Teacher Burnout Causes, Symptoms and Recommended Solutions: A Study on Special Education Teachers in Lebanon

By

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ABSTRACT

The pressure of being a teacher of students with special needs could eventually drive teachers to burnout, a phenomenon that manifests itself in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and feeling incapable of personal accomplishment. Burnout has physical and psychological symptoms and affects teachers’ wellbeing and quality of work. In order to identify the causes and symptoms of teacher burnout, this study was conducted in 5 private schools in Beirut. A qualitative research approach and a multiple-case study design were followed. The instruments were the Mashlach Burnout Inventory- Educators Survey (MBI-ES) that 54 special education teachers responded to, a researcher’s reflective journal, and semi-structured interviews with 5 Heads of special education departments and 5 teachers of students with special needs. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis was conducted and credibility, trustworthiness and ethical practice were ensured. Findings indicate that Lebanese special education teachers experience high burnout on emotional exhaustion and low burnout on depersonalization and personal accomplishment caused by teaching conditions, minimal support, heavy workload, challenging students’ behavior, teacher expectations not matching reality, role conflict and ambiguity, and lack of teacher training. Recommendations for dealing with burnout were highlighted.

Keywords: Burnout, Special education teacher(s), Special needs student(s), MBI-ES
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Chapter One

Introduction

Teaching in today’s schools often demands catering for students’ different needs, which adds new responsibilities for special education teachers. Many of whom choose this career because of the meaningful returns for them and for the students with special needs (Crutchfield, 1997; Brunsting, Sreckovic & Lane, 2014). A special education teacher is someone who works with children and youths who have a variety of disabilities. They are specially qualified professionals to educate students with special needs who require unique instruction to help them achieve their highest potential and overcome their limitations specially that the field of special education is indeed of growing demand (Crutchfield, 1997; Emery & Vandenberg, 2010). Special education is a form of instruction that’s designed to meet the needs of students with mental challenges or learning disabilities, so that they can learn the same skills and material as other students in school (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Sariçam & Sakiz, 2014). Students with special needs are students who suffer from one or more of the following: speech or language impairment, developmental delay, autism, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, brain injury, deafness, blindness learning disability, hearing, visual or orthopedic impairment (Hebbeler, Spiker, & Kahn, 2011). They are at a high risk for depression, anxiety, low academic achievement and poor social skills compared to regular students The major concern is that teachers of these students are becoming a high risk group themselves (Lane, Wehby, & Barton-Arwood 2005; Emery & Vandenberg, 2010). With all these stressors, special education teachers might reach burnout.
Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) state that the use of the term burnout started during the 1970s in the United States describing a phenomena that was caused by the difficulties that people face within their work environment, especially when it comes to relationships and interactions with other people. “Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people-work’ of some kind” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p.99). In other words, people working in human services are more likely to be put under pressure due to the nature of their jobs where direct involvement with people is a requirement; thus, educators and social workers are prone to burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Dorman, 2003; Zhouchun, 2011). In the case of educators, burnout may be an outcome of their dealings with the students which could be challenging and exhausting (Maslach, 1999), especially when these students have physical, social and psychological difficulties rendering special education teachers at a higher risk for professional burnout (Zabel & Zabel, 2002).

Freudenberger was the first to define burnout as a long-lasting disorder resulting from daily life and work related stress manifesting itself in mental, emotional and physical exhaustion (Hoffman, Palladino & Barnet, 2007). Putting these definitions in an educational perspective, special education teachers are prone to facing burnout at very high levels due to the pressure and demands of their profession and the responsibilities that come with dealing with students with special needs (Friedmen, 2000; Fore, Martin, & Bender, 2002; Küçüksüleymanoğlu, 2011). Burnout is categorized into three dimensions of negative psychological reactions: Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Emery & Vandenber, 2010; Lavian, 2012). Definitions by Maslach and Jackson
(1981), Emery and Vandenberg (2010) and Lavian (2012) describing the major three dimensions of burnout, state that emotional exhaustion is characterized by the lack of energy, fatigue and work overload resulting in one’s loss of interest, lack of emotions and interest towards others and inflexibility. Depersonalization, on the other hand, was defined as one’s detachment from the surroundings resulting in a negative, cynical, insensible and apathetic attitude towards others. The final component is the reduced personal accomplishment which decreases self-worth resulting in feelings of failure, guilt, doubt and ineffectiveness (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Lavian, 2012).

Along with the psychological symptoms, special education teachers are also prone to physical and behavioral symptoms of burnout rendering them incapable of fulfilling their job’s requirements, whether it is planning for lessons, dealing with students with special needs, completing paperwork or attending required meetings with parents, coworkers or administration (Friedman, 2000; Zabel & Zabel, 2002; Tepper & Palladino, 2007). Special education teachers facing burnout are hanging by a thread and need professional intervention to help them face and deal with the challenges.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The phenomenon of burnout is becoming a major concern in the educational system, especially that education is regarded as a challenging occupation, “Often, in fact, teaching has been described as one of the most stressful and exhausting of all professions” (Gavish & Friedman, 2010, p.141).
Special education teachers in particular are a matter of concern when studying the phenomenon of burnout. These concerns date back to the 1990s as studies from the National Association of State Directors of Special Education state that burnout rates are higher in special education in comparison to general education (Kaufhold, Alverez, & Arnold, 2006). “It is estimated that almost 75 percent of teachers who are now teaching special education will leave their job within 10 year of starting”(Cooter, & Stricherz, 2014, p.56). Serious physical, psychological and behavioral symptoms resulting from burnout are considered to be a threat on special education teachers’ wellbeing and career. On the other hand, when teachers’ energy is drained they might lose sense of the real objective behind their job which in turn could affect the quality of education (Gavish & Friedman, 2010). Special educators in particular have a great responsibility towards their students. “They give children with special needs much hope and love, and, most important, belief in themselves” (Crutchfield, 1997, p.18). However, when a teacher suffering from burnout stops believing in herself in the first place, students’ learning would become at risk.

I, the researcher, being a special educator, left the profession after 4 years of teaching students with special needs, after reaching the last phase of burnout during the 4th year of teaching. I suffered several psychological, physical and behavioral symptoms that affected my normal daily life activities. At the beginning, I wasn’t aware that these symptoms were caused by burnout which added to the level of stress and frustration that I was passing through. Therefore, these reasons led me to conduct this study to examine whether other fellow special educators in Lebanon suffer teacher burnout in order to spread awareness about this subject.
1.2 Purpose and significance of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the causes and symptoms of burnout experienced by special education teachers and to recommend possible solutions for facing and recovering from this phenomenon.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the causes of teacher burnout among Lebanese special education teachers?
2. What are the symptoms of teacher burnout among Lebanese special education teachers?
3. What are some recommendations to deal with teacher burnout?

With the increase in the number of students who are in need of special support within the school system, the demand on special educators is on the rise. When special educators’ expectations in making change in the education domain are not met due to being faced with cumbersome daily tasks (Gavish & Friedman, 2010), chances are that this clash will lead to burnout. This research could be an eye opener for prospective special education teachers who would like to work in the field of special education, and it could also help current special education teachers become more aware about burnout, its causes, symptoms and strategies to help overcome or avoid burnout before reaching the final stages.
International and regional research has been conducted on this topic during the past years. Studies in the United Arab Emirates (Bataineh & Alsagheer 2012), Turkey (Küçüksüleymanoğlu, 2011; Sariçam & Sakiz, 2014), Romania (Nistor, 2013), Greece (Platsidou, 2010) and others in the United States (Crane & Iwanicki, 1986 ; Kaufhold et al., 2006) show significant findings on teacher burnout in the field of on special education. Lebanon still lacks this kind of research; only one study was found (El Helou, 2014), but it was targeting regular teachers rather than special education teachers. Thus, the following study will add to the Lebanese literature on burnout and contribute to Lebanese special education teachers’ awareness on this topic.

