

## Passion and Burnout among Teachers of Special Education Institutes in Peshawar

Syeda Nadia Shah  
Department of Psychology,  
Islamia College Peshawar, Pakistan

Bushra Sajid  
Department of Psychology,  
University of Peshawar, Pakistan

Muhammad Siddiq  
Department of Business Administration,  
University of Punjab, Gujranwala Campus

The present study aimed to assess the level of passion and burnout among teachers of special education system in Peshawar. For this purpose, a sample of eighty-one respondents comprising two comparative groups, was selected through a purposive sampling technique. One group consisted of male and female teachers with age range of 25 to 55 years ( $M= 31.34$  and  $SD= 8.48$ ), selected from special education schools located in Peshawar ( $n=41$ ), whereas the other group included male and female teachers from different conventional educational institutes of Peshawar ( $n=40$ ), having age range of 25 to 55 years ( $M= 26.22$  and  $SD= 4.42$ ). The two groups were matched in terms of demographic variables, including age, gender, and socioeconomic status by using a demographic information sheet devised by the researchers. The Passion Scale (Vallerand et al., 2003) and Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996) were administered to measure the extent of passion and burnout among the participants. The results showed that the two groups were significantly different on harmonious passion ( $t =2.3$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and burnout ( $t =2.1$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Moreover, obsessive passion had a strong positive correlation with burnout ( $r=.28$ ,  $p<.01$ ). It is therefore concluded that the teachers of special education who scored higher on obsessive passion had higher level of burnout and vice versa. The study has implications for teachers working in special education institutes in Pakistan to help them avoid burnout and perform their job with passion through effective training programs

**Keywords:** burnout, harmonious passion, obsessive passion, special education

Special educational institutes have often been quite dynamic worldwide. Nevertheless, they continue functioning under frequently changing environmental conditions. The persistent situational demands and the basic requirements of the students emphasize a dire need to bring change in global policies for better adaptation to the diverse social, political and cultural environment of special education institutes.

In order to cope with the diverse problems of special children, teachers of special educational institutes have to play remarkable roles to achieve their challenging tasks. Lavian (2013) specified that teachers of special education schools must be dynamically trained so that the needs of special children could be fulfilled effectively. As handling students with intellectual disabilities is a significant challenging goal for the teachers of special needs schools, various work-related risk factors require to be the prime focus of researchers to increase the level of efficiency and passion among them.

In general, all educational institutes operate by following the feedback from the students related to their learning and development.

Kokkinos and Davazoglou (2009) suggest that students' problematic behaviour is a leading cause of exhaustion for teachers. According to Kurth et al. (2014), teachers working with disruptive behaviours of students are especially reported to have high level of emotional difficulties. Although these findings are supported by earlier studies (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997; Ghani, Ahmad, & Ibrahim, 2014), researchers are yet to explore the degree to which individual behaviours of students with intellectual disabilities are perceived as stressful by teachers. According to Chang (2013), besides problematic behaviors, emotional difficulties in special students also play an essential role in causing the high level of stress in teachers that may be reduced by arranging various motivational programs for them.

Studies have found that the prolonged emotional problems in teachers caused due to heavy workload and traumatic environment of special institutes may lead to burnout and emotional exhaustion among them. For instance, Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) studied burnout as a universal phenomenon related to the sensitive profession of teaching special children. They described the concept of burnout concerning three major components, including emotional exhaustion, reduced personal achievement and depersonalization. According to Piko (2006), burnout leads to physical, behavioural and emotional dysfunctions with emotional exhaustion among teachers. Earlier studies by Maslach, Jackson and Leiter (1996) had illustrated the high level of burnout among teachers caused by distrust and exhaustion among them. Later in 1999, Maslach and

Leiter continued their research to explore the significant effects of burnout among teachers. It was revealed that time-constraint in task completion, workload, lack of rewards and disrespect were some of the common problems faced by the respondents. Besides, it was also observed that constant burn out was linked to the emergence of further adversities including depersonalization, emotional exhaustion and diminished personal accomplishment (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001; Semmer, McGrath & Beehr, 2005). In a similar study carried out by Burke and Fiskensbaum (2009), teachers were specifically found to experience many stressful events often in their careers. In another study conducted in Finland by Kamilo and Hakanen (2000), a high level of burnout was found among teachers as compared to individuals employed in other professions.

