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### Examining the Connection between Teacher Professional Identity and Burnout Levels in Educators

#### Abstract

*Introduction.* This study examines the professional identity and burnout levels of English language teachers in Turkistan. *Methodology and methods.* The study was conducted using the Professional Identity Scale and the Maslach Burnout Inventory. A total of 80 teachers from different educational institutions participated in the research. Descriptive statistics showed that teachers generally report moderate burnout and a stable perception of their professional identity across subject-matter, pedagogical, and didactical domains. Reliability analysis indicated strong internal consistency for all subscales. Correlation analysis revealed a meaningful relationship between the two constructs, with the strongest link observed between professional identity and the personal accomplishment component of burnout. *Results.* Emotional exhaustion and depersonalization showed weaker associations with identity dimensions. These findings suggest that teachers' sense of professional effectiveness plays a central role in supporting their well-being and may reduce vulnerability to burnout. *Scientific novelty.* The research shows empirically how scientific dimensions of teacher professional identity are associated with distinct components of burnout and also clarifies which identity profiles function as protective factors or risk factors for burnout. *The practical significance* is that the finding can be used to identify educators earlier and to design targeted interventions to prevent burnout.

*Keywords:* teacher burnout, professional identity, English language teachers, personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion, teacher well-being.

**Introduction.** Teaching is widely recognized as demanding, but the real difficulty goes far beyond knowing the subject well. A teacher works with people every single day, and that means dealing with emotions, expectations, pressure, and sometimes even conflicting responsibilities. Although teachers help shape students' thinking and personal growth, they themselves face heavy workloads and constant emotional tension. Over time, this combination can lead to professional burnout, a condition that gradually drains enthusiasm, lowers job satisfaction, and affects overall performance. Because of this, the connection between a teacher's sense of professional identity and their

vulnerability has become an important topic in current educational discussions.

Professional identity essentially reflects how teachers understand their place in the profession: what they believe their responsibilities are, which values guide them, and how they interpret their role within the educational environment. This identity does not appear immediately as they start working; it grows through experience, personal beliefs, collaboration with colleagues, and the atmosphere of the school where they work. Examining how professional identity influences teachers' emotional well-being is crucial for improving both working conditions and the quality of education. To understand

whether having a stable and confident sense of who they are professionally helps them deal with challenges more effectively and maintain interest in their work, or having an unclear, conflicted, or poorly formed identity increases the risk of burnout among EFL teachers.

The problem of professional burnout remains one of the most discussed topics in pedagogy, since it directly affects the quality of teaching and the resistance of teachers to professional difficulties. Burnout was first conceptualized by Maslach and Jackson (1984), where researchers described three key components of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decreased sense of personal achievement. These ideas were later developed by Lee and Ashforth (1990) and Brouwers and Tomic (2000), who confirmed that prolonged stress and lack of emotional resources significantly increase the likelihood of teacher burnout. Modern research shows that teacher burnout is associated not only with workload, but also with a whole range of professional factors: a large number of administrative tasks, student behavior, parental expectations, and pressure from educational institutions. Similar trends are observed in different countries. Recent research links increased emotional exhaustion to a lack of autonomy at work, and Akbari and Eghtesadi Roudi (2020) highlight the role of occupational stressors, especially among English language teachers.

Personality characteristics can also increase or decrease the risk of burnout. For example, the study by Fiorilli et al. (2019) and Mojsa-Kaja et al. (2015) suggest that emotional stability and the ability to regulate one's experiences may buffer the effects of occupational stress. At the same time, in the conditions of teaching a foreign language, additional factors are added: language anxiety, the constant need to demonstrate a high level of language proficiency, and uncertain expectations from the administration. Several studies suggest that such conditions can increase the emotional pressure on teachers and increase the risk of burnout. In general, modern data confirm that teacher burnout is a multi-layered phenomenon, depending both on working conditions and on the teacher's

internal resources. That is why more and more research is aimed at finding factors that could serve as a protective mechanism. Professional identity is considered a teacher's internal representation of himself in the profession: his values, approaches, responsibilities, and role in the educational environment. Authors working in this area emphasize that identity is formed gradually, changes under the influence of experience and interactions, and reflects how the teacher sees their place in the professional community. Izadinia (2015), Barkhuizen (2016), and Tai & Wei (2020) emphasize that identity is a dynamic structure that integrates personal beliefs and professional expectations.

