

### Investigating Burnout among Iranian EAP Teachers: A Comparison of Content instructors and ELT Instructors

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**Abstract:** English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses are currently well-established university programs. These courses are run independently by English Language Teaching (ELT) instructors and content instructors without any collaboration. However, ELT instructors and content instructors do not receive the same level of collegiality and social support from the organizations and students. This paper probed burnout among Iranian EAP teachers, including content instructors and ELT instructors in 28 state universities and its variations in relation to their demographic and organizational characteristics. To this aim, the Persian version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was administered to content instructors (N=185) and ELT instructors (N=86) in the state universities in Iran. The results of the study indicated that while most of EAP teachers, both content instructors and ELT instructors, had low burnout, a considerable number had mid-levels of emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. The findings of the study also indicated that the ELT instructors had higher emotional exhaustion than the content instructors, and it was also found that the content instructors with more than 13 years of experience and the ELT instructors with more than 20 years of experience in teaching such courses had the lowest burnout. Based on the findings of the study, educational administrators are suggested to take remedial and preventive actions against EAP teachers' burnout and enhance ELT instructors' occupational well-being. It also seems necessary to assist EAP teachers in adapting to the requirements of teaching EAP courses through pre/in-service teacher training courses to obviate the need for extensive experience for gaining expertise in it.

**Keywords:** Burnout; Content Instructors; ELT Instructors; English for Academic Purposes (EAP); Iran.

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## **Introduction**

The literature on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teacher education presents the challenges these teachers typically face in such context-specific courses (e.g., Basturkmen, 2010; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). It is also acknowledged that “being an ESP teacher is not an easy job” (Robinson, 1991, p. 96) as it “requires more experience, additional training, extra effort, a fresh commitment, compared with a teacher of General English” (Stevens, 1988, p. 41). However, despite the acknowledged demands of ESP on teachers (Basturkmen, 2010; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Stevens, 1988), the needs of ESP practitioners are less attended to by the ESP community (Ding & Campion, 2016).

Burnout is considered a big hazard in emotionally challenging occupational settings such as teaching (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). It is a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and personal accomplishment (PA) which occurs among individuals who work with other people (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Maslach et al. (2001) consider EE as the “basic individual stress dimension of burnout ... [which] ... refers to the feeling of being overextended and depleted of ones’ emotional and physical resources” (p. 399). DP, “the interpersonal context dimension of burnout, ... refers to a negative, callous, or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job” (p. 399). PA is “the self-evaluation dimension of burnout... [and] ... refers to feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement and productivity at work” (p. 399).

Although EAP courses are challenging to both content instructors and ELT instructors, it seems to be more demanding for ELT instructors. Further, lack of attention to EAP teachers’ needs, and also lack of adequate training for dealing with such demands may affect their occupational well-being in the work place.

## **Literature Review**

ESP, a branch of ELT, stemmed from the demands caused by technological, linguistic, and psychological advancements and sociopolitical changes in the status of the English language (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). It is “an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning” (p. 19). ESP is classified into different types as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) deals with English for studying a specific discipline (Robinson, 1991). ESP courses, targeting specific goals and assuming some different roles for teachers, burden ESP teachers with unique demands and pedagogical and

administrative challenges in such context-specific courses (Basturkmen, 2010; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

There are differences in the status of ESP courses in different contexts as they are either run as a for-profit service unit attached to academic departments or offered by independent centers. In some cases, EAP courses enjoy a strong history and are well-established while some others are beginning to emerge in educational settings. Such differences trigger heterogeneity of EAP teachers' identities, roles, and working contexts (Ding & Campion, 2016).

Regarding the separation and gap in the education of humanities and sciences and unfamiliarity of English teachers with the sciences (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), there can be variations in the workloads for ELT instructors in EAP courses for students of humanities, sciences, engineering, and medical studies. Further, despite the scanty literature suggesting the achievement of development through pre-service training (Ding & Campion, 2016), the prevailing experience bias (Elsted, as cited in Ding & Campion, 2016) highlights inadequate preparation of EAP teachers and legitimizes long term experience as the requisite for the development of expertise (Ding & Campion, 2016).