1.3 Thesis division

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter one is the introduction, chapter two is the literature review, chapter three the methodology, chapter four the results, chapter five the discussion of findings and chapter six is the conclusion, limitations and suggestions for further research.

1.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the meanings of burnout and related terms were defined in terms of education in general and special education in particular. The purpose and significance of the study were identified to show the importance of this research in the field of education. In the upcoming chapters a review of literature will be presented, the methodology used to conduct this study will be explained and results and discussion of findings will be analyzed.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

The literature review will focus on studies and research conducted on the phenomenon of burnout, its causes, symptoms and recommended solutions for dealing with it. It is divided into a theoretical and a conceptual framework. The acronym SET will refer to the term special education teachers. The reviewed study findings will be organized according to the research questions: The causes and symptoms of burnout among SET and the recommended solutions to deal with burnout for SET.

2.1 Theoretical framework

My findings will be analyzed based on two theories of psychology to explain how burnout happens and its influence on the work experience of teachers of students with special needs. As the literature shows, burnout is experienced among individuals who work within a social context and provide human services. The targeted individuals in this study are teachers, special education teachers in particular. Studies show that SET are more likely to face burnout than regular teachers because the slow nature of students with special needs makes them feel less successful and decreases their sense of personal accomplishment (Küçüksüleymanoğlu, 2011).

The first theory is that of self-efficacy which is defined as an individual’s confidence in the ability to face given tasks, goals and challenges. This theory states that human beings are directly responsible for setting their goals, anticipating the outcome, monitoring and regulating their actions and thus assessing their effectiveness and
abilities based on the results they attain (Bandura, 1986, 2006). Teacher’s self-efficacy is related to the confidence in the teaching ability (Protheroe, 2008). The more the teacher feels incompetent and unable to reach the students and see immediate outcomes the more likely it is for the teacher to experience low self-efficacy thus leading to burnout.

Research on burnout is often linked to the theory of self-efficacy. My choice to study teacher burnout under the umbrella of this theory is because I have found that self-efficacy is the predictor of several causes and symptoms of burnout that are tackled in this study. Bandura (2006) states that self-efficacy determines how people handle obstacles they are faced with, how much effort they exert in certain tasks, what activities they choose to pursue and how they perceive external stimuli. All these factors are directly linked to the three dimensions of burnout dealing with negative psychological reactions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Since these dimensions of burnout are affected by one’s perceptions, experiences and environmental and social factors it is likely that these factors are influenced by one's sense of self-efficacy (Bandura 2006; Bresó, Schaufeli and Salanova 2011). So, it is crucial to understand a teacher’s efficacy when examining the causes and symptoms of burnout and using this theory as bases to recommend solutions for this phenomenon. According to Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy (1998) and Bresó et al. (2011), a person’s self-efficacy determines one’s capabilities to accomplish goals and tasks. If a person has a low sense of self-efficacy it is likely that they will have a negative perception of their capabilities thus leading to failure and giving up any task they see as challenging. On the other hand, if a person has a high sense of self-efficacy they will have a positive perception that will allow them to tolerate the challenges and
aim for higher and better goals. In the light of this, it is important to take into consideration teacher’s self-efficacy link to teacher burnout. Teacher’s self-efficacy is jeopardized by lack of professional support, increased work load with low salaries, students challenging behaviors, unsupportive work environment, lack of mentoring and the conflict between the expectations on the job versus the reality (Milner, 2002; Swanson, 2010). Bresó et al. (2011) stated that high levels of one’s self-efficacy results in low levels of fatigue, stress and anxiety. Bearing these factors in mind, if a teacher’s self-efficacy is threatened physical and psychological factors such as depersonalization, stress, anxiety, fatigue and exhaustion will occur thus influencing teacher’s effectiveness in teaching and willingness to exert effort which in turn will result in poor quality of education for the students and eventually making teachers want to leave the job resulting in high rates of attrition and teacher shortage in general and in special education in particular (Milner, 2002; Swanson, 2010; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000).

The second theory explains compassion fatigue. According to Figley (2002), any job that requires working with and helping a category of people who are at risk are likely to suffer compassion fatigue. “Though elements of burnout can occur in any setting, a unique form of it, compassion fatigue, affects people in caregiving professions” (Joinson, 1992, p.116). The teaching profession has recently been linked to this theory, “At the core of potential victims in this field are special education teachers who have direct contact with recipients and service providers of Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs)” (Tepper & Palladino, 2007, p.3). The symptoms of compassion fatigue are very similar to those of stress. The symptoms range from feeling exhausted,
depressed and sick to being unable to focus and getting headaches and stomach distress (Joinson, 1992). Those symptoms are very similar to the ones an individual suffers within the process of reaching the final stage of burnout. Thus, my choice to use the theory of compassion fatigue is in line with my study on burnout. Though studies mainly address nurses, doctors, psychologists and social workers when discussing compassion fatigue, it is important to highlight this theory when discussing special education teachers as well, for a special educator’s role is very similar to those mentioned professions. Special educators have daily, direct contact with individuals suffering from learning difficulties due to physical, cognitive or psychological disabilities which makes special education teachers vulnerable to compassion fatigue. Fowler (2015), states: “Competent, caring, and concerned, we bear witness to the suffering of our students because we are human, we may also bear the burden” (p.31). Special education teachers are part of their students’ lives so they are directly exposed to their sufferings and feel responsible to be emotionally available to help. “Teachers are not immune to human emotions. No smart board or dry erase marker magically protects us from feeling another’s pain” (Fowler, 2015, p.31). Compassion fatigue, just like secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma causes teachers dealing with difficult students to be physically, emotionally and mentally worn out (Fowler, 2015), which in turn is linked to the phenomenon of burnout in all its aspects. Hoffman et al. (2007) study results support the use of compassion fatigue as a framework to study teacher burnout in special education as they show that teachers do become very engaged in their students’ disabilities. They experience fatigue relative to their students’ struggles. Teachers’ loss of control in their jobs, the stress of the responsibilities they have and their feelings of empathy towards their struggling students are factors that result in their burnout.
So the aim in highlighting this theory is to draw awareness in order to avoid the increased rate of special education teachers leaving the job and have special education teachers get the support they need in times of crises.

2.2 Research question 1: Causes of burnout

The review of literature on causes of teacher burnout in special education focuses on teaching conditions, support, challenging behaviors of students with special needs, role conflict and role ambiguity, teacher expectations versus reality and the lack of teacher training, and workload as factors that may lead to teacher burnout.

In the literature review the five most common categories that cause burnout have been identified. The following section elaborates on each major cause as found in the literature.

2.2.1 Teaching conditions

The first factor that may lead to burnout is teacher’s working conditions. The lack of school supplies, materials and resources for special education teachers is a matter of concern. This factor has been determined as one of the important factors that should be highlighted when discussing teacher burnout in special education. The struggle between special education teachers and general classroom teachers on the use of the same resources has become a factor of stress and frustration among special education teachers (Kaufhold et al., 2006). In the study of Kaufhold et al. (2006), to determine the effects of lack of school supplies, materials and resources on the special education teachers, 228 out of 750 teachers from South Texas took surveys. Results yielded that 90% of teachers “strongly agreed” and “agreed” that they do lack school resources,
supplies and materials while none of the teachers said that they have enough school material and supplies to help them perform their job in a more effective manner.

Another aspect of teaching conditions is the type of physical environment the special education teacher is in and how well the goals and duties of the teacher are communicated within the work setting and how the flexibility of the system would affect teacher burnout. Friedman (2000) conducted a study to identify school factors associated with teacher burnout on a random sample of 1,597 teachers in 78 elementary schools. Results were collected, and it was found that those teachers in school environments with more flexible goals and less pressured school system had low levels of burnout, while teachers in a rigid hierarchy system face high pressure and stress thus leading to burnout; due to their feelings of loneliness and isolation they suffer from workload and strict rules.

In a study on teachers in Lebanon, El Helou (2014) reported that poor school environment was perceived by the teachers as a leading cause to burnout. 6 out of 9 interviewed teachers reported burnout as a result of poor and demanding relationship with the administration, power given to parents and students over teachers’ rights, rigid school rules and policies and shaky relationship with other teachers.

