school stress, but older teachers require more time to restore balance. This accumulated load contributes to increased levels of emotional exhaustion and stress. Constant changes in educational policies, curricula, and technology can be challenging, even for the most experienced teachers. Adjusting to these frequent changes can be a source of considerable stress. Teachers with many years of experience may feel increased pressure to perform at a high level and maintain the standards they set throughout their careers. This pressure contributes to high levels of stress and burnout.

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