One of the most common models is the approach of Beijaard et al. (2000), who identified three key components of professional identity: subject, pedagogical, and didactic competence. These dimensions reflect how confident a teacher feels in his knowledge of the subject, in his ability to explain the material, and in choosing methods appropriate for a particular teaching context. The degree of expression of professional identity influences many aspects of teaching activity. Abednia (2012) and Andreasen et al. (2019) noted that a strong identity promotes professional growth, resilience to change, and a deeper understanding of one's role in learning. Chen et al. (2020) link it to job satisfaction and motivation.

Researchers pay special attention to the connection between professional identity and the emotional state of a teacher. Based on Tajfel and Turner's (2004) social identity theory and job demands and resources model, it has been shown that a sense of occupational belonging and role confidence can reduce the impact of job stress. The work of Sun et al. (2022) and Lin et al. (2022) found that professional identity can reduce the risk of burnout by increasing the teacher's internal resources: confidence, resistance to difficulties, and the perception of one's work as meaningful. Work on English language teachers, including studies by Minghui et al. (2018) and Xing (2022), confirms this trend: a strong identity is associated with greater engagement, confidence, and less susceptibility to burnout. Thus, recent research emphasizes

that a teacher's professional identity is not only a personality characteristic, but also an important factor that can mitigate the emotional consequences of stress and increase resistance to burnout (Zhao et al., 2022). Although there is a significant amount of research on teacher burnout and professional identity, data on English language teachers in the regions of Kazakhstan remain limited. In the context of professional pressure, reforms, and growing demands for the quality of teaching, it remains unclear how confident teachers perceive their professional role and how this relates to their emotional stability. There is a lack of empirical evidence to show whether a developed professional identity actually helps teachers cope with burnout. This creates a need for local research that takes into account the characteristics of the educational environment of Turkestan.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the level of professional identity and emotional burnout among English teachers in Turkestan, as well as to identify the nature of the relationship between these two constructs. The study seeks to determine whether individual components of professional identity may serve a protective function and reduce vulnerability to burnout.

*Research questions:*

- 1) What is the overall level of professional burnout among English teachers in Turkestan?
- 2) How do teachers assess their professional identity in terms of subject, pedagogical, and didactic competence?
- 3) Is there a relationship between overall professional identity and burnout levels?
- 4) Which components of professional identity are most strongly associated with symptoms of emotional burnout?

**Materials and Methods.** The study used a quantitative research design, relying on standardized instruments that have been widely applied in international teacher research.

*Participants.* The participants of this study were English language teachers working exclusively in the city of Turkistan. A total of 80 teachers' survey responses were included in the dataset. The sampling was intentionally focused on the city, as most English language teachers in Turkistan work under similar administrative

requirements, teaching loads, and school conditions. This allowed the study to explore burnout and professional identity within a shared educational environment, without the variations typically found between urban and rural schools. Teachers were recruited from public secondary schools, private schools, and universities located within the city. Invitations were distributed through school WhatsApp groups, internet communication channels, and direct messages from English department heads. Participation was voluntary, and each teacher provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire.

The demographic information collected in the first section of the survey included gender, years of teaching experience, and type of institution. The gender distribution reflected the general pattern of English teaching staff in Turkistan: 71 teachers identified as female, while 9 identified as male. This gender imbalance is common in language education in Kazakhstan. Teaching experience among participants varied from early-career teachers to educators with more than two decades of classroom work. This diversity helped capture how burnout and identity may differ across different stages of a teaching career. While most participants worked in public secondary schools, a smaller number taught at universities in Turkistan. An interesting detail is that within the demographic section where participants could optionally share additional professional information, around 40% of teachers noted that they frequently take part in professional development workshops offered by Orleu, IKTU, or local educational organizations.

*Instruments.* To investigate the relationship between teacher burnout and professional identity, there were used Maslach Burnout Inventory and Beijaard's Professional Identity Questionnaire were used. The first tool used in the research was the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBI ES), which remains one of the most established instruments for studying burnout in educational settings. It captures how teachers experience the emotional and cognitive demands of their profession by evaluating three central dimensions: emotional exhaustion,

depersonalization, and the sense of personal accomplishment. Responses were provided on a Likert scale ranging from “never” to “every day” in order to evaluate how frequently teachers experience burnout-related symptoms.

The second instrument was a Professional Identity Questionnaire grounded in Beijaard’s theoretical framework, which conceptualizes teacher identity across three interrelated areas: subject-matter expertise, pedagogical expertise, and didactical expertise. These dimensions were selected because they correspond closely to how English language teachers in Turkistan typically describe the core areas of their professional role. Teachers responded to all statements using a four-point Likert scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. When combined with the burnout instrument, the professional identity questionnaire provided a detailed picture of how teachers’ understanding of their subject knowledge, teaching abilities, and didactical skills interacts with the emotional demands of their work.