2.2.2 Support

The second factor of burnout is the type of support SET get. It includes the availability of support to the special education teachers from the administration, parents, coordinators, colleagues and family. Positive teacher’s perceptions of principal support, peer support, family and friends’ support, and parents’ support were associated with
lower levels of burnout, so the increase of support given to the teacher predicts a decrease in burnout (Brissie, Hoover-Dempsey, & Bassler, 1988; McLain, 2005).

Special education teachers need support from various sources. A study conducted by Tatar (2009) on 281 teachers, showed that teacher support from their colleague teachers ranked as number one source of backup teachers find comforting when in need. Then comes support from principal, educational resources, school counselor, a personal friend, a partner, coordinator, school’s psychologist and finally the internet ranking from most to least needed sources of support to teachers.

On another note, according to research in the United Arab Emirates (Bataineh & Alsagheer, 2012), family support had a direct impact on reducing burnout along with collegial support by positively influencing the teacher’s sense of accomplishment. Family support plays an important role in the Arab region, and this was reflected in the results. However, other sources of support by supervisors showed no relationship to burnout reduction for special education teachers.

Support has also been found to influence teacher’s self-efficacy which is one of the theories relevant to this study. According to Stipek (2012), teacher’s views on support from the administration and the support they receive from their students’ parents predicted their self-efficacy thus directly affecting their performance on the job and their ability to support their students’ learning. In a cross-sectional of causes predicting teachers’ self-efficacy 473 third- and fifth-grade teacher in 196 schools were surveyed. Findings indicated that the self-efficacy of teachers of minorities was positively proportional to the support they got from administrators and parents (Stipek 2012).
2.2.3 Challenging behaviors of students with special needs

The third category includes another factor of burnout, which is dealing with students with special needs. The difficulty that comes with working with students with special needs, whether it is behavioral or academic is one of the major causes for teacher’s feeling of stress and frustration rendering the teacher helpless (Friedman, 2000).

Misbehavior of students has been associated with teacher burnout, wellbeing and attrition and self-efficacy. Teachers who find misbehaving as a factor of stress within the classroom have reported high levels of burnout (Hastings & Bham, 2003). Student behavior can be a result of several factors. Some factors may be acquired from the environment and the upbringing of the student and other behavioral factors may be a result of psychological and emotional problems of the child. Hastings and Bham (2003) stated that Friedman generated a scale to study the relationship between students’ behavior and teacher burnout. Friedman’s pupil behavior scale (PBS) is divided into three categories: disrespect, sociability and attentiveness. As reported by Friedman’s two samples of study, disrespect ranked the highest as a contributor to teacher burnout (Hastings & Bham, 2003).

2.2.4 Teacher expectation versus reality, role conflict and ambiguity, and lack of teacher training

The fourth category includes the following factors that may lead to burn out: teacher expectation versus reality, teacher’s role conflict and ambiguity, and lack of teacher training. Findings show that novice special education teachers lack training and tend to have different expectations when it comes to teaching students with special needs. Soon
enough these teachers are faced with the reality and the challenges that come along with
this job. According to Lavian (2012), teachers start with enthusiasm and a sense of
certainty about their ability to give their best and work hard. However, many face the
harsh school realities later on.

A case study conducted on three upper-elementary special education teachers to study
the effectiveness of following professional development to apply specific teaching
strategies for special education students showed that the teacher who had better
professional development was able to integrate and apply specific programs and
strategies in her classroom unlike the two other teachers who lacked the knowledge and
training; they were unable to incorporate specific teaching strategies for special
education students within their classroom (Dingle, Brownell, Leko, Boardman, &
Haager, 2011).

Special education teachers are being put in situations that they are not well prepared and
trained for. In schools that follow the inclusion system, special education teachers do not
only cater for the special education students but are also asked to be part of the regular
classroom and co-teach with regular teachers without proper preparations to compensate
for teachers’ shortage which could be a struggle for these SET (Nichols, Bicard, Bicard,
& Casey, 2008).

Moreover, role conflict and role ambiguity arise from the inconsistent and unclear
information given to special education teachers regarding their responsibilities,
obligations and duties towards their students and lack of guidance to properly do their
work, leading these teachers to feel exhausted, stressed and uncaring towards their students (Lavian, 2012; Brunsting, et al., 2014).

Crane and Iwanicki (1986) studied the relation between role conflict and role ambiguity for special education teachers in Connecticut. Personal and professional variables were examined in this study. A sample of 433 special education teachers were given the Maslach Burnout inventory along with questionnaires targeting the variables under study, it was found that role conflict and role ambiguity have a direct relation to burnout accounting for variance of the frequency and intensity of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment.

2.2.5 Workload

The fifth category related to burnout is the workload given to special education teachers which may sometimes be too demanding. They are asked to do the paperwork, prepare their classroom material, plan the lessons according to student levels and needs, and meet with the coordinators, the administration, parents and other staff. All this workload will eventually drain the teacher’s energy and decrease the level of motivation thus increasing the chances of teacher burnout (Brunsting, et al., 2014; Kaufhold et al., 2006). Teachers’ tasks are no longer limited to the classroom; the teachers’ duties have extended to the school as a whole with more demand on cooperative teaching, in-service work, and giving teacher extra roles such as supervising and counseling (Gavish & Friedman, 2010).
In a narrative study done on special education teachers, DeMik (2008) conducted interviews, discussions, and an exploration of past experiences with special education teachers who shared their experiences in the field. SET in the study reported that they suffered from the load of work they had. They mentioned Pre and Post assessments, Individualized educational plans (IEPs), lesson plans, talks with the general education teachers, documentations such as filling out forms and grading as some tasks they had in addition to their need to be always available for their students and the general education teachers. This basically left them no time to even take their breaks as they should. One special education teacher reported “It's astronomical! Ridiculous! Redundant! Basically, the paperwork comes from our 'department of redundancy!' I have three sets of student files: the IEP file, the daily work semester files, and the permanent files that I put things in” (DeMik, 2008, p.28). Another special education teacher stated “The paperwork was unbelievable! The paperwork for this particular district was anywhere from twelve to fifteen pages long [length of the IEP and supplementary documents]. It was all written out. If you had a behavior plan with it, that made it even longer. It took forever and ever and ever” (DeMik, 2008, p.28).

Friesen and Sarros (1989) conducted a study in a school setting on 635 teachers and 128 administrators using surveys and the MBI-ES and showed that workload and work stress are direct predictors of emotional exhaustion for both teachers and administrators and contribute to burnout and stress.

2.3 Research question 2: Symptoms of burnout

As the stages of burnout progress, symptoms of this phenomenon become more evident. In the literature, symptoms that may be directly linked to teacher burnout are
reviewed; physical and psychological symptoms are highlighted, along with effects like teacher attrition and shortage and quality of education.

2.3.1 Physical symptoms and Psychological symptoms

The literature also shows that a teacher’s low performance, redundant absences due to sickness and early attrition are alarming symptoms of teacher burnout in addition to physical symptoms like headache, stomach distress, extensive fatigue and neurological and cardiovascular complications (Talmor, Reiter, & Feigin, 2005).

To study the symptoms that correlate with the causes of burnout, questionnaires were given to 420 teachers targeting participant characteristics such as age, professional preparation, experience, conditions of their jobs and the support they get from the school administration, special education administration, other teachers and parents. The Maslach Burnout Inventory was used to measure burnout. Results show a correlation between support and burnout; teachers who didn’t have support were suffering from emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished sense of accomplishment (Zabel & Zabel, 2002).