### **Challenges in ESP Courses**

There seem to be differences between the challenges content instructors and ELT instructors face as some administrative challenges are common between them while some are specific to ELT instructors. Problems such as the size of classes, students' low general English proficiency (GEP) level and motivation, (Atai & Nazari, 2011; Ding & Campion, 2016; Robinson, 1991), inadequacy of materials, time limitation (Anthony, 2011; Atai & Nazari, 2011), inadequacy of payment (Anthony, 2011; Robinson, 1991), lack of systematically designed courses (Atai & Nazari, 2011), accountability to the investors and learners (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), negotiating with learners on their perceptions of the nature, goals, and content of ESP courses (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), inadequacy of support and resources (Ding & Campion, 2016), lacking appropriate training for ESP teachers (Basturkmen, 2010; Ding & Campion, 2016; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), and lack of recognition of the value of ESP courses by organizations (Anthony, 2011) and learners (Robinson, 1991) seem to be experienced with both content instructors and ELT instructors.

It seems there are challenges specifically experienced with ELT instructors. Challenges such as content knowledge development (Anthony, 2011; Basturkmen, 2010; Campion, as cited in Ding & Campion, 2016; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), having less content knowledge

than learners (Howe, as cited in Anthony, 2011), underestimating ELT instructors' abilities in teaching subject specific knowledge (Howe, as cited in Anthony, 2011), and their need for content instructors' cooperation and help (Anthony, 2011; Basturkmen, 2010; Robinson, 1991) can be caused by the narrow-angled approach to ESP (Anthony, 2011).

It can also be postulated that some problems ELT instructors experience have roots in the stance of ESP in the educational settings. Such problems may include inadequacy of social support and collegiality from the organizations (Anthony, 2011) and students (Johns, as cited in Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), lacking developmental opportunities (Ding & Campion, 2016), lower status of ESP as compared to ELT (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Robinson, 1991), marginalization and depersonalization of ESP teachers (Hall, 2013; Robinson, 1991), lacking professional identity, detachment from other English teachers doing similar work; lack of contact with content instructors, lower status than subject teachers, low priority in timetabling, and lack of respect from students (Johns, as cited in Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). It can be argued ELT instructors' reluctance in joining ESP (Anthony, 2011; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) may have roots in the host of challenges they face in ESP courses.

### **Factors Affecting Burnout**

Maslach et al. (2001) review the factors affecting burnout and classify them into individual and situational characteristics. While individual factors include demographic characteristics such as age and experience, situational factors involve job, occupation, and organizational characteristics such as time pressure and social support. They consider age as the most consistently related variable to burnout and describe older individuals as less prone to burnout because of their survival bias, resourcefulness, or higher status positions. Regarding the subscales of burnout, younger teachers were reported to experience higher EE (Eghtesadi, 2011; Van Droogenbroeck, Spruyt, & Vanroelen, 2014). However, Byrne (1999) found less EE just among older university professors. Byrne (1999) also found no association between DP and age. As for PA, while some studies reported that reduced PA and age are negatively related (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014), some reported a positive relationship between these two variables (e.g., Byrne, 1999; Van Horn, Schaufeli, & Enzmann, 1999).

Byrne (1999) argues that few studies attest the association between burnout and experience. In much the same vein, while it is reported that burnout is not related to experience (e.g., Eghtesadi, 2011; Van Horn et al., 1999), Goddard, O'Brien, and Goddard (2006) reported beginning teachers' experiencing high burnout. As for the subscales of burnout, while

Eghtesadi (2011) did not find a difference in the EE of teachers with different years of experience, some postulated an increase in EE with an increase in teaching experience (e.g., Akbari & Tavassoli, 2011; Goddard et al., 2006; Kokkinos, 2007). While Goddard et al. (2006) found that DP increased with experience, Eghtesadi (2011) reported that DP did not vary with experience. As for reduced PA, it is argued that it is also positively related to experience (Goddard et al., 2006; Kokkins, 2007).

Regarding the educational level of the students in relation to teacher burnout, while Hakanen et al. (2006) found no differences in the burnout of teachers in elementary, lower, and upper secondary as well as vocational schools, some reported differences in the burnout of teachers in different educational settings such as high school, elementary and middle schools (Steinhardt et al., 2011) and elementary and secondary schools (Van Horn et al., 1999).