*Data collection.* Data collection took place over a period of four weeks at the beginning of the fall semester of the 2025-2026 academic year. School principals and heads of English departments in Turkistan were first contacted via email and phone. They were informed about the aims of the study and were asked to share the questionnaire link with English language teachers in their institutions. The survey was administered online using a secure questionnaire platform, such as Google Forms. This format was chosen to make participation easier for teachers with busy schedules and to reach schools located outside the city center. The first page of the online form briefly explained the purpose of the research, assured teachers of anonymity, and included the informed consent statement. Only those who clicked “I agree to participate” could proceed to the questionnaires.

On average, completing all sections took about 15-20 minutes. Participants were able to fill out the survey at any convenient time using a computer or smartphone. To reduce potential response bias, teachers were asked to answer honestly and were reminded that their responses would be used only for research purposes and would not be shared with school administration.

In total, 86 responses were received. After screening the data, 6 questionnaires were removed because they were incomplete or contained clearly inconsistent answers; for example, some selected the same option for all items. The final dataset thus included 80 valid cases, which were used in the subsequent analysis.

*Data analysis.* The collected data were exported to SPSS for statistical analysis. Data were first checked for missing values, outliers, and entry errors. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) were calculated for all demographic variables, burnout subscales, and professional identity dimensions in order to obtain a general overview of the sample. Before examining the relationship between professional identity and burnout, the assumptions for parametric tests were checked, including normality. Internal consistency of the MBI-ES and the professional identity scale was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha coefficients. To address the main research question, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between the three burnout components and professional identity dimensions. This allowed us to see whether higher levels of professional identity were associated with lower burnout among English language teachers in Turkistan. Where relevant, independent-samples t-tests and one-way ANOVAs were used to compare burnout and professional identity scores across different groups of teachers. For all analyses, the level of statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

**Results.** This section presents the results of the quantitative analysis sequentially. First, basic demographic information about the participants is provided, and then the reliability of the instruments used is assessed. Descriptive measures for professional identity and burnout are then examined to provide insight into the overall level of each construct. In a separate step, the distribution of the data is checked to justify the choice of statistical methods. Next, the relationship between overall measures of professional identity and burnout is analyzed, and finally, the relationships between individual subscales are examined to understand which components are most significant.

**Table 1**  
*Demographic characteristics of participants*

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	9	11.2%
	Female	71	88.8%
Years of experience	0-5 years	57	71.2%
	6-14 years	12	15.0%
	15+ years	11	13.8%
Educational institution	Public school	58	72.5%
	Private school	16	20.0%
	University	6	7.5%

As shown in Table 1, 80 English language teachers participated in the study, with a significant predominance of women. Most of the respondents belong to the group of teachers with up to five years of experience, which reflects the relative youth of the professional staff. In addition, the majority of participants work in public schools, while the share of private

schools and universities is noticeably smaller. Such proportions help to better understand the professional environment within which levels of identity and burnout are formed. These data give an idea of how homogeneous the sample is and which groups of teachers are most actively represented.

**Table 2**  
*Reliability statistics for the study instruments*

Instrument/Subscale	Number of items	Cronbach, $\alpha$
Professional Identity (total)	18	.881
Subject matter expertise	6	.751
Pedagogical expertise	6	.718
Didactical expertise	6	.713
Maslach Burnout Inventory	22	.862
Emotional exhaustion	9	.855
Depersonalization	5	.799
Personal accomplishment	8	.896

Table 2 illustrates that both instruments used demonstrated high internal consistency. The overall indicator of professional identity has a high alpha value, and all three of its subscales also show strong reliability, which indicates the stability of responses in each area. The burnout scale was no less reliable: the overall alpha coefficient was high, and

individual components, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement, also showed good indicators. These results confirm that the instruments correctly measure the stated construct domains, and the resulting data can be used for further analysis without questioning their robustness.

**Table 3**  
*Descriptive statistics for professional identity*

Statistic	Total	SME	PE	DE
Mean	2.7785	2.7375	2.7771	2.8208

SD	0.53349	0.64128	0.59294	0.57416
Min	1.44	1.33	1.17	1.50
Max	3.72	3.83	4.00	3.83

Given Table 3 shows the overall professional identity score had a mean of 2.78, indicating teachers' consistently positive perceptions of their professional role. The three subcomponents, subject, pedagogical, and didactic competencies, have very similar average values, ranging from 2.73 to 2.82. The scatter of data across subscales is moderate, as can be seen from the standard deviation values,

which range from 0.57 to 0.64. The minimum and maximum indicators also demonstrate that among the participants, there are no sharp deviations in any direction: the majority of respondents assess their professional qualities at approximately the same level. This uniformity confirms that teachers perceive their competence quite holistically, without strong biases towards one of the areas.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive statistics for teacher burnout*