Burnout manifests itself in the three dimensions of negative psychological reactions studied by Maslach (1999). As these reactions appear they are alarming symptoms that may indicate burnout. Maslach et al. (2001) state that exhaustion is central to burnout; when people state that they are experiencing burnout, exhaustion is what they are usually referring to. Exhaustion reflecting the stress aspect is the most reported criteria of burnout and is directly linked to workload. On the other hand, depersonalization is a person’s unwillingness to interact with others; it is one’s attempt to put distance between
oneself and others, and it is characterized by one’s detachment from the surrounding and
human encounters. As for the third dimension of burnout, which is the reduced sense of
accomplishment, it is directly related to the first two dimensions since the feelings of
exhaustion and cynicism are likely to wear down one’s sense of accomplishment and
success since it’s difficult to attain the feelings of efficacy when one feels drained and
indifferent. However, in some cases lack of self-efficacy comes hand in hand with the
other two dimensions of burnout. Research findings show that lack of sense of personal
accomplishment is a result from the lack of resources. As for the depersonalization and
exhaustion they are often linked to workload and social support (Leiter 1993; Maslach et
al., 2001)

2.3.2 Teacher attrition and shortage and quality of education

Findings show that there is a challenge in the special education field nowadays because
it is becoming hard to attract and retain competent teachers in the field (Zabel & Zabel,
2002). A symptom of concern that is being raised in research is the increased teacher
attrition and shortage in special education which is jeopardizing the quality of teaching
students with special needs (Fore et al., 2002) and this being a matter of concern, studies
on causes and symptoms of this phenomenon are needed. Attrition refers to the loss of
employees through a number of circumstances, such as resignation and early retirement.
The cause of attrition may be either voluntary or involuntary, though employer-initiated
events such as layoffs are not typically included in the definition (Jethrcom, 2016).
Johnson (2010) studied reasons behind teachers’ attrition in special education.
Correlations were examined between teachers’ attrition and four variables: job
satisfaction, self- efficacy, burnout and path of certification. Results showed a moderate
correlation between burnout and teachers’ attrition. Burnout was identified as a possible reason why teachers leave the field of special education; other reasons are lack of opportunity for promotion, people at work and supervision. On the other hand, there was a low correlation between self-efficacy and teachers’ attrition.

This section states the possible symptoms of burnout as found in the literature. Physical symptoms may be fatigue, feelings of distress and headaches; whereas psychological symptoms are more related to the 3 dimensions of burnout which are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. All three dimensions interfere with personal psychological wellbeing. On the other hand, other symptoms include teacher attrition and shortage which in turn affect the quality of education for students.

2.4 Research question 3: Recommendations for burnout

Many scholars are trying to help teachers to avoid or overcome burnout. Solutions stated in the literature focus on decreasing teachers’ stress by providing more mentoring and support on the professional level for the teachers and creating a motivating work environment (Fore et al., 2002). More training should be done to ensure that teachers could develop proper self-efficacy that will help them cope with challenging situations and be more confident when facing difficult circumstances (Friedman, 2000). It is important that special education teachers get the necessary training in the field in order to know how and what to teach their special need students. “The literacy struggles of students with learning disabilities and the need to provide these students with targeted, intensive, research-based instruction is well documented and supported through regulatory language in the Individuals with Disabilities Education
Improvement Act” (Dingle et al., 2011, p.87), so in other words, this indicates that it is important for teachers to be aware of the different strategies, programs and instructions for students with learning disabilities.

Other literature suggests different programs that could help SET since they have become a high risk group and are likely to suffer from low job satisfaction, low self-efficacy and increased stress and burnout. The literature discusses problems of special education and that solutions have been only targeting the outcome and symptoms which teachers are experiencing rather than mediating psychological processors. The authors suggest the Acceptance and Commitment therapy (ACT) would serve as a promising solution to reduce teacher burnout and stress. The focus of the ACT is to target experiential avoidance, acceptance, mindfulness and valued living as the key elements that should be targeted to help special education teacher (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010).

2.5 Summary

Five major categories of causes of burnout were derived from the review of literature. Some causes may be interconnected and overlapping, so one may complete the other as mentioned in the literature and in the findings. The symptoms of burnout were also studied and 2 major categories represent the symptoms that may occur as a result of burnout in special education. Finally, recommendations on how to overcome and face burnout have been identified and others will be derived from the findings.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented details extracted from the literature review on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study in relation to burnout. Each
research question was discussed in relation to the given findings from previous literature. The next chapter will present the methodology of this study.
Chapter Three

Methodology

This section presents this study’s methodology and is divided into research approach, sampling method and participants, instrumentation, data analysis and triangulation, credibility and trustworthiness.

3.1 Research approach

To address the research questions of this study a qualitative research approach was used to tackle the issues that are under investigation. Qualitative research focuses on understanding the participants’ point of view in relation to certain events, stimulations and situations (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). Participants in a qualitative research are often involved in the research procedure making the research specific to a targeted situation. Direct contact between the research and the participants takes place in the natural setting where the researcher should be flexible, ask good questions and does careful observations (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I examined special education teachers’ experiences with the phenomenon of burnout. This research approach fits my study because I need direct answers on given questions from SET on the phenomenon of burnout, what it means to them, their experiences, thoughts and opinions on this matter.

3.2 Research design

The study followed the case study research design to examine the phenomenon of burnout of special education teachers in Lebanon. A case study is a comprehensive
analysis description of a specific phenomenon, i.e., a single-case study of an individual or a group of people, i.e., is a multiple-case study in a specific system or context (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). “The distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena” (Yin, 2009, p.5). Thus, a multiple-case study was selected in this research to study a group of special education teachers in Lebanon and reflect on their experiences in relation to the phenomenon of burnout.

3.3 Sampling method and participants

Selecting the sample for this study was done through purposive and convenience sampling. The purposive sampling relies on previous knowledge in selecting a specific sample based on the criteria that fits the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). Moreover, it aims for a careful selection of information according to the specific qualities the targeted population possesses thus, the sample of participants was chosen based on what the researcher needs to know and the willingness of this sample to provide the necessary information and share their experiences (Tongco, 2007; Bernard, 2011). I chose a sample that allowed me discover, understand, gain insight and learn the most about the burnout phenomenon, so I believe that SET in schools around Beirut, Lebanon were a suitable source to collect my data from. Selection of participants followed the convenience sampling type since the participants were accessible and available with less demands on the researcher in terms of time and effort (Marshall, 1996; Merriam, 2009). Also, the study followed the snowball sampling since I got information and recommendations from my connections to contact specific participants knowledgeable in the field of special education and who could enrich my study (Fraenkel & Wallen,
2010). These techniques were chosen because they work best with the researcher’s, schools’ and teachers’ schedule.

After communicating with the targeted schools via email and phone calls, I was granted access from the administration after providing them with the necessary documents they requested. The targeted schools cater for different student needs and abilities. These schools were chosen because they provide special education students with the suitable academic programs within the system of inclusion with regular students. Both the pull-out and in-class inclusion systems are applied within the special education departments of these schools. Moreover, the school locations were convenient; all are located in the greater Beirut area, so I was able to commute with ease to reach all the schools.