Student misbehavior is also an influential factor affecting teacher burnout (Hakanen et al., 2006; Kokkinos, 2007). It deserves mentioning that experiencing stress due to job-related issues (i.e. work overload) might deteriorate teachers' perception of student behaviors (Kokkinos, 2007). It was also reported that low outcomes from students was related to high burnout, and resulted in an increase in DP and a reduction in PA (Van Horn et al., 1999).

Social support from colleagues and school administration was also regarded as a job resource contributing to alleviating burnout (Hakanen et al., 2006). Likewise, Kokkinos (2007) concluded that administrative support had the strongest predictive power regarding EE. Similarly, Steinhardt et al. (2011) claimed that organizational stressors, especially along with lack of support, exacerbated EE. Perceived social support from mentors was also associated with perceived efficacy in student engagement (Brannan & Bleistein, 2012). In much the same vein, Brannan and Bleistein (2012) contended that educating pre-service ESOL teachers in building a social support network and introducing strategies for developing mentoring and collegial relationships would enhance the initial teaching experience. Brannan and Bleistein (2012) found coworkers, administration (boss/supervisor), mentors (experienced educators), family, media (books or Internet) and friends as sources of support.

Having explored the reciprocity (equality of investment and outcome) of teachers' relationships with both students and school, Van Horn et al. (1999) reported that lack of reciprocity was related to all three burnout dimension. Specifically, although it did not contribute to burnout in considering teachers' relationship with students; it was related to EE in considering teachers' relationship with school. In the study by Van Droogenbroeck et al. (2014), relationship with students was negatively related to both EE and DP and positively

related to PA. This relationship, through teaching-related workload, affected EE. Furthermore, positive relationship with students was negatively related to teaching-related workload (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014). In the same vein, Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2016) concluded that a learner-centered teaching focusing on student-teacher interaction reduced EE. Similarly, a comparison of Turkish and Iranian EFL teachers revealed that inability of Turkish EFL teachers in imparting knowledge, along with their lack of preparation, was conducive to their EE. However, job dissatisfaction and inability in adapting to the working conditions were considered as the main cause of EE in Iranian EFL teachers, and, thus, they were asked to embrace work conditions (Khezerlou, 2017).

Detrimental effects of burnout on teachers in general, and on EFL teachers in particular, are reflected in the literature (e.g. Akbari & Tavassoli, 2011; Byrne, 1999; Eghtesadi, 2011); however, despite the differences in the demands and organizational factors governing EAP courses as compared to other courses, studies on burnout of EAP teachers is still scanty or nonexistent. Moreover, among EAP teachers, content instructors and ELT instructors seem to differ in their work place relationships and social supports received from the students and colleagues. This study, thus, considered the variations in the challenges content instructors and ELT instructors face, and probed the status of burnout among them in relation to demographic and organizational characteristics. Specifically, the current study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the patterns of burnout among ELT instructors and content instructors?
2. What are the variations in the patterns of burnout among ELT instructors and content instructors?
3. What are the variations in burnout facets of ELT instructors in relation to their age, field of EAP courses being taught, and years of experience in teaching EAP courses?
4. What are the variations in burnout facets of content instructors in relation to their age, field of EAP courses being taught, and years of experience in teaching EAP courses?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

In the present study, the data were collected from 300 EAP teachers teaching EAP courses in 28 Iranian state universities in the centers of provinces. The participants were chosen through cluster sampling from EAP teachers (187 content instructors and 89 ELT instructors) teaching EAP courses for different majors in four colleges of Medical studies (N=106), Engineering

(N=57), Sciences (N=39), and Humanities (N=72) (24 of the questionnaires were excluded due to having missing responses). Byrne's classifications (1999) were used for grouping the participants regarding their ages and experiences as they accounted for the wide ranges of ages and teaching experiences of the EAP teachers and provided a logical differentiation among them. However, teachers' minimum age was considered 24 (the minimum age possible for completing graduate studies).