Statistic	Total	EE	D	PA
Mean	2.3710	2.1889	1.4950	3.1234
SD	0.89706	1.16486	1.16878	1.48296
Min	0.41	0.00	0.00	0.25
Max	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00

An analysis of burnout indicators, as shown in Table 4, indicates that the majority of teachers have a burnout level in the low-medium range. The average value was 2.37 with a fairly moderate spread of data (SD = 0.90). The minimum score was close to zero, which means that some teachers show virtually no

symptoms of burnout. However, the maximum value is 6.00, which indicates that there is a small group of teachers experiencing significant signs of emotional exhaustion and other aspects of burnout. In general, it can be assumed that moderate levels of burnout prevail among respondents, without pronounced extremes.

**Table 5**

*Correlation between professional identity and burnout*

Variable	Professional identity	Burnout
Professional identity	1	.510**
Burnout	.510**	1

As illustrated in Table 5, correlation analysis showed a fairly clear relationship between general indicators of professional identity and burnout. The correlation coefficient was  $r = .510$  with a significance level of  $p < .001$ . This means the presence of a stable relationship of medium

strength: the higher the overall level of burnout, the weaker the teacher feels his professional identity, and vice versa. The connection is not overly strong but sufficiently pronounced to indicate a real mutual dependence of these two phenomena in the sample of teachers.

**Table 6**  
*Correlations between subscales*

Burnout Subscales	PI subscales	SME	PE	DE
EE		.079 (p=.113)	.139 (p=.218)	.222* (p=.048)
D		-.141 (p=.213)	-.168 (p=.136)	-.124 (p=.273)
PA		.703 (p=.000)	.640 (p=.000)	.645 (p=.000)

Table 6, on comparison of subscales revealed a more complex picture. Weak associations showed emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in most cases; the coefficients were low and statistically insignificant. The exception was the weak but significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and the didactic component of identity ( $r = .222$ ,  $p < .05$ ). A completely different situation was observed with personal achievements. This subscale demonstrated the highest and most consistent coefficients, ranging from .640 to .703, with respect to all three components of professional identity. In fact, it was the feeling of professional success that turned out to be the indicator that is most closely related to how the teacher perceives his professional self. This suggests that self-awareness and confidence in one’s accomplishments serve as a protective factor that moderates other aspects of burnout. The findings indicate that teachers generally maintain a strong professional identity and exhibit moderate levels of burnout. There is a tangible connection between the two constructs: the more the teacher’s emotional state is disturbed, the less professionally confident he feels. The personal achievement component turned out to be a particularly important element; it was this element that showed the most pronounced relationships with the three dimensions of professional identity. This allows us to consider a sense of professional success as a key indicator influencing the well-being of a teacher.

**Discussion.** The results of the study provide an opportunity to take a new look at the professional well-being of English teachers in Turkestan. Despite the common stereotype that teaching is inevitably accompanied by emotional

burnout, the findings show that the majority of participants demonstrate only moderate levels of burnout. The average values on the scales of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization turned out to be relatively low, while the indicator of personal achievements, on the contrary, was noticeably higher. This may indicate that many teachers, even when faced with professional challenges, retain a sense of personal efficacy. Similar findings were reported by Sokal et al., (2020) and Russell et al. (2020), who found that many teachers maintained professional resilience despite stressful working conditions. Comparable results were also identified by Sánchez-Pujalte et al. (2021), who emphasized that teachers were able to preserve emotional commitment and professional motivation even during periods of educational uncertainty. In a city where education is actively developing, teachers probably feel the demand for their work and see the practical result of interaction with students.

The respondents’ professional identity also showed fairly consistent results. Regardless of their length of service and place of work, teachers assessed their subject, pedagogical, and didactic competencies approximately equally. This uniform profile may be explained by the fact that in Kazakhstan the system of advanced training is quite standardized; many teachers undergo similar courses and trainings, which form a unified professional field. Another possible factor is the relatively young sample: the predominance of teachers with up to five years of experience may influence a more optimistic self-assessment of competence, since it is during this period that teachers usually maintain a high level of involvement and try to actively develop. Similar observations were also

made by Rojas et al. (2025), who emphasized that professional identity is closely connected with teachers' adaptation and engagement in different educational contexts. Likewise, van der Want et al. (2019) argued that strong interpersonal role identity positively influences teachers' engagement and professional self-efficacy.

