INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON OF TEACHER BURNOUT: UTILISING THE MASLACH INVENTORY BETWEEN ROMANIA AND VARIOUS EUROPEAN CONTEXTS

CONFRONTO INTERNAZIONALE DEL BURNOUT DEGLI INSEGNANTI: UTILIZZO DEL MASLACH INVENTORY TRA LA ROMANIA E DIVERSI CONTESTI EUROPEI

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ABSTRACT
This article conducts a comparative analysis of teacher burnout in Romania and various European countries using Maslach's Burnout Inventory (MBI). A recognised tool for assessing emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal achievement. The investigation reveals that, where professional development, mental health support and enhanced working conditions are prioritised, burnout rates tend to be lower. The study adds to our knowledge of how school policies and available support systems affect teacher burnout rates.

Questo articolo presenta un'analisi comparativa del burnout degli insegnanti in Romania e in diversi paesi europei, utilizzando il Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), uno strumento riconosciuto per valutare l'esaurimento emotivo, la depersonalizzazione e la ridotta realizzazione personale. L'indagine rivela che, nei contesti in cui si dà priorità allo sviluppo professionale, al supporto per la salute mentale e al miglioramento delle condizioni lavorative, i tassi di burnout tendono a essere più bassi. Lo studio contribuisce ad ampliare le conoscenze su come le politiche scolastiche e i sistemi di supporto disponibili influenzino i livelli di burnout tra gli insegnanti.

KEYWORDS
Burnout, Teachers, Stress, Anxiety, Reduced Achievement
Burnout, Insegnanti, Stress, Ansia, Ridotta Realizzazione

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Introduction

In recent years, teacher burnout has emerged as a significant global issue, exacerbated by the strains worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic. The abrupt shift to online education, increased effort, emotional pressure, and uncertainty resulted in heightened stress levels among educators globally (Pressley, 2021). Despite the resumption of in-person schooling, the repercussions of the epidemic persisted as a threat to teachers' mental health and overall welfare (Kim & Asbury, 2020).

Burnout is a critical determinant influencing teacher retention, work satisfaction, and instructional quality, as evidenced by global studies (OECD, 2021). Burnout is commonly assessed by the three core dimensions established by Maslach and Jackson (1981) that constitute their paradigm:

- Emotional Exhaustion: When one's emotional reserves are depleted, they feel emotionally overextended.
- Depersonalisation is a detached, impersonal response to coworkers or students that frequently manifests as cynicism.
- Decreased Personal Accomplishment: A person feels inadequate or dissatisfied with their achievements and performance in the workplace.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), a validated instrument widely used in educational and occupational settings, is based on this tripartite paradigm, which is fundamental to burnout research (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).

1. Purpose of the study

This study seeks to examine the extent and attributes of teacher burnout in several European nations utilising the MBI as a dependable measurement instrument. This study aims to evaluate and analyse the frequency and characteristics of teacher burnout across several European countries utilising the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The study seeks to offer a thorough, cross-cultural analysis of burnout manifestations in diverse educational settings by employing a standardised measurement instrument grounded in Maslach's three-dimensional model: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and diminished personal accomplishment. The COVID-19 pandemic has differentially affected European educational systems, influenced by government responses, the duration of school closures, and the availability of digital infrastructure (Bozkurt et al., 2020). A comparison study would provide useful insights into how contextual resilience or

vulnerability may have affected teachers' psychological health during and after the pandemic.

2. An Overview of the Method: Measuring Burnout Using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), a validated and often employed instrument for assessing burnout, served as the principal tool in this study to measure the degree of occupational burnout experienced by teachers. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), a tripartite evaluation of burnout encompassing depersonalisation, emotional weariness, and diminished personal accomplishment, was initially created by Maslach and Jackson in 1981. This study utilises the version of the MBI-Educators Survey (MBI-ES) most relevant to professionals in the education sector. This survey was created to record the specific needs associated with teaching (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). The MBI-ES consists of 22 items assessed on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 for "never" to 6 for "every day," to ascertain the frequency of burnout-related events. The MBI's validity and reliability have been established through several investigations across various professional environments, including educational settings. Global studies indicate that the MBI-ES possesses construct validity and robust internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70) for each subscale (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Worley et al., 2008). The newly published information offers evidence endorsing the use of the MBI in cross-cultural study. The instrument has been adapted and evaluated for several languages and cultures, including those of European countries such as the Netherlands, Finland, Germany, and Spain (Schutte et al., 2000; Gil-Monte, 2005).