As depicted in Table 1, EAP courses in Iran are taught by content instructors and ELT instructors. It is also worth mentioning that there are differences in the status of EAP courses in different colleges and universities as in most medical schools and some technical universities EAP courses are offered by independent language departments with an established place where students refer to for their EAP courses. However, EAP courses for Sciences and Humanities are mainly taught by content instructors.

**Table 1.** *Demographics of EAP Teachers*

		ELT instructors	Content instructors
Field of the EAP course being taught	Medical school	48	58
	Engineering	20	37
	Sciences	1	38
	Humanities	18	54
	Missing	2	0
Years of experience in teaching EAP courses	1-4	18	81
	5-12	42	69
	13-20	14	28
	≥20	15	9
Age	25-35	35	39
	36-45	29	70
	46-55	14	57
	≥55	11	21

### Instruments

A demographic characteristics questionnaire elicited the participants' demographic (i.e. age and years of experience in teaching EAP courses) and organizational (i.e. field of EAP course being taught) characteristics. The MBI, first developed by Maslach et al. (1996) on the basis of Maslach's three-dimensional definition of burnout in English, is the most commonly administered measure (Maslach et al., 2001) which "assesses burnout as the result of problems at work, not as a psychiatric syndrome" (Maslach & Leiter, 1997, p. 156). It has 22 items on a 7-point Likert scale and includes three subscales: EE includes 9 items (e.g. I feel I'm working too

hard on my job.), DP has 5 items (e.g. I don't really care what happens to some students.), and PA has 8 items (e.g. I've accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.).

The construct validity of the MBI was attested (Byrne, 1999) and the acceptable reliability indices (0.71-0.90) have also been reported for its subscales (Maslach et al., 1996). In a study on Iranian school language teachers, Eghtesadi (2011) translated the MBI into Persian and attested the validity of the scale and assured reliability of its subscales (EE=0.84, DP=0.75, and PA=0.74). In the present research, the Persian version of the MBI, translated by Eghtesadi, was used to assess the participants' level of burnout. To assure its reliability in the EAP context, it was piloted among EAP teachers (N=50) and Cronbach alpha analyses yielded reliability estimates of 0.60, 0.79, and 0.80 for EE, DP, and PA, respectively. Moreover, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was run using Maximum Likelihood method (ML) through LISREL (8.53) software and three subscales of the MBI were verified (GFI=0.81; AGFI=0.77; CFI=0.87;  $\chi^2/df= 3.36$ ). To estimate the reliability of the subscales of the MBI, we used the Cronbach Alpha tests the results of which indicated reliability indices of 0.82, 0.73, and 0.76 for EE, DP, and PA, respectively.

## **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20). It deserves mentioning that considering the non-normality of the data as proved by Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests (the observed levels of significances for EE, DP, and PA were 0.00), the data were analyzed through non-parametric tests (i.e. Mann Whitney and Kruskal Wallis). The MBI questionnaire was also factor analyzed running Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) through the LISREL (8.53).

## **Results**

### **Patterns of Burnout among Content Instructors and ELT instructors**

The participants' burnout levels were examined according to the instructions offered by the developers of the MBI, i.e., Maslach et al. (1996). Specifically, having added the scores on EE, DP, and PA separately, we classified the scores into three levels of high, mid, and low, with regard to the total possible scores on these subscales (EE: 0-54; DP: 0-30; and PA: 0-48). It should be noted that high scores in EE and DP and low scores in PA represent high burnout cases. As Table 2 indicates, most of content instructors had low EE and DP (86.09% and 98.39%, respectively) and high PA (79.67%). This is while few of them had mid EE, DP,

and PA (13.36%, 1.60%, and 19.78%, respectively), high EE (0.53%), and low PA (0.53%). As for the ELT instructors, those scoring low EE and DP and high DP were 78.65%, 91.13%, and 74.15%, respectively. However, 20.22%, 7.86%, and 24.71% had mid EE, DP, and PA, respectively and 1.22% had high EE and 1.22% had low PA.