When choosing the participants, I followed a two level sampling. First, I chose SET teachers from schools I previously worked at and schools around Beirut area which I had access to by having the necessary contact information. This made it convenient for me to directly communicate with the schools and Heads of departments. Second, I was provided with information on the number of SET by the Heads of special education departments. For the interview, I asked the Head of department of each school to select one SET available to answer my questions. The sample was obtained depending on the number of special education teachers in each school and their availability and willingness to participate. The number of participants was 60 SET and 5 heads of special education departments from five schools. The 5 heads of departments were interviewed, and randomly selected teachers were interviewed. 54 out of 60 SET filled in the MBI-ES due to absences of some teachers on the days of my visits to schools. Table 1 below presents information on the participants and schools that were involved in the study.
Table 1: Information of participants and schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>System of special education followed</th>
<th>Number of SET in Elementary school</th>
<th>Number of SET teachers in Middle school</th>
<th>Number of SET who participated from Elementary school</th>
<th>Number of SET who participated from Middle school</th>
<th>Head of special education department interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Elementary section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Elementary section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Elementary section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 4</td>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Elementary section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5</td>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Elementary section</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Instrumentation

For this research three instruments were used to apply triangulation and increase the validity and reliability of the results. The instruments are the MBI-ES questionnaire for elementary and middle SET, a semi-structured interview with a random sample of special education teachers in the selected schools and the head of special education department in each school and my own reflective journal. The instruments of qualitative design are usually in the form of words and narrative
descriptions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). Table 15 in appendix 6 is a presentation of the purpose, research questions and instrumentation items related to the study.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

I chose to administer a published instrument which is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). I purchased this inventory after reviewing the literature and deciding that it’s one of the most used instruments when it comes to measuring burnout. I communicated with Mindgarden.com to get a better understanding of the inventory. They suggested I purchase the MBI license in order to have the right to copy the purchased items. My purchase includes the MBI General Survey, Human Services Survey and Educators Survey. I used the MBI-ES for my study since my targeted participants were special educators. I requested from Mindgarden.com the permission to do some changes to the items in order to fit special educators in particular (example: changing the word “teacher” to “special education teacher” and the word “student” to special education student” and giving the word “callous” in item number 10 in the MBI-ES another synonym due to its ambiguity to some readers) but they suggested that I shouldn’t because it would affect the validity and reliability of the study, and teachers targeted would understand the items anyway without the addition of these words and as for the word callous they suggested I would add an asterisk symbol next to the word “callous” as a pointer to an annotation to the definition of the word. I did and chose the two synonyms “insensitive” and “uncaring” to define the word and avoid ambiguity of item number 10 in the MBI-ES.

Appendix 1 presents a sample of the MBI-ES questionnaire where only three items are presented following the rules and regulations of the purchased license. The
MBI-ES consists of 22 items; each item is a statement that is used to assess one of the three major dimensions of burnout which are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1996). Each of the items is linked to one of these burnout major dimensions. Items number 1,2,3,6,8,13,14,16 and 20 assess teachers’ feelings and perceptions in relation to emotional exhaustion. Items number 5,10,11,15 and 22 assess depersonalization and items number 4,7,9,12,17,18,19, and 21 assess the lack of personal accomplishment (Zhouchun, 2011). The statements in the MBI-ES are scored in a Likert-scale from 0 which indicates “never” to 6 which indicates “every day”.

The MBI-ES questionnaire was distributed to the sample within the region of greater Beirut area in its original English version with no changes done to the items. The questionnaire took around 10 minutes to be filled. In two schools I collected the filled questionnaires on the same day and in the other 3 schools I went back to collect them on the next day. In this manner, I saved time; special education teachers filled the MBI-ES according to their free time and availability, so I didn’t have to sit and wait for each teacher (Marshall, 1996). All the elementary and middle school SET of the selected schools agreed to respond to the questionnaire. Fifty-four out of 60 teachers completed the questionnaire. The teachers who did not fill the questionnaire were absent at the time of its distribution. All participants who have completed the questionnaire have filled in all the items.

3.4.2 Interviews

Semi-structural interviews were conducted with 5 middle school and elementary special education teachers and 5 heads of special education departments to examine the
causes and symptoms of the burnout phenomenon on SETs in Lebanon. Heads of special education departments were interviewed to find out if they are aware of their teachers’ experiences. The items of the interviews were derived from my journal, the questionnaire and the literature review.

Since the study is qualitative, interviewing in a semi-structural is a flexible and powerful tool to reflect the interviewees’ voices, experiences and personal points of views (Rabionet, 2011). As a researcher, I chose the semi-structured interview method since I was aiming to gather data on teachers’ personal experiences and perceptions on the causes and symptoms of burnout and prompt the teacher to answer the targeted questions to obtain the needed data for the studies research questions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010).

The special education teachers’ interview consisted of nine questions while the Heads’ interview consisted of eight questions. All the questions cover the variables related to the three research questions. The questions aim to derive information on possible causes and symptoms of burnout and to get recommendations to help avoid or overcome this phenomenon. Sample questions of the special education teacher’s interview: ‘Describe how the effort you put in teaching students with special needs reflects on their performance and improvement’, ‘How do you find dealing with students with special needs’, ‘Do you think having more training and internships would help special education teachers be more prepared and efficient on the job? Give examples’. Sample questions of the Head’s interview: ‘How do you describe the teachers’ relationship with their students?’ ‘What are the means used to evaluate the teachers’ performance?’ (See appendix 2).
The individual interviews were conducted within the school setting during teachers and head of department’s free time. All interviews were conducted in private offices or setting where only the teacher and I were present. The interviews were recorded using the recording application on the smartphone. Each interview took around 10 to 15 minutes.

In 3 of the chosen schools there was one head of special education department for both elementary and middle school whom I interviewed. In the other 2 schools, there were two heads of special education department, one for the elementary school and one for the middle school. So, I interviewed the elementary head of special education department in both of the schools that had both an elementary and middle school head of special education department due to their availability at the scheduled time of my visit. The special education teachers I interviewed were randomly picked by the head special education department based on their availability and schedule in order to work with my time of visitation.

3.4.3 Researcher’s Journal

The journal I wrote reflects my experience as a special education teacher. The journal describes my experience during my fourth year of teaching and the phases that I passed through before I decided to resign. The journal content was used to form some of the interview questions thus contributing to internal validity of the research. Questions on physical symptoms such as “Do you suffer frequent exhaustion and fatigue during your working hours?” are derived from my personal experience. Reflective writing can provide much understanding to the personal experiences of the teachers in their work and development. These reflective writings benefit the writer and the reader by giving a
deeper understanding of the topic through the involvement of the researcher (Borg, 2001). Appendix 3 presents a sample of the researcher’s journal.

3.5 Procedure

The interviews and questionnaires were piloted to make sure that all the items were clear to the targeted participants. Moreover, it was important to know if the questionnaires and interviews fit into an adequate time-frame in order to avoid conflict within the school settings. I selected a special education teacher that I know external from the study in order to respond to the questionnaire and interview questions. The teacher was able to respond to all the interview questions and answer all the items of the questionnaire without having any trouble in understanding the terminologies and the structure of the questions. Having done that the instrument’s validity was increased adding more credibility to the study.

I completed the requirements and procedures that guarantee ethical human research required by Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Lebanese American University (LAU), informed consents and details on the study with the introduction of the questionnaire and interview were generated and sent via e-mail to the five targeted schools asking for permission to access their premises to conduct the study with their special education teachers in the elementary and middle sections. The email included a summary of the study and assurance that the study was completely anonymous and no reference to any of the schools or teacher would be made. One school responded to my e-mail within few days. For the other four schools I had to contact my acquaintances and colleagues in the targeted schools to have them check and respond to my email. Within
one week of communication via e-mail with schools I got the approval of the principals and heads of department from all five schools to start my visits.

School visits and data collection were completed in October/November 2016. The targeted schools are all located around Beirut. I arrived to schools and directly met with the head of special education departments. The heads had already picked one teacher whose schedule fits with my visit time in order to be interviewed. The interviewees’ answers were recorded using a smart phone after taking their permission. They were told that they could stop the interview anytime they want.

The questionnaires were handed to the head of section of special education in sealed envelopes in order to be distributed to teachers to fill out. In 3 schools I collected the filled questionnaires 2 days later from the head of department after the special education teachers had filled them at their convenience. While in the other two schools I stayed within the school premises until all the available teachers had filled the questionnaire and I collected them on the same day.

Appendix 4 shows the formal approval I received from Mindgarden.com as a license to reproduce 60 copies of the MBI-ES and Appendix 5 includes the formal letter sent to schools from the IRB.

3.6 Data analysis

To analyze the results of the interview and reflective journal, I followed thematic analysis for analyzing the qualitative data. It is a theoretically flexible approach done by identifying themes that emerge and recur within the data in order to form recognition of patterns found within the data for rich and detailed description of the findings (Braun &
Clarke, 2006). The Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey was scored following the instruction on the MBI-ES manual. Results from these data analysis methods were used to address the research questions.