3. Comparison of Teacher Burnout Nationwide

This section presents a comparative analysis of teacher burnout in several European nations, emphasising significant patterns, systemic factors, and the educational context that affects burnout rates. Each subsection emphasises pertinent countries and cites empirical data utilising the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) framework.

Northern Europe: Finland and Sweden (Reduced Burnout Rates)

In Northern Europe According to Maslach's Burnout Inventory (MBI), which assesses emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and diminished personal

accomplishment (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 2001; Arvidsson et al., 2016), educators typically exhibit greater professional satisfaction, reduced stress levels, and enhanced well-being compared to their peers in other regions. A concurrent study conducted by (Pyhalto, et al. 2015) in Finland revealed that the majority of teachers indicated moderate to high levels of professional engagement, whereas merely 12% exhibited signs of chronic burnout. Approximately 3% of Finnish women and 2% of Finnish men experience severe burnout symptoms, while 24% of women and 23% of men report lesser symptoms on a monthly basis (Finnish Institute of Occupational Health 2018). Finland exhibits one of the lowest burnout rates in the EU+, with merely 4.3% of employees indicating signs of burnout (Schaufeli, W. B. 2021). A study involving 490 Swedish teachers revealed that 15% exhibited significant burnout in two of three categories, whereas 4% reported elevated levels across all three aspects (Arvidsson et al., 2016). Research by (Arvidsson et al. 2016) revealed that fewer than 20% of Swedish educators exhibited significant emotional weariness or depersonalisation. A notable characteristic of educational models in Northern Europe is the comprehensive support networks for teachers that are inherent to these models. Educators are regarded not as government employees but as esteemed professionals. (Sahlberg et al. 2015) asserts that Finnish educators possess significant autonomy regarding their courses, benefit from continuous mentoring, and operate within institutional structures that promote lifelong learning and collaboration. Similarly, Sweden has established formal support structures, including teacher consultation teams, mental health services, and stress management preventative training. Research by Persson and Persson (2018) demonstrates that Swedish schools consistently utilise welfare officers and school psychologists to assist teachers managing work-related stress (e.g., see Fig. 1).

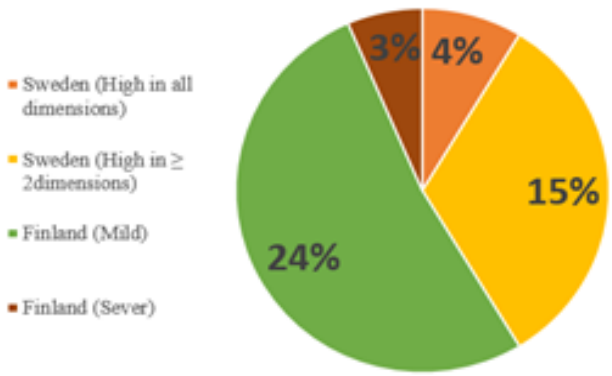

Figure 1. Burnout range among teachers in Northen Europe

Finland: 3% (critical). This indicates significant burnout symptoms among Finnish educators. These symptoms manifest at a minimum frequency of once per week. The rate is comparatively modest when considering Finland – 24% (Mild). These educators indicated suffering mild signs of burnout, including intermittent exhaustion or stress. This transpires at a minimum of once every month.
Sweden exhibits a 15% rating, classified as high in more than two dimensions. Fifteen percent of the sample included teachers who had high scores in two or more of these areas, indicating substantial evidence of significant stress and likely long-term burnout.
Sweden (leading in all aspects), 4%. These educators exhibited significant and pervasive burnout, as indicated by their elevated ratings across all three characteristics of burnout.