**Table 2.** *Patterns of Burnout Facets among Content Instructors and ELT Instructors*

		EE	DP	PA
Low	Content instructors	86.09%	98.39%	0.53%
	ELT instructors	78.65%	91.13%	1.22%
Mid	Content instructors	13.36%	1.60%	19.78%
	ELT instructors	20.22%	7.86%	24.71%
High	Content instructors	0.53%	0%	79.67%
	ELT instructors	1.22%	0%	74.15%

### Variations in the Burnout Facets of Content Instructors and ELT Instructors

To probe the differences in the burnout facets of content instructors and ELT instructors, Mann-Whitney U tests were run the results of which revealed that the differences in their EE was statistically significant ( $P = 0.04$ ) (Table 3). Specifically, ELT instructors were more emotionally exhausted than content instructors. The differences in their DP ( $P = 0.07$ ) and PA ( $P = 0.19$ ) were not significant.

**Table 3.** *Differences in the Burnout Facets of Content Instructors and ELT Instructors*

	Educational background	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig.
EE	Content instructors	187	130.51	6.94	-1.96	.04
	ELT instructors	89	150.64			
DP	Content instructors	187	131.14	7.05	-1.80	.07
	ELT instructors	89	149.32			
PA	Content instructors	187	141.27	7.35	-1.29	0.19
	ELT instructors	89	128.02			

### Variations in the Burnout Facets of Content Instructors and ELT Instructors in Different Colleges

To probe further the burnout of EAP teachers, variations of burnout facets among content instructors in different colleges were tested through Kruskal Wallis tests (Table 4). It was found that there were no differences in the EE, DP, and PA of content instructors offering different EAP courses, considering the levels of significance of 0.11, 3.65, and 0.85, respectively.

**Table 4.** Differences in the Burnout Facets of Content Instructors Teaching Different EAP Courses

	Field of EAP courses being taught	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Df	Asymp. Sig.
EE	Medical schools	58	83.89	5.92	3	0.11
	Engineering	37	98.01			
	Sciences	38	84.22			
	Humanities	54	105.58			
DP	Medical schools	58	96.14	3.65	3	3.65
	Engineering	37	87.86			
	Sciences	38	81.71			
	Humanities	54	101.30			
PA	Medical schools	58	98.04	0.77	3	0.85
	Engineering	37	89.77			
	Sciences	38	90.04			
	Humanities	54	91.95			

Differences in the burnout facets of ELT instructors offering EAP courses in different colleges were examined through Kruskal Wallis tests (Table 5). It deserves mentioning that the ELT instructor teaching EAP courses for the Sciences (N=1) was excluded in this test. Moreover, 2 of the ELT instructors had not identified the field of EAP courses they were teaching and were not included in this test. The results indicated that there were no differences between them regarding their EE ( $p = 0.34$ ) and DP ( $p = 0.64$ ). However, there were differences in their PA ( $p = 0.03$ ) as ELT instructors in Medical schools and colleges of Humanities had the highest and lowest PA, respectively.

**Table 5.** Differences in the Burnout Facets of ELT Instructors Teaching Different EAP Courses

	Field of EAP courses being taught	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Df	Asymp. Sig.
EE	Medical studies	48	40.60	2.11	2	0.34
	Engineering	18	50.61			
	Humanities	20	44.05			
DP	Medical studies	48	41.62	0.86	2	0.64
	Engineering	18	47.97			
	Humanities	20	43.98			
PA	Medical studies	48	49.61	6.52	2	0.03
	Engineering	18	35.97			
	Humanities	20	35.60			

### Variations in the Burnout Facets of Content Instructors and ELT Instructors of Different Age Groups

As the results of Kruskal Wallis tests, represented in Table 6, revealed, there were statistically significant differences in EE ( $p = 0.00$ ), DP ( $p = 0.00$ ), and PA ( $p = 0.02$ ) of content instructors

in different age groups. The youngest age group had the highest mean rank in EE while content instructors aging 46-55 had the lowest mean rank in EE. While DP decreased with age, PA increased with age.