Besides considering burnout as a fundamental factor affecting job practices among teachers, Mistry (2010) perceived passion as vital for motivating teachers towards their profession, even in conditions of severe exhaustion. Vallerand et al. (2003) proposed a dualistic model that described passion as an attitude towards desirable activities. The model also classified passion into two parts based upon internalization process, namely, obsessive passion and harmonious passion. However, Deci and Ryan (2000) suggested that obsessive passion compelled an individual to attribute his/her activities into uniqueness. Their finding was later supported by research conducted by Sheldon (2002). Further, Hodgins and Knee (2002) characterized obsessive passionate individuals with rigid cognitive patterns towards the accomplishment of tasks. To elaborate, such individuals were described as having weak work commitment failing to complete their assigned tasks. Obsessive passionate persons also gave extra value to a specific activity which in turn created conflict in their work and family relationship.

Conversely, Donahue, Rip and Vallerand, (2009) and Mageau et al., (2009) observed harmonious passion as a tendency that led to acceptance of tasks regardless of any rewards or expectations. Harmonious passionate individuals willfully followed the motivational path to complete their task by adding the ingredient of joy into it. Consequently, they pursued their goals by their own choice rather than being compelled by any external forces, thus bringing harmony to their personal life, too.

Literature reveals that only a few studies have been conducted by researchers to investigate the possible relationship between work-related passion and burnout. However, findings by Burke and Fiskensbaum (2009) have shown a close connection between passion and burnout. Their work represents the impact of obsessive passion on burnout. Hence, they conclude that people with obsessive passion are at high risk to have feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal achievement. As far as harmonious passion is concerned, studies have proved its insignificant linkage with burnout or emotional exhaustion. Thus, Carbonneau, Vallerand, Fernet, and Guay (2008) assumed that increase in harmonious passion decreases the level of burnout among high school teachers. To sum up, harmonious passion has a strong positive impact on teachers as it is positively related to leisure time activities and negatively related to family conflicts and work-related problems. Therefore, obsessive passion increases the probability of burnout, while harmonious passion prevents and controls it (Caudroit, Boiché, Stephan, Le Scanff & Trouilloud, 2011).

### **Rationale of the Study**

Literature provides remarkable researches on burn out and passion among individuals related to different professions, yet, only a few studies show the prevalence of burnout and its association with passion among teachers working in special educational institutes. The present study, therefore, aims to investigate the occurrence of burnout and passion in teachers from special educational system with comparison to those employed in conventional schools. Furthermore, it is assumed that the findings of the current research may contribute positively in bringing the attention of the experts in Pakistan towards planning and initiating training programs for these teachers. In this way, teachers shall be able to improve their skills and develop an understanding of the needs of special children, without being emotionally exhausted or losing passion in their jobs.

### **Aims of the Study**

1. To compare the level of burnout and passion between teachers from conventional educational system and those employed at special education institutes.
2. To assess the interrelationship among harmonious passion, obsessive passion and burnout

### **Hypotheses**

1. Teachers of children with special needs will have a higher level of burnout than the teachers of the conventional educational system.
2. Teachers of children with special needs will have a higher level of obsessive passion than the teachers of the conventional educational system.
3. Teachers of children with special needs will have a lower level of harmonious passion than the teachers of the conventional educational system.
4. There will be a positive correlation between obsessive passion and burnout.
5. There will be a negative correlation between harmonious passion and burnout.

### **Method**

#### **Sample**

The sample of the present study consisted of eighty-one participants (N=81), comprising two major groups, i.e., teachers of the special education system (N=41) including 21 males and 20 females, having age range of 25 to 55 years (M = 31.34 and SD= 8.48) and teachers of conventional education system (N=40) including 20 males and 20 females, having age range of 25 to 55 years (M= 26.22 and SD= 4.42). Using a purposive sampling technique, the desired sample was selected from different special educational institutes and other educational institutes located in Peshawar. Both the comparative groups were matched in terms of demographic variables, i.e., age, gender and socioeconomic status. Table 1 illustrates details of the demographic information of the sample.

#### **Instruments**

The following measuring instruments were used in the present study:

**Demographic Information Sheet**

The demographic information (age, education, gender, and socioeconomic status) of the participants was recorded using a demographic information sheet as devised by the researchers.

**The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES) (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996)**

The inventory, devised by Maslach and his colleagues (1996), is a seven-point Likert scale, containing 22 items that measure the extent of burnout among teachers. The responses on the scale range from 'Never' to 'Everyday'. However, the MBI-ES provides individual measures for three subscales, namely, Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP) and Personal Accomplishment (PA). The significant value of Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha = .72$ ) illustrated reliability of the scale in the current study.