Western Europe include the Netherlands, Germany, and the United Kingdom (Burnout has only been moderate).
Teacher burnout in Western Europe, especially in Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, is categorised as mild although on the rise, despite notable regional disparities. Employing Maslach's Burnout Inventory (MBI) framework, researchers have identified elevated stress levels in these nations, especially among academics and early-career educators in metropolitan settings. These indicators encompass a reduction in personal achievement, depersonalisation, and emotional fatigue. A nationwide poll by the German Education Union (GEW) revealed that over 60% of teachers in Germany experience emotional tiredness regularly, with 25% to 35% exhibiting clinical signs of burnout. According to the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS) (Bauer et al., 2006), German educators typically exhibit elevated levels of emotional tiredness and moderate levels of depersonalisation. In the Netherlands, burnout is unequivocally a key factor influencing teacher turnover and absenteeism. The OECD's 2019 TALIS study indicated that approximately 30% of Dutch lower secondary school teachers experienced "a lot of stress" in their workplace. The Dutch Education Inspectorate (2018) arrived at a comparable conclusion: pupils' behavioural difficulties and administrative problems contribute to elevated burnout rates. In the UK, numerous stress-related ailments are among the predominant factors contributing to teacher attrition. A nationwide assessment by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020) indicates that roughly 20% of teachers resign within the initial five years of their employment. In 2024, 52% of educators encountered burnout, attributed to insufficient support, mental health challenges, and an overwhelming workload. Elevated attrition rates are

exacerbating the teacher shortage crisis (Education Support, 2024), (Devlin Peck. 2025). Excessive workload, stress, and insufficient recognition are the predominant causes for departing from the profession. The allocation of support among the four constituent countries of the United Kingdom, (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) significantly adds to the policy's inconsistency. For instance, the implementation of more teacher cantered policies and curricular modifications in Scotland and Wales has resulted in reduced burnout rates (NFER, 2020), (e.g. See Fig. 2).

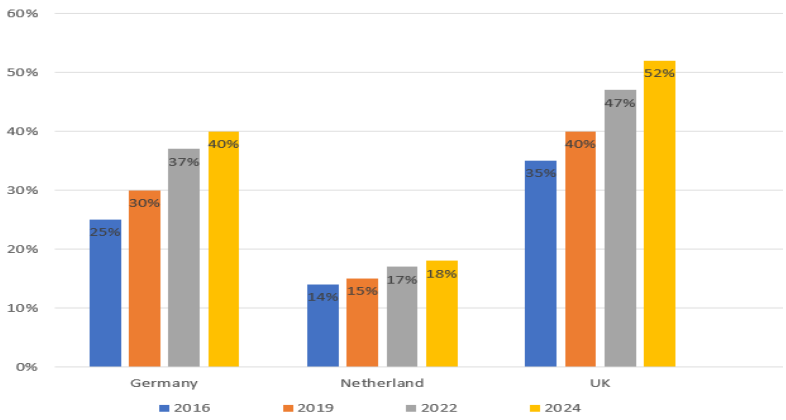

Figure 2. Burnout range among teachers in Western Europe

Southern European nations include Portugal, Spain, and Italy

(Maslach et al. 2001) assert that educators in Southern European countries, particularly Portugal, Spain, and Italy, encounter a unique array of structural, cultural, and policy-related challenges that result in persistently elevated burnout rates. This is particularly applicable for reduced personal achievement and emotional fatigue. Various reasons contribute to this burnout, including unstable employment, excessive workloads, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient support networks, and societal changes in the perception of teaching as a career. Almost fifty percent of educators in Italy express feelings of burnout, with thirty-five percent contemplating resignation from their positions. The main challenges include inadequate work-life balance, overcrowded schools, and excessive administrative burdens (Nonnis et al., 2022). Temporary contracts are prevalent in Italy. In 2015, 14% of public school teachers were engaged on fixed-term contracts, leading to judicial action by the European Commission for breaches of labour standards (Nonnis et al., 2022). Forty percent of Spanish educators encounter burnout. Experienced educators, who navigate increasingly diverse classes and are

expected to fulfil responsibilities beyond academic instruction, are particularly susceptible to emotional exhaustion (Rodríguez-Mantilla et al., 2023). Spain has elevated class sizes and inadequately supported educational institutions. Regularly addressing various student requirements with limited institutional assistance increases instructors' burden (Rodríguez-Mantilla et al., 2023).

Portugal lacks comprehensive information on burnout; however, issues such as high workloads, inadequate compensation, and a general shortage of personnel have fostered an environment conducive to stress and exhaustion. Projections indicate a crisis in the teaching profession, necessitating 30,000 more educators by 2030, which requires urgent action (Financial Times, 2024). Schools struggle to maintain continuity and foster a feeling of community due to the prevalence of recent graduates working under temporary contracts (Financial Times, 2024). In conclusion, Southern Europe experiences elevated levels of burnout attributable to diverse social, economic, and cultural influences. Precarious employment, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient institutional support, and a tarnished professional reputation are among these factors. The results of this study highlight the importance of comprehensive policy initiatives that incorporate institutional reforms, professional recognition, and the well-being of teachers, with individual resilience training (e.g. See Fig. 3).