**Table 6.** Differences in the Burnout Facets of Content Instructors of Different Age Groups

	Age	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Df	Asymp. Sig.
EE	25-35	39	128.90	24.10	3	0.00
	36-45	70	88.75			
	46-55	57	75.82			
	≥55	21	86.12			
DP	25-35	39	118.77	13.26	3	0.00
	36-45	70	91.36			
	46-55	57	81.58			
	≥55	21	81.00			
PA	25-35	39	71.27	9.77	3	0.02
	36-45	70	93.71			
	46-55	57	100.87			
	≥55	21	110.05			

As presented in Table 7, Kruskal Wallis tests examining the differences in the burnout facets of ELT instructors of different age groups proved that ELT instructors of different age groups had significant differences in their EE ( $p = 0.00$ ) and DP ( $p = 0.04$ ). While ELT instructors ageing 46-55 had the lowest mean rank in EE, those aging 36-45 had the highest mean rank in EE. As for DP, ELT instructors aging 36-45 and ≥55 had the highest and lowest DP, respectively. Moreover, there were not any statistically significant differences in the PA of ELT instructors of different age groups.

**Table 7.** Differences in the Burnout Facets of ELT Instructors of Different Age Groups

	Age	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Df	Asymp. Sig.
EE	25-35	35	42.86	14.84	3	0.00
	36-45	29	57.38			
	46-55	14	27.40			
	≥55	11	37.89			
DP	25-35	35	45.99	7.96	3	0.04
	36-45	29	50.74			
	46-55	14	41.23			
	≥55	11	24.0			
PA	25-35	35	49.61	6.65	3	0.08
	36-45	29	34.57			
	46-55	14	50.33			
	≥55	11	46.89			

### Variations in the Burnout Facets of Content and ELT Instructors with Different Years of Experience in Teaching EAP Courses

To examine the differences in the burnout facets of content instructors with different years of experience in teaching EAP courses, we ran Kruskal Wallis tests (Table 8) which revealed that they differed in their EE ( $p = 0.00$ ) and PA ( $p = 0.01$ ), but not in DP ( $p = 0.16$ ). Specifically, mean ranks in EE decreased with experience, while the highly experienced group was an exception. PA also increased with experience. Considering the content instructors' mean ranks in EE, DP, and PA also revealed that mean ranks of those with 13-20 and  $\geq 20$  years of experience were close to each other.

**Table 8.** Differences in the Burnout Facets of Content Instructors with Different Years of Experience in Teaching EAP Courses

	Years of Experience in teaching EAP courses	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Df	Asymp. Sig.
EE	1-4	81	107.84	15.91	3	0.00
	5-12	69	89.65			
	13-20	28	64.81			
	$\geq 20$	9	66.56			
DP	1-4	81	97.47	5.14	3	0.16
	5-12	69	96.93			
	13-20	28	75.06			
	$\geq 20$	9	74.50			
PA	1-4	81	85.98	10.03	3	0.01
	5-12	69	88.88			
	13-20	28	112.12			
	$\geq 20$	9	132.56			

As illustrated in Table 9, to probe the differences in burnout facets of ELT instructors with different years of experience in teaching EAP courses, we ran Kruskal Wallis tests which indicated that EE ( $p = 0.00$ ), DP ( $p = 0.01$ ), and PA ( $p = 0.00$ ) of ELT instructors with different years of experience in teaching EAP courses were statistically significant. Specifically, EE decreased with an increase in years of experience. While DP increased with an increase in years of experience for the first three groups, it decreased highly for the highly experienced group. As for PA, ELT instructors with 13-20 and  $\geq 20$  had the lowest and highest mean ranks in PA, respectively. Those with  $\geq 20$  years of experience had the lowest EE and DP and highest PA.

**Table 9.** Differences in the Burnout Facets of ELT Instructors with Different Years of Experience in Teaching EAP Courses

	Years of experience in teaching EAP courses	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Df	Asymp. Sig.
EE	1-4	18	54.35	16.51	3	0.00
	5-12	42	48.68			
	13-20	14	44.75			
	≥20	15	20.00			
DP	1-4	18	47.09	6.22	3	0.01
	5-12	42	47.34			
	13-20	14	48.03			
	≥20	15	29.00			
PA	1-4	18	40.59	14.29	3	0.0
	5-12	42	44.67			
	13-20	14	30.34			
	≥20	15	64.93			