**The Passion Scale (Vallerand et al., 2003)**

The Passion Scale, developed by Vallerand and colleagues (2003), is a seven-point Likert type scale with three subscales, comprising 16 items. Total score on the scale provides an overall measure of passion among respondents, whereas, items 1, 2, 3, and 4 measure the Passion Intensity (PI), items 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 14 assess the Harmonious Passion (HP), and items 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, and 16 provide a measure of Obsessive Passion (OP). Studies by Rousseau et al. (2002) prove that the Passion Scale is a standardized measure of passion in individuals. In addition, the value of Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha = .86$ ) in the present study provides evidence for reliability of the scale on the indigenous data.

**Procedure**

The sample was selected after seeking formal permission from the concerned authorities of the targeted educational institutes. The purpose of the study was briefed to all the participants. They were also told that their participation was voluntary. As they all were educated, therefore, the researchers did not face any problem in collecting the desired data from them. All the questionnaires were then systematically administered by the researchers, and it was observed that each respondent took about 15-20 minutes to fill in all the questionnaires. The gathered data was later coded and statistically analyzed using SPSS, Version 22.

Table 1  
*Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=81)*

	Teachers of Special Education Institutes	Teachers of Conventional Educational System
Characteristic	(n=41)	(n=40)
Gender		
Male	21	20
Female	20	20
Age in years	25-55	25-55
Socioeconomic Status		
Low	8	7
Middle	33	33
High	0	0

**Results**

Table 2  
*Means, Standard Deviations, and t-values of scores of teachers of special education institutes and teachers of conventional educational system on Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Scale (MBI-ES) (N=81).*

Variable	Teachers of Conventional Education System		Teachers of Special Education Institutes		t	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD		LL	UL	
MBI-ES	83.6	12.5	77.8	12.4	2.1	.352	11.38	0.46
HP	31.3	7.1	34.7	5.7	-2.3	-.62	-.50	0.52
OP	25.5	7.2	27.7	7.9	-1.2	-.55	1.1	0.29

Note. MBI-ES= Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Scale, HP= Harmonious Passion, OP, Obsessive Passion

Table 2 shows that the two study groups are significantly different on burnout. However, the figures illustrate a low level of burnout among the teachers of special education institutes as compared to those from conventional education system. Moreover, scores on harmonious passion and obsessive passion show that the two study groups are not significantly different on the two subscales.

Table 3  
*Correlation between Subscale of the Passion Scale and Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Scale (N=81).*

Variables	1	2	3	4	M	SD
1. OP	1	.54**	.85**	.28*	26.6	7.6
2. HP	.54**	1	.85**	.06	33.0	6.6
3. PI	.85**	.85**	1	.13	82.3	15.6
4. MBI-ES	.28**	.06	.13	1	80.7	12.7

Note. OP= Obsessive Passion; HP, Harmonious Passion; PI= Passion Intensity; MBI-ES= Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Scale

Pearson correlation in Table 3 reveals a strong, positive and significant ( $p < .01$ ,  $p < .05$ ) relationship among all three subscales of the Passion Scale and Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Scale.

### Discussion

The current research was carried out to measure the prevalence of burnout and passion among teachers working in special education schools of Peshawar in comparison with those employed in conventional education system situated in the same locality. For this purpose, the desired data was collected by systematically administering Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Scale (MBI-ES) devised by Maslach, Jackson and Leiter (1996) and The Passion Scale by Vallerand et al., (2003) on the selected sample comprising two groups (see Table 1). The data was then scored and analyzed statistically by following the prescribed procedures.

To elucidate, Hypothesis 1 assumed that the teachers working in special educational institutes would have a high level of burnout and low level of harmonious passion than the teachers employed in the conventional schools, which is not supported by figures shown in Table 2. The findings showed converse of the hypothesized statement, i.e., a low level of burnout and high level of harmonious passion was measured in special schools teachers as compared to those working in the conventional educational system. However, figures in Table 2 reveal that the two study groups are not significantly different on the harmonious passion and obsessive passion subscales.

Moreover, Hypothesis 2 predicted that there would be a positive correlation between obsessive passion and burnout which is supported by the results illustrated in Table 3. The significant values given in the table demonstrate that there is a strong and positive correlation between obsessive passion and burnout among the respondents. While measuring passion as one of the major variables, Table 3 provides additional insight of the present research as it shows that the scores obtained on all the three subscales of The Passion Scale and Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Scale were positively correlated with each other.