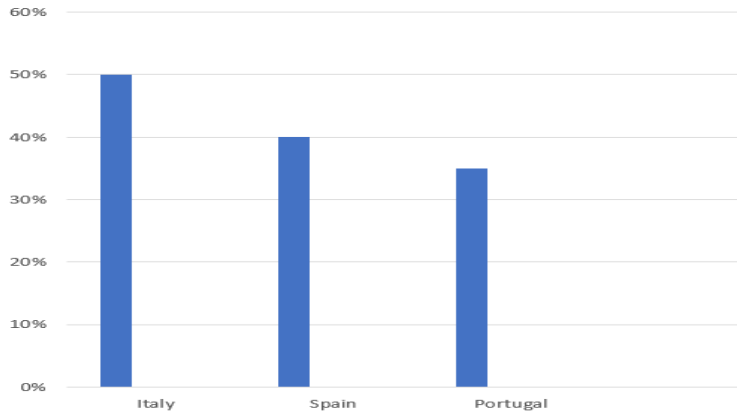

Figure 3. Burnout range among teachers in Southern Europe

Eastern European nations include Hungary, Poland and Romania.

(Głos Nauczycielski 2003) reported that a poll of 33,000 teachers indicated that merely 4% felt rejuvenated and optimistic at the commencement of the school year. Disturbingly, 46% reported feelings of hopelessness, tiredness, and burnout, while 27% conveyed anxiety and substantial concern about alterations to the educational

system. Subsequent research by (Kozak, S. 2023) indicates that educators are facing exacerbated indicators of a professional crisis, characterised by precarious working conditions and fluctuating legal frameworks. A 2022 study in Hungary revealed that 40% of instructors demonstrated inadequate challenge or flexibility, signifying elevated stress levels. The nation faces a persistent teacher shortage, with many attributing their exit to inadequate compensation, escalating workloads, and burnout. The teacher shortage situation in Hungary is exacerbated by burnout, inadequate compensation, and substandard working circumstances, compelling several educators to exit the profession (Sági & Molnár, 2023).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBI-ES) was employed in Romania to evaluate the extent of burnout among educators. The MBI is a standardised, psychometrically validated instrument specifically developed to assess occupational burnout among human care workers, including educators.

The inventory has 25 elements, categorised into three subscales:

- Emotional Exhaustion (9 items) – measures feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work.
- Depersonalization (6 items) – measures an unfeeling and impersonal response toward students or recipients of one's service.
- Personal Accomplishment (10 items) – assesses feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work.

Participants responded to each item using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from: 0 = Never to 6 = Every day, indicating how often they experienced each described feeling in the context of their work.

Higher scores in Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization, and lower scores in Personal Accomplishment, indicate greater levels of burnout. After scoring, results were categorized into low, moderate, and high burnout levels based on established cut-off values provided in the MBI manual. Teacher burnout has become an increasingly salient issue within educational systems in Central and Eastern Europe, where ongoing structural reforms, insufficient institutional support, and fluctuating policy environments have intensified the demands placed on educators. In this context, the present study examines burnout among a sample of 96 teachers, employing the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)—a validated and widely-used instrument for assessing occupational burnout in helping professions. The MBI evaluates burnout across three core dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Descriptive findings reveal that 59.4% of participants reported high levels of emotional exhaustion, 63.5% high depersonalization, and 19.8% high reduced personal accomplishment. Furthermore, 54.2% of respondents were classified as experiencing a high overall

level of burnout, suggesting a widespread psychological toll associated with teaching under current systemic conditions. To determine whether differences among the three burnout dimensions were statistically significant, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The analysis yielded a significant result $F(3, 380) = 15.71$, $p < .001$ indicating that burnout does not manifest uniformly across the emotional and professional domains. These findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions and policy reforms aimed at mitigating burnout and enhancing teacher well-being in the region.

Burnout Levels	Number of Exhaust	Number of Depersonalised	Number of Achievement	Total
High	57	61	19	52
Medium	38	34	77	44
Low	1	1	0	0
Total	96	96	96	96
%High	59,4%	63,5%	19,8%	54,2%
%Medium	39,6%	35,4%	80,2%	45,8%
%Low	1,0%	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%
	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

*This shows the total respondents in each burnout group by number and percentage.