## Discussion

The present study attempted to investigate the patterns and variations of burnout among ELT instructors and content instructors. It also probed variations in burnout facets of ELT instructors and content instructors in relation with their age, field of EAP courses being taught, and years of experience in teaching EAP courses. As for the patterns of burnout among ELT instructors and content instructors, the findings of the study revealed that most EAP teachers had low burnout; however, a considerable number had mid-levels of EE (13.36% and 20.22% of content instructors and ELT instructors, respectively) and PA (19.87% of content instructors and 24.71% of ELT instructors). While EFL teachers' EE can be justified by their lack of job satisfaction and inability to adapting the work conditions, we may argue that, in the case of EAP teachers (Khezrlu, 2017), their EE may indicate that "being an ESP teacher is not an easy job" (Robinson, 1991, p. 96) and "requires more experience, additional training, extra effort, a fresh commitment" (Strevens, 1988, p. 41).

It was also found that ELT instructors were more emotionally exhausted than content instructors. Considering the limited collegiality available for ELT instructors from the students (Johns, as cited in Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) and organizations (Anthony, 2011) and the role of social support on burnout (Brannan & Bleistein, 2012; Hakanen et al., 2006) and EE (Kokkinos, 2007; Steinhardt et al., 2011), ELT instructors' higher EE may not seem unexpected. Besides, considering the association of EE with lack of reciprocity with schools (Van Horn et al., 1999) and relationship with students (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014), ELT instructors' higher EE might be attributed to their inappropriate relationships with departments and students. However, considering the mid-level of EE among both groups of EAP teachers,

they might be suggested to adapt a learner-centered teaching and facilitate the interaction between teachers and students so as to reduce EE (Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2016).

ELT instructors also face more challenges than administrative challenges common between content instructors and ELT instructors. Narrow-angled approach to ESP and the stance of ESP in the educational settings face ELT instructors with challenges such as content knowledge development (Anthony, 2011; Basturkmen, 2010; Campion, as cited in Ding & Campion, 2016; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), having less content knowledge than learners (Howe, as cited in Anthony, 2011), underestimating ELT instructors' abilities in teaching content knowledge (Howe, as cited in Anthony, 2011), their need for content instructors' cooperation and help (Anthony, 2011; Basturkmen, 2010; Robinson, 1991), inadequate social support and collegiality from the organizations (Anthony, 2011) and students (Johns, as cited in Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), lacking developmental opportunities (Ding & Campion, 2016), lower status of ESP as compared to ELT (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Robinson, 1991), marginalization and depersonalization (Hall, 2013; Robinson, 1991) of ESP teachers (better to say ELT instructors) and their lacking professional identity, detachment from other English teachers doing similar work, lack of contact with content instructors, lower status than subject teachers, and low priority in timetabling. Such challenges may also contribute to their greater EE. It can also be argued ELT instructors' reluctance in joining ESP (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Anthony, 2011) might be contributing to their EE. Thus, not in line with Khezrlu (2017) who suggested Iranian EFL teachers to adapt to the work conditions, we may call for education administrators' attempts for enhancing the status of EAP courses.

Lack of variations in burnout facets of content instructors in EAP courses in different colleges can be considered in line with Hakanen et al.'s (2006) findings on lack of differences in the burnout of teachers in different schools. However, this finding is not constant with other studies (Steinhardt et al., 2011; Van Horn et al., 1999). As for ELT instructors, unlike Hakanen et al.'s (2006) findings, PA of ELT instructors in different colleges was different and they had the highest PA in Medical schools. As for EE, although the difference was not significant, they also had the lowest EE in such schools. These findings may seem to nullify Hutchinson and Waters's (1987) contention regarding the higher workloads in different disciplines due to the separation in the education of humanities and sciences. However, as Van Horn et al. (1999) argued for the association between PA and achievements from students, this difference can be attributed to the variations in the GEP levels of EAP students in different colleges. This justification is supportable as content instructors offering EAP courses in medical schools

reported higher PA and lowers EE than content instructors in other departments. Furthermore, as the establishment and status of EAP courses affect EAP teachers' identities, roles, and working contexts (Ding & Campion, 2016), ELT instructors' higher PA and lower EE in EAP courses for Medical students can also be related to the high status and prestige of medical studies, in general, and the established status of language centers in such departments, in particular.