3.6.1 Questionnaire

The MBI-ES administered to SET was scored to find out the rate of burnout in each targeted school. The score reflects the levels of burnout: High, Medium, and Low for each dimension: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal accomplishment. Results are used to respond to question number 2 to see which symptoms of burnout are most common among the participants and to check the rate of burnout among elementary and middle school special education teachers in the sample schools. Each questionnaire was scored according to instructions on the MBI-ES manual. The scores of each burnout dimension were derived by lining up the numbers of each given item following the same numbers given in the MBI-ES key (0 to 6) then adding up the scores of the interviewees’ answers according to each dimension of burnout (Maslach et al., 1996).

Scores that range from 0 to 16 on Emotional Exhaustion, 0 to 8 on Depersonalization and 37 or above on Personal Accomplishment are considered indicators of low levels of burnout. Scores that range from 17 to 26 on Emotional Exhaustion, 9 to 13 on Depersonalization and 31 to 36 on Personal Accomplishment are considered indicators of Moderate levels of burnout. Scores that range from 27 or above on Emotional Exhaustion, 14 or above on Depersonalization and from 0 to 30 on Personal Accomplishment are considered indicators of Low levels of burnout (Maslach et al., 1996).
The frequencies of the scores were computed and tabulated to reflect the levels of burnout of special education teachers in the 5 schools. Percentages on levels of burnout related to the three dimensions of burnout were derived to link question 1 and question 2 of the study and to have insight on information related to question number 3.

3.6.2 Interview and Researcher’s Reflective Journal

The interviews conducted with the 10 participants (5 SET and 5 Heads of special education departments were transcribed word by word into written text to derive the frequency of terms targeted within the study and thus divided into the following categories: working conditions, support, challenging behaviors of students with special needs, teacher expectation versus reality, role conflict and ambiguity, and lack of teacher training and finally workload. Tables of results are presented; they reflect answers from SET and answers from the heads of departments in order to see whether the heads of departments have parallel views with their teacher’s experiences. Furthermore, the transcribed answers from the interview are analyzed and used as supporting evidence to research question 2 and to help derive information for research question 3; direct statements from the interviewees’ answers are presented. The researcher’s reflective journal was also analyzed and frequency counts were used to derive data for research questions 1 and 2.

3.7 Trustworthiness, credibility and triangulation

According to Fraenkel and Wallen, (2010) validity is the meaningfulness and correctness of the researcher’s readings of the findings, and reliability is the uniformity
of the answers of the different instruments used. In a qualitative study like this, the perspective given on the data collected highly depends on the researcher, so in order to avoid bias and increase the validity and reliability, three instruments that involve many participants, audio recordings, interviews and documentation were used (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). The instruments in this study are considered credible because the questionnaire and interview were piloted by a special education teacher outside the study to check for any item ambiguity thus increasing the validity of the instrument.

Triangulation requires both quantitative and qualitative data collection to validate the findings (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010) so data from the questionnaire, interviews and researcher’s journal are compared and common results are highlighted.

The validity of the questionnaire was asserted by the literature. The review of literature by Maslach et al. (1996), shows that the MBI-ES questionnaire has been previously administered in many studies about the phenomenon of burnout thus making it a reliable instrument. The review of literature on burnout is extensive and many researchers administer the MBI-ES as the primary tool to study burnout and its three aspects: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment.

The interview items of both the special education teachers and the heads of special education departments were derived from the review of literature, the questionnaire and the researcher’s journal acquiring internal validity. According to Maslach et al. (1996), to study burnout, it is best that research questions are derived from the actual work environment targeted and from well-studied theories. The interviews were recorded and transcribed word by word to increase the validity and reliability. Interview questions were asked in a way that makes the interviewee connect the ideas and information given
to form the whole picture. Some questions had common aspects but were asked in different phrasing. For example, two questions to the heads of special education departments that lead them to form answers about their teacher’s effectiveness and struggles that teachers might face are questions numbers 3 and 4 in the interview “What are some factors that you feel might affect the special education teachers’ effectiveness in your department?” and “What are some concerns you have about the special education teachers in your department?” which led one interviewee to state similar aspects. She said for question number 3 “Teachers might be affected by severe cases of behavior problems” and for question number 4 she stated “It is difficult to deal with students that have ADHD, especially among 26 or 27 other students in class.” As for the validity of the SET interview questions number 7 and 8 “Do you think more training and internships would help special education teachers be more prepared and efficient on the job? Give examples.” and “Were your expectations about the job matching with the reality of the job? Give examples.” both questions triggered special education teachers to talk about the need for having real life experiences through training before entering the job and that theory of special education doesn’t match the reality. One teacher answered to question number 7 saying “Training is important because you can choose where you really want to work whether in inclusive settings or schools that just cater for special needs exclusively” and for question number 9 she mentioned “I started working at a school for special needs exclusively and it didn’t relate to the expectation I had when I was at the university, so after the this experience I knew I wanted to work in an inclusive school setting.”
I was not able to link the answers of the interview questions to the questionnaire for individual teachers because the MBI-ES was taken anonymously by the SET.

On the other hand, the validity of the researcher’s journal was measured by the quality of ideas presented reflecting personal experiences that are relevant to the questions under study. It reflects information from me as an experienced special education teacher in the field. The information derived from the researcher’s journal is parallel to the information found in the literature review and items of the questionnaire and interview.

3.8 Assumptions

In this study, assumptions regarding validity, reliability are made based on the methods that were used in conducting and analyzing this study. The interviewees are assumed to have truthfully answered the questionnaires since they were conducted in an anonymous manner. Moreover, their responses to the interview questions are also assumed to be honest and uninfluenced by any external factors since the interviews were done in a relaxed and private setting.

3.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, the methodology of this study was thoroughly discussed elaborating on the research approach, sampling method and participants, instrumentation, data analysis and validity, reliability and triangulation. The next chapter presents results derived from data analysis.
Chapter Four

Results

This chapter presents results of the analyzed data. The results are used to address the 3 research questions and derive appropriate recommendations to deal with burnout.

4.1 Causes of teacher burnout among Lebanese special education teachers

To answer question 1, transcribed information from the teachers’, heads of special education departments’ interviews and information from the researcher’s reflective journal were divided into the 5 categories that represent the causes of burnout. Results are presented in tables 16,17,18,19, 20 and 21 in appendix 6 and referred to where relevant.

4.1.1 Teaching conditions

For the first category that states the teaching condition, answers by heads’ interviews reflect the conditions of their department. Two heads of department mentioned that they lack resources like computes and special programs for special education students. The lack of these resources puts load on SET and hinders their ability to cater for the special education students due to the shortage of necessary material. The 3 other heads of department stated that a good amount of material and resources is available for the teachers. On the other hand, 3 out of 5 heads of departments stated that the setting of the classes may be a barrier for the proper teaching and learning process between the SET
and students. They said that the classes are too small. Table 2 includes the results of teaching conditions as reported by the Heads of department.

Table 2: Results of teaching conditions reported by the Heads of department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head of department 2: “…One of the factors that might affect the effectiveness of the teachers in school may be the space located for support rooms; space is not helping the teachers a lot…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of department 3: “…We have a lack in material, we have basic material, we don’t have electronic books, we just have few computers…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of department 5: “…Classrooms are too small…as for the material we try our best to provide what teachers ask for but it all depends on the available budget…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.2 Support

For the second category that reflects on support, all the teachers were consistent with the basic types of the support they need and get, such as support from the students’ parents, the coordinator, the administration and support from the regular teachers. Other sources of support that varied from one teacher to another were support from therapists and counselors in the field. One teacher mentioned she needed support from the students
themselves to be able to complete her task as required. Table 3 includes the results of support as reported by the SET.