Age	Total	%
20-35	14	14,6%
36-45	32	33,3%
46-60	38	39,6%
60+	12	12,5%
Total	96	100,0%

*This shows the total respondents in each age category by number and percentage.

Age	Exhaust Ave Score	Depersonalised Ave Score	Achievement Ave Score	Total Ave Score
20-35	31,5	23,8	29,1	84,4
36-45	30,6	21,5	29,3	81,3
46-60	30,0	20,3	28,4	78,7
60+	26,4	17,6	27,3	71,3

*This shows the average burnout score for each burnout group by age category.

Sex	Total	%
Masculine	39	40,6%
Feminine	57	59,4%
Total	96	100,0%

*This shows the total respondents in each sex category by number and percentage.

Nearly 60% of teachers report feeling extremely exhausted, demonstrating the high prevalence of emotional exhaustion. Depersonalisation, a crucial aspect of burnout that involves emotional detachment or cynicism, is also high, at 63.5%. There is an inverse trend in lower personal achievement, even though only 19.8% of teachers fall into the "high burnout" category, indicating that many continue to feel productive despite stress. More than half of the sample—54.2%—show high levels of general burnout, which is a worrying sign for teachers' wellbeing and retention, (e.g., see Fig. 4)

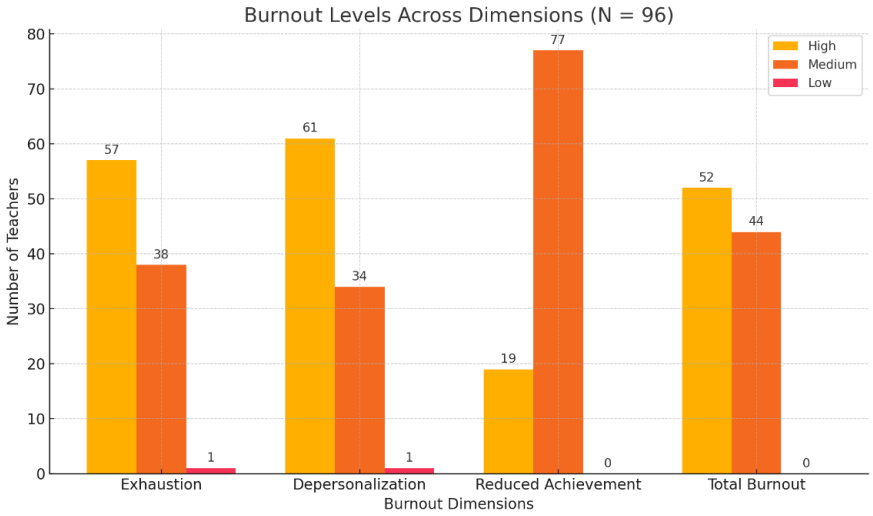

Figure 4. Burnout range among teachers in Romania

Conclusion

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) indicates notable geographical variations in teacher burnout throughout Europe. Fewer than 20% of educators in Northern European nations, such as Finland, Sweden, and Denmark, exhibit elevated levels of emotional exhaustion or depersonalisation; their burnout rates are the lowest. Robust institutional support, equitable workloads, and a significant level of professional autonomy may all be evident in this context. Between 35% and 50%

of responders from Western European countries, including France, Germany, and Belgium, exhibit moderate to severe levels of burnout. These findings indicate increasing professional demands, encompassing administrative responsibilities, high class sizes, and heightened performance accountability. Eastern European nations, particularly Romania, have the highest levels of burnout, with over 60% of teachers assessed achieving elevated scores in at least one of the three components of the Maslach Burnout Inventory: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment. These findings indicate systemic problems, such as inadequate psychological support, insufficient money, excessive student-teacher ratios, and persistent devaluation of the teaching profession.The results underscore the necessity of developing burnout interventions customised to certain national and local contexts. A universal solution is improbable to effectively tackle the structural and cultural issues encountered by educators in various countries. Educational systems across Europe, particularly in Eastern and Western regions, must prioritise the implementation of comprehensive support frameworks, encompassing mentoring initiatives, manageable workloads, access to school psychologists, and opportunities for professional advancement. Due to the transnational nature of teacher burnout, coordinated policy measures at the European Union level are essential. We recommend the establishment of a comprehensive EU framework for teacher well-being that encompasses common best practices, targeted funding, and the integration of mental health metrics into assessments of educational success.

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