Like previous studies (e.g., Eghtesadi, 2011; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014), older EAP teachers, both content instructors and ELT instructors, had less EE. However, those in the third age group i.e., aging 46-55, had much less EE than the oldest group. As for DP, unlike Byrne (1999), we found the oldest groups of both content instructors and ELT instructors experienced the least DP. In considering PA among content instructors, our findings, unlike Van Horn et al. (1999), indicated an increase in PA with an increase in age as the oldest group had the highest mean rank in it. The third age-group of ELT instructors also had the highest mean rank in PA. Generally, findings of the present study attest Maslach et al.'s (2001) contention regarding the reduction in the susceptibility of older individuals to burnout. As they argued, it can be caused by their survival bias, resourcefulness, or higher status positions.

As for the variations in the facets of burnout among content instructors and ELT instructors with different years of experience in teaching EAP courses, results of the study, unlike the findings of Eghtesadi (2011) and Van Horn et al. (1999), indicated that all facets of burnout, other than DP among content instructors, were significantly different in both groups. Regarding EE, the results of the present study indicated both the highest EE in the least experienced groups of both content instructors and ELT instructors, and not in line with previous studies (e.g., Akbari & Tavassoli, 2011; Goddard et al., 2006; Kokkinos, 2007), a reduction in EE with an increase in years of experience in teaching EAP courses among both groups. This negative association between EE and years of experience among EAP teachers may underscore inadequacy of training courses for ESP teachers (Basturkmen, 2010; Ding & Campion, 2016; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) which results in the experience bias indicating that gaining expertise in teaching ESP courses entails extensive experience (Elsted, as cited in Ding & Campion, 2016).

In line with Eghtesadi's (2011) findings, there was a non-significant difference in the DP of content instructors with different years of experience. However, the difference in the DP of ELT instructors with different years of experience was significant, while the mean ranks of the first three groups were close to each other, those with over 20 years of experience, had the

lowest mean rank in DP. Such differences in the DP of EAP instructors can be justifiable as content instructors have more relationships with students in other field-specific courses while language instructors may meet them in just EAP and General English courses and do not receive adequate collegiality from the students (Johns, as cited in Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

PA increased with years of experience in teaching EAP courses among content instructors and ELT instructors, (with the exception of ELT instructors with 13-20 years of experience). In considering content instructors, the least experienced group of content instructors had the highest EE and DP and lowest PA. ELT instructors with over 20 years of experience had the lowest EE and DP and highest PA. Our findings on the role of experience indicated that, considering the demands of EAP courses on teachers and the present inadequacies in the education of EAP instructors, adapting to the requirements of EAP courses entails extensive experience (Ding & Campion, 2016).

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This study explored levels of burnout among content instructors and ELT instructors and variations in relation to their demographic and organizational characteristics. The number of both content instructors and ELT instructors with mid-levels of DP and EE indicate that teaching EAP courses is taxing for both groups; however, ELT instructors' higher EE signifies higher demands of such courses on them. Findings of the study suggest that EAP instructors' burnout should be taken seriously by the EAP teachers, themselves, and educational administrators. The findings of the study on the role of age and experience reveal the inadequacies in the preparation and training of EAP teachers in dealing with the host of demands on them and indicate that adapting to the requirements of EAP courses entails extensive experience (Ding & Campion, 2016). It can also be concluded that enhancing the status of language centers offering EAP courses may prove helpful in reducing the EE of ELT instructors through promoting EAP instructors' identities, roles, and working contexts.

Considering our findings, the paper first and foremost calls for taking remedial and preventive actions against burnout among EAP teachers in general and ELT instructors in particular. On the part of EAP teachers, awareness raising and some in-service courses may prove helpful. At the higher organizational level, educational administrators are suggested to take actions so as to de-marginalize EAP courses and recognize EAP teachers' needs to enhance their occupational well-being (Ding & Campion, 2016). Moreover, this study also

suggests training courses for EAP teachers as a supplement for extensive experience in adapting to the requirements of EAP courses.

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