Although passion and burnout among teachers of special education institutes need much attention to research, western researchers are providing an increasing number of studies over the recent years. Literature review shows that the findings of the present research have been supported by studies conducted in the relevant field. For instance, a remarkable study by Philippe and his colleagues (2010) has shown a significant positive relationship between harmonious passion and obsessive passion in teaching staff. The same results have later been obtained in a study by Forest, Mageau, Sarrazin and Morin (2011). In addition, Burke and Fiskensbaum (2009) measured the impact of passion on burnout among individuals. They suggested that as people with obsessive passion are highly fixated with their work, therefore, letting go off there is not so easy for them. Thus employees with an obsessive passion may be more at risk of developing burnout. However, harmonious passion in specific does not necessarily lead to burnout. Interestingly, it will mediate the effect of emotional exhaustion. Some researchers in the field claim that passion in the working environment has been assessed as a remedy to reduce emotional exhaustion and burnout (Dlugos & Friedlander, 2001). Moreover, in a cross-sectional study conducted by Lavigne, Forest, Fernet and Crevier-Braud (2014), it was revealed that harmonious passion had greater impact in protecting teachers against burn out. Similarly, Carbonneau and his associates (2008) demonstrated that the high level of harmonious passion was related directly to lowering emotional exhaustion. As mentioned earlier in the previous section, Donahue, Forest, and Vallerand (2012) concluded the same results in a research conducted on high school teachers. To simplify,

having a harmonious passion for job appeared to prevent teachers from emotional exhaustion and burn out.

According to Westling (2010), one of the reasons for low level of burnout among teachers of special education schools may be the trainings and workshops especially arranged for them by the state. These training sessions are specifically designed to promote a better understanding of the learning requirements of a special child to deal with him/her adequately. Contrary to that, lack of trainings will, in turn, lead these teachers to find their jobs as more difficult and stressful. A more recent study by Houliort and colleagues (2013) has shown that unlike obsessive passion, harmonious passion is negatively correlated with job dissatisfaction and burnout.

To sum up, considering the relationship between obsessive passion and burnout is also evident from previous studies. For example, a study carried out by Vallerand, Paquet, Philippe, and Charest (2010) examined the vital role of passion in reducing emotional exhaustion which is one of the primary determinants of burnout. Furthermore, they have also revealed a positive association between obsessive passion, emotional exhaustion and work burnout.

### Limitations and Suggestions

The study lacks the theoretical background to support the literature as the subject of stress-related issues in special schools teachers still needs the attention of researchers and theorists worldwide. Moreover, the authors of the current manuscript has not mentioned a single theory related to the subject matter keeping in view the cultural differences that hinder the suitability of the gathered data to the existing body of knowledge. Therefore, this study highly recommends proposing a theoretical model concerning the issues of special schools teachers from different cultural backgrounds that may be generalized by future researches.

The sample size of the current research is small due to a limited number of special education institutes situated in Peshawar, thus making the availability of the teachers working there also small. Due to the small size of the sample, the results of this study cannot be generalized. This limitation can be covered up in future by carrying out further research on a larger sample by including participants from special education institutes outside Peshawar city. This will also enable the researchers to generalize their findings more confidently.

The researchers mainly used Pearson correlation for statistical analysis of the data, which was also due to the less number of respondents available to participate in the present study. Future researches in this domain may be conducted to assess the predictability of the variables such as burn out and passion in teachers of special education institutes as compared to those working in the conventional education system.

Although the present research used standardized questionnaires to assess the levels of burnout and passion among the respondents, however, the findings would have been much reliable if the assessment was made from a clinical perspective, too. It is, therefore, suggested that future research may also use DSM VI criteria to assess the levels of burnout and passion among special schools teachers. Further, assistance of clinical psychologists may also help in analyzing the emotional state of teachers.

### Conclusion

The findings conclude that the teachers of special education institutes have been assessed as having a low level of burnout and high level of harmonious passion as compared to the teachers of conventional education system. Moreover, a positive correlation between obsessive passion and burnout among the respondents has also been found in the study.