The most interesting results emerged when analyzing the relationship between professional identity and burnout. The general correlation between the two constructs turned out to be quite noticeable: the higher the burnout level, the weaker the feeling of professional confidence. This finding is consistent with numerous recent studies that emphasize that burnout over time undermines a teacher's self-image as a competent professional (Li et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2022). However, in our sample, this connection manifested itself through rather unexpected accents. It turned out that the main "bridge" between the two constructs is personal achievements. It is this burnout subscale that is most closely related to all dimensions of professional identity. Teachers who feel that they are coping with their tasks show a high level of professional self-esteem, and conversely, the loss of a sense of effectiveness is almost immediately reflected in the perception of their own professional role. This supports the findings of Kim and Lee (2021), who argued that teacher efficacy plays a mediating role between identity and burnout. Likewise, Ratnaningtyas et al. (2025) found that resilience and professional identity are strongly associated with lower burnout levels among educators. Similar conclusions were presented by Lin et al. (2022), who demonstrated that professional identity acts as a protective psychological factor against burnout among teachers during challenging educational conditions.

Emotional exhaustion, on the contrary, turned out to be associated only with the didactic component, and even then quite weakly. This may mean that fatigue most often affects the technical and organizational aspects of work, such as lesson planning, preparing materials, and monitoring progress, but does not always affect

a deeper sense of professional identity. Teachers can be tired, but remain confident in their own knowledge and teaching approaches. Similar patterns were identified by Sánchez-Pujalte et al. (2021), who reported that emotional exhaustion does not necessarily destroy teachers' professional competence or emotional commitment to teaching. As for depersonalization, its absence of significant connections with any components of professional identity suggests that this aspect of burnout is weakly expressed in the sample. This finding partially differs from the results of Li et al. (2023), who observed stronger associations between burnout dimensions and professional identity among Chinese teachers. Such differences may be explained by institutional conditions, workload differences, or cultural and educational contexts. Many teachers are likely to feel tired, but not to the point of becoming emotionally detached from their students.

Overall, the results show that a teacher's professional identity suffers most not from fatigue as such, but from a sense of personal ineffectiveness. This observation is scientifically valuable because it demonstrates that psychological perceptions of competence may influence burnout more strongly than emotional tiredness itself. Similar arguments were proposed by Lin et al. (2022), Li et al. (2023), and Sun et al. (2022), who emphasized that professional identity functions as a psychological resource protecting teachers from burnout. Furthermore, Zeng et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of organizational support and psychological factors in maintaining professional well-being. Comparable findings were also discussed by Altınay and Bıcentürk (2023), who emphasized that supportive educational environments reduce burnout and strengthen teachers' professional sustainability. In addition, Russell et al. (2020) noted that institutional support and engagement significantly decrease teachers' emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions. Thus, the results highlight the need to create an environment in which teachers not only gain new knowledge but also see tangible evidence of their effectiveness. This could be a mentoring system, regular professional feedback, or participation in small, successful

projects where the teacher can observe concrete improvements in student learning. In this regard, the findings of Rojas et al. (2025) also support the importance of institutional support and professional recognition in preventing teacher burnout. Similarly, Altinay and Bicentürk (2023) stressed that sustainable professional environments strengthen teachers' resilience and organizational commitment. In the context of Turkestan, where education is actively developing, enhancing the sense of professional achievement may be a key factor in preventing burnout among teachers.

**Conclusion.** The conducted research allowed us to see a more vivid and realistic picture of how English teachers in Turkestan experience their professional role and what manifestations of emotional burnout are really familiar to them. The results show that the majority of teachers maintain confidence in their own competence, despite the workload and external challenges. Their professional identity remains quite stable, and the level of burnout is moderate, which indicates internal resources and the ability to adapt to difficulties.

The connection between professional identity and a sense of personal achievement stands out in particular. It was this component that turned out to be key in understanding what helps a teacher "stay afloat". When a teacher sees that

his work is bringing results, this becomes a kind of protection against burnout. On the contrary, a lack of a sense of effectiveness significantly weakens self-confidence and makes teachers more susceptible to emotional exhaustion. This finding emphasizes that teacher support should be built not only around demands and accountability, but also around creating situations where teachers can observe their own progress.

Another important point is the differences between burnout components. Emotional fatigue and depersonalization manifest themselves differently among teachers and do not always affect their professional perception. This shows that reducing workload is only one part of the solution, while enhancing a sense of professional success can be an equally important preventive tool. Thus, the results of the study emphasize the importance of working with professional identity as a living, developing element of teaching activity. An environment in which teachers feel valued, validated, and have the opportunity to develop is a key factor in preventing burnout and maintaining the quality of their work.

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