Table 3: Results on support reported by SET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Support of the school administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support from coordinator/Head of department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support from regular teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support from student’s parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support from specialists in the field like therapists and psychologists and special education centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support from students themselves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.3 Challenging behaviors of students with special needs

For the third category relating to challenging behaviors of students with special needs, teachers stated that they encounter students who don’t express themselves, students who have mood swings and social problems, others who are difficult to handle, some who have mood swings, and others who are disruptive. (See table 4)

Table 4: Results on challenging behaviors of students with special needs reported by SET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenging behaviors of students with special needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Students who bully others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students who lack concentration and have difficulty staying on task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students with mood swings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students who lack discipline and do not follow the rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students who are difficult to contain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.4 Role conflict and role ambiguity, teacher expectations versus reality and the lack of teacher training

The fourth category includes SET teachers’ role conflict and role ambiguity, teacher expectations versus reality and the lack of teacher training. Teachers’ answers varied. Some believed if they had more training for the job they would know what to expect. Others struggled between two roles they had to play with students, one would be the strict teacher and the other, the emotional who would love and care for the student as a mother or a friend. Most SET mentioned that their expectations didn’t meet the reality of the job because what they learned about being a SET was completely different from the working field. Table 5 includes results on role conflict and role ambiguity, teacher expectations versus reality and the lack of teacher training reported by SET.

Table 5: SET role, expectations versus reality and lack of training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role conflict and role ambiguity, teacher expectations versus reality and the lack of teacher training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Planning for students doesn’t match the expectations requiring constant need for adjustment in plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conflict between being a strict teacher or a loving mother to special needs students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expectations of results from students don’t always match the outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working with special needs students was harder than expected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.5 Workload

The fourth category includes findings on the workload of SET teachers have. All 5 SET agreed on similar tasks they had. These tasks include preparing IEPs, preparing and modifying lesson plans, assignments and assessments, observing students and keeping record of their improvement, changing bulletin boards and class setting, differentiating lessons and instructions to cater for all the student’s needs, meetings with parents, regular teachers and coordinator and attending workshops. Table 6 shows results on workload as reported by SET.

Table 6: Results on workload as reported by SET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workload</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Prepare material for teaching activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prepare and modify lesson plans and assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teach one-on-one in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Follow up on student’s progress through observations and informal assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use different programs and methods to teach students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meet with parents, regular teachers and coordinator/Head of department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attend workshops and seminars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Symptoms of teacher burnout among Lebanese special education teachers

To address question 2, the results of the MBI-ES that were conducted in 5 schools and with current 54 SET were tabulated into the three dimensions of burnout: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment. Tables 7, 8, and 9 present the results collected from SET in the 5 schools. Each table presents the percentages of teachers’ levels of burnout on each dimension of burnout. Extracts from the transcribed
interviews with the teachers are presented to show how they reflected on the symptoms of burnout along with quotes from the researcher’s reflective journal to show the symptoms of burnout that were experienced.

### 4.2.1 Emotional Exhaustion

Reflecting on the Emotional Exhaustion dimension of burnout the findings show that 50%, 81.81%, 75%, 53.84% and 50% of the SET in schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 showed high levels of burnout respectively. Thus, in all schools more than half of the SET are suffering from high levels of burnout in Emotional Exhaustion. SET experienced stress and fatigue, at times they felt worn out at times due to the excessive workload. Table 7 shows the percentages of the levels of burnout recorded by the SET on Emotional Exhaustion.

Table 7: Percentages of SET burnout level on the Emotional Exhaustion Dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>High level of burnout</th>
<th>Moderate level of burnout</th>
<th>Low level of burnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6 out of 12 SET</td>
<td>5 out of 12 SET</td>
<td>1 out of 12 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>41.66%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9 out of 11 SET</td>
<td>2 out of 11 SET</td>
<td>0 out of 11 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81.81%</td>
<td>18.18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 out of 4 SET</td>
<td>1 out of 4 SET</td>
<td>0 out of 4 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7 out of 13 SET</td>
<td>4 out of 13 SET</td>
<td>2 out of 13 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.84%</td>
<td>30.76%</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7 out of 14 SET</td>
<td>4 out of 14 SET</td>
<td>3 out of 14 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>21.42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.2 Depersonalization

Reflecting on the Depersonalization dimension of burnout, the findings indicate that 100%, 54.54%, 75%, 84.61% and 78.57% of the SET in schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 showed low levels of burnout respectively. Thus, in all schools most of the SET do not suffer of high levels of burnout in Depersonalization; the highest percentage was recorded in school 4 with 15.83% of the teacher rating a high level of burnout. Depersonalization being a person’s detachment from the surrounding and the inability to interact with others, SET did not report these types of behaviors towards their students and colleagues; instead, they reported affection and responsibility towards their students and showed good relationships towards other teachers. Table 8 shows the levels of burnout recorded by the SET on Depersonalization.

Table 8: Percentages of SET burnout level on the Depersonalization Dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>High level of burnout</th>
<th>Moderate level of burnout</th>
<th>Low level of burnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 out of 12 SET</td>
<td>0 out of 12 SET</td>
<td>12 out of 12 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 out of 11 SET</td>
<td>4 out of 11 SET</td>
<td>6 out of 11 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.09%</td>
<td>36.36%</td>
<td>54.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 out of 4 SET</td>
<td>0 out of 4 SET</td>
<td>3 out of 4 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 out of 13 SET</td>
<td>0 out of 13 SET</td>
<td>11 out of 13 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.38%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>84.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 out of 14 SET</td>
<td>1 out of 14 SET</td>
<td>11 out of 14 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.28%</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
<td>78.57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.3 Personal accomplishment

Reflecting on the Personal accomplishment dimension of burnout, the findings show that 24%, 45.45%, 75%, 69.23% and 64.82% of the SET in schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 exhibited low levels of burnout respectively. Thus, in all schools most of the SET do not suffer of high levels of burnout in Personal accomplishment. Almost half of the SET revealed that they consider themselves successful and have a high sense of self-efficacy when it comes to their job. While other SET did not feel that their accomplishments on their job were worthwhile, table 9 shows the levels of burnout recorded by the SET on Personal Accomplishment.

Table 9: Percentages of SET burnout level on the Personal Accomplishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>High level of burnout</th>
<th>Moderate level of burnout</th>
<th>Low level of burnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 out of 12 SET</td>
<td>4 out of 12 SET</td>
<td>5 out of 12 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>41.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 out of 11 SET</td>
<td>6 out of 11 SET</td>
<td>0 out of 11 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45.45%</td>
<td>54.54%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 out of 4 SET</td>
<td>0 out of 4 SET</td>
<td>1 out of 4 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9 out of 13 SET</td>
<td>4 out of 13 SET</td>
<td>0 out of 13 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69.23%</td>
<td>30.76%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9 out of 14 SET</td>
<td>2 out of 14 SET</td>
<td>3 out of 14 SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64.28%</td>
<td>14.28%</td>
<td>21.42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, table 10 showing the mean of each dimension of burnout of the MBI-ES was formulated to present the ratings of burnout in each school and present the scores of the researcher’s level of burnout. The means showed that 3 out of 5 schools
had an average of high level of burnout and 2 out of 5 schools had medium levels of burnout on Emotional Exhaustion while the researcher had high level of burnout on Emotional Exhaustion. On the other hand, 5 out of 5 schools had low levels of burnout on depersonalization while the researcher had high levels of depersonalization. Finally, 4 out of 5 schools had low level of burnout and 1 out of 5 schools had moderate levels of burnout on personal accomplishment which matched with the level of burnout of the researcher.