## References

- Burke, R.J., & Fiskensbaum, L. (2009). Work motivations, work outcomes and health: Passion versus addiction. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84, 257–263
- Carbonneau, N., Vallerand, R.J., Fernet, C., & Guay, F. (2008). The role of passion for teaching in intra and interpersonal outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100, 977–987.
- Caudroit, J., Boiché, J., Stephan, Y., Le Scanff, C., & Trouilloud, D. (2011). Predictors of work/family interference and leisure-time physical activity among teachers: The role of passion towards work. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 20, 326–344.
- Chang, M.-L. (2013). Toward a theoretical model to understand teacher emotions and teacher burnout in the context of student misbehaviour: appraisal, regulation and coping. *Motiv. Emot.* 37, 799–817. DOI: 10.1007/s11031-012-9335-0
- Day, C. (2000). Stories of Change and Professional development: The costs of commitment. In C. Day & A. Fernandez & T. Hauge & J. Moller (Eds.), *The life and work of teachers: International perspectives in changing times* (pp. 109-129). London: Falmer Press.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behaviour. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227–268.
- Dlugos, R. F., & Friedlander, M. L. (2001). Passionately committed psychotherapists: A qualitative study of their experience. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 32, 298–304.
- Donahue, E. G., Rip, B., & Vallerand, R. J. (2009). When winning is everything: on passion, identity, and aggression in sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 10, 526-534. DOI:10.1016/j.psychsport.2009.02.002
- Donahue, E. G., Forest, and Vallerand, R. J. (2012). Passion for Work and Emotional Exhaustion: The Mediating Role of Rumination and Recovery. *Applied Psychology: Health And Well-Being*, 4, 341–368 DOI:10.1111/j.1758-0854.2012.01078.x.
- Ghani, M. Z., Ahmad, A. C., and Ibrahim, S. (2014). Stress among special education teachers in Malaysia. *Proc. Soc. Behav. Sci.* 114, 4–13. DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.12.648
- Forest, J., Mageau, G. A., Sarrazin, C., & Morin, E. M. (2011). "Work is my passion": The different affective, behavioural, and cognitive consequences of harmonious and obsessive passion toward work. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 28, 27-40
- Hodgins, H. S., & Knee, R. (2002). The integrating self and conscious experience. In E. L. Deci & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook on self-determination research* (pp. 87–100). Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.
- Houffort, N., Philippe, F. L., Vallerand, R. J., & Me'nard, J. (2013). On passion and heavy work investment: Personal and organizational outcomes. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 29, 25–45.
- Kalimo, R., & Hakanen, J. (2000). *Tyo'uupumus [Work and Health in Finland: Burnout]*. In S. Virtanen (Ed.), *Tyo'ja terveys Suomessa v. 2000* (pp. 119– 126). Helsinki7 Tyo' terveyslaitos
- Kokkinos, C. M., Panayiotou, G., and Davazoglou, A. M. (2004). Perceived seriousness of pupils' undesirable behaviours: the student teachers' perspective. *Educ. Psychol.* 24, 109–120. doi: 10.1080/0144341032000146458
- Kurth, J. A., Morningstar, M. E., and Kozleski, E. B. (2014). The persistence of highly restrictive special education placements for students with low-incidence disabilities. *Res. Pract. Pers. Sev. Disabil.* 39, 227–239. doi: 10.1177/1540796914555580
- Lavian. R. (2013). Masters of weaving: the complex role of special education teachers. *Teachers and teaching theory and practice*, 21, 103-126.
- Maslach, C., Jackson, S.E., & Leiter, M.P. (1996). *Maslach burnout inventory manual* (3rd ed.). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Mistry, M.T., 2010. A Study for Teachers Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Mental Health Awareness. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 1, 377-391.
- Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 397–422.
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (1999). Take this job and y love it!. *Psychology Today*, 32, 50–53.
- Piko, B.F. (2006). Burnout, role conflict, job satisfaction and psychosocial health among Hungarian health care staff: A questionnaire survey. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 43, 311–318.
- Philippe, F. L., Vallerand, R. J., Houffort, N., Lavigne, G. L., & Donahue, E. G. (2010). Passion for an activity and quality of interpersonal relationships: the mediating role of emotions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98, 917-932.
- Semmer, N. K., McGrath, J. E., & Beehr, T. A. (2005). Conceptual issues in research on stress and health. In C. L. Hooper (Ed.), *Handbook of stress medicine and health* (pp. 1–43), 2nd ed. London: CRC Press
- Sheldon, K.M. (2002). The self-concordance model of healthy goal striving: When personal goals correctly represent the person. In E.L. Deci & R.M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 65–86). Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press
- Vallerand, R. J., Blanchard, C. M., Mageau, G. A., Koestner, R., Ratelle, C. F., Le'onard, M., et al. (2003). Les passions de l'âme: On obsessive and harmonious passion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 756–767.
- Vallerand, R.J., Paquet, Y., Philippe, F.L., & Charest, J. (2010). On the role of passion for work in burnout: *A process model*. *Journal of Personality*, 78, 289–312
- Vallerand, R.J, & Houffort, N. (2003). Passion at work: Toward a new conceptualization. In D. Skarlicki, S. Gilliland, & D. Steiner (Eds.), *Social issues in management*, 3, 175-204. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Westling, D.L. (2010). Teachers and challenging behaviour: knowledge, views, and practices. *Remedial and Special Education*, 31, 48-63.
- Wisniewski, L., and Gargiulo, R. M. (1997). Occupational stress and burnout among special educators: a review of the literature. *J. Spec. Educ.* 31, 325–346. DOI: 10.1177/002246699703100303