Table 10: Mean of each burnout dimension of the MBI-ES for all schools and the researcher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean of each burnout dimension of the MBI-ES</th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4</th>
<th>School 5</th>
<th>Average of the 5 schools</th>
<th>The researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean of Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>27.41</td>
<td>32.54</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>24.07</td>
<td>27.10</td>
<td>36.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean of Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>(High Burnout)</td>
<td>(High Burnout)</td>
<td>(High Burnout)</td>
<td>(Moderate Burnout)</td>
<td>(Moderate Burnout)</td>
<td>(High Burnout)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean of Depersonalization</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>6.81</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean of Depersonalization</td>
<td>(Low Burnout)</td>
<td>(Low Burnout)</td>
<td>(Low Burnout)</td>
<td>(Low Burnout)</td>
<td>(Low Burnout)</td>
<td>(Low Burnout)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean of Personal Accomplishment</td>
<td>33.41</td>
<td>37.36</td>
<td>37.25</td>
<td>39.30</td>
<td>46.81</td>
<td>38.82</td>
<td>34.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean of Personal Accomplishment</td>
<td>(Moderate Burnout)</td>
<td>(Low Burnout)</td>
<td>(Low Burnout)</td>
<td>(Low Burnout)</td>
<td>(Low Burnout)</td>
<td>(Low Burnout)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.4 Physical and psychological symptoms

From the interviews questions: Describe how the effort you put in teaching students with special needs reflects on their performance and improvement, How do you find dealing with students with special needs? How do you feel everyday as you head to your job? Have you experienced any kind of unpleasant feelings during your years of teaching? The following sample answers from SET reflect the physical and psychological symptoms of burnout showing that teachers are suffering from emotional exhaustion which is parallel with the results of the MBI-ES. Table 11 shows the main narrative quotes from the SET.

Table 11: Main narrative quotes from the SET on physical and psychological symptoms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main narrative quotes from SET on physical and psychological symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“…I feel frustrated when I don’t see the results I anticipated from my students….”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…Sometimes I feel I don’t want to come to school, it’s tiring when you have been doing this for 11 years...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“...It’s exhausting; you need to put a lot of physical effort, after all, most of the day I am standing on my feet....”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“...It was so difficult to deal with the special need students at the beginning...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“...I was tired, sad, crying, but with experience you’ll be able to manage it…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“...Definitely, at certain times you feel that you are exhausted and overwhelmed with the different tasks....”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.5 Teacher attrition and shortage and quality of education

The heads of department were asked about the concerns they have for their SET. Two out of 5 coordinators said they are afraid to lose SET teachers within their departments due to the pressure and workload they have along with the emotional factor that is needed in their job. None of the coordinators mentioned any factor relating to their concern on the quality of education the SET are offering. Table 12 shows the main narrative quotes from Heads of department on teacher attrition and shortage and quality of education.

Table 12: Quotes on teacher attrition and shortage and quality of education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main narrative quotes from Heads of department on teacher attrition and shortage and quality of education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“…In special education it’s not only about following the curriculum, other objectives such as social skills are also a part of the teacher’s responsibilities…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…Some teachers might find the different tasks tiring and maybe decide to quit…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…Sometimes it’s just finding special education teachers might be the problem because as we see we’re not finding them anymore…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“… Special education teachers are leaving the profession actually. They start as special educators then they’re not anymore…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Recommendations to deal with teacher burnout

To respond to research question 3, SET and heads of departments answered the following questions in the interview: what are some factors that you feel might affect the special education teachers’ effectiveness in your department? What are some concerns you have about the special education teachers in your department? SET answered the following questions: do think having more training and internships would help special education teachers be more prepared and efficient on the job? Give examples; were your expectations about the job matching with the reality of the job? Give examples. Table 13 presents some narrative quotes from SET, Heads of departments and the researcher on recommendations to help overcome or avoid burnout for special education teachers and Table 14 presents recommendations for prospective SET and for current SET.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SET</th>
<th>Heads of department</th>
<th>The researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“…SET must attend workshops, visit centers and get more real life training in the field…”</td>
<td>“…I always request that teachers should have professional development…”</td>
<td>“…I needed professional help to take this step, I talked to many professionals in the field who helped me understand that I wasn’t the first person to feel that way…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…A SET should be trained well before starting work…”</td>
<td>“…I always have one-on-one meetings with the SET to share concerns…”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…SET should attend new</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
courses, workshops and do a lot of internships to know the nature of this job…”

“…Workshops and gaining diplomas in the field are important for the SET…”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations on Burnout for prospective SET</th>
<th>Recommendations on Burnout for current SET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Internships in different schools</td>
<td>• Professional development training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Internship in varied settings that cater for special education students</td>
<td>• Attending workshops and seminars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interacting with special education students within a school context</td>
<td>• Reading about new theories and teaching methods in the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preparing and delivering lessons that caters for special education students</td>
<td>• Taking courses to help deal with challenging student behaviors like ABA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observing students and teachers</td>
<td>• Meeting regularly with parents, coordinators, regular teachers and administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussing concerns and questions with professionals in the field</td>
<td>• Voicing concerns and worries to colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working hand-on with special education students</td>
<td>• Updating degrees and courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conducting lot of research and readings about the field</td>
<td>• Trying new methods and strategies to cater for all students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented the analyzed data and revealed results derived from the interviews, questionnaires and the researcher’s reflective journal reflecting.
Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings

The following chapter presents the discussion of the findings derived from the study on Lebanese SET as compared with findings of studies of the reviewed literature on the topic.

5.1 Causes of SET burnout

The findings derived from the interviews with the SET and heads of special education departments and from the researcher’s reflective journal on the 5 categories related to the causes of burnout were compared with findings from the literature.

5.1.1 Teaching conditions

In 3 out of 5 schools, findings show that the lack of school material and supply and the unavailability of essential resources like technology and teaching programs for the use of the SET in the classrooms with the students is a concern to Heads of special education departments. This has an effect on the teacher’s effectiveness and burnout. These results are in line with Kaufhold et al. (2006) who found that none of the teachers in the study had enough material and resources. On the other hand, Heads of departments stated that the physical environment is a concern they have when it comes to effectiveness of the teaching process; they stated that the small classrooms given for the SET to teach in are hindering the proper learning process; furthermore, the lack of flexibility in the system and strict rules may cause teachers to feel pressured. These
results are relevant to findings by Friedman (2000) and El Helou (2014) that show that inflexible physical environment lead to burnout and stress.

On the other hand, heads of departments of schools 2, 3 and 5 are the ones who expressed concern on this category which matches the results found from the MBI-ES that resulted in showing that schools 2 and 3 having high burnout level on emotional exhaustion and school 5 showed moderate burnout levels on emotional exhaustion.

5.1.2 Support

Findings indicate that all the teachers in all schools agreed on the type of support they need to fulfill the requirements of their job effectively. They need the support of their students’ parents, their heads of departments, the administration or principal of the school and the regular classroom teacher. All the SET expressed the need to cooperate with the regular classroom teachers and their constant support for the sake of the students and in order to facilitate their jobs as SET. These findings are in line with Tatar (2009) whose findings showed that the number one support that SET need is from their colleagues. All teachers showed that they get support for the regular teachers and that they have very good relations with their colleagues. All SET stated that they always try to maintain a good relationship with their students whom they love and care for. This finding is aligned with the results of the MBI-ES, showing that 4 out of 5 schools had low burnout out level on depersonalization and 1 out of the 5 schools had moderate burnout on depersonalization. The SET interviewed in schools 4 and 5 had a more positive attitude towards of the head of department’s support and the administration’s support, reporting moderate to low levels of burnout on the MBI-ES. This is parallel to
findings by Brissie et al. (1988) and McLain (2005) that suggest having a positive perception of principal support were associated with lower levels of burn out.

However, none of the SET reported that they rely on family support in their job which is contradicting to Bataineh and Alsagheer’s (2012) finding that family support has an influence on teachers’ effectiveness while support from heads of departments had no relation with teacher burnout.

5.1.3 Challenging behaviors of students with special needs

In this study, the challenging behavior of students is taken as one of the possible causes of burnout. SET expressed that dealing with difficult students is exhausting. Some experienced breakdowns and other cried and felt emotionally challenged. Some of the challenging behaviors mentioned by the SET were disruptive behavior, students who had mood swings, those who had difficulty expressing themselves and some who are unable to manage working on tasks appropriately and others who needed a lot of effort to reach the academic objectives. This was in line with Friedman’s (2000) findings that stated behavioral and academic difficulties of the special education students are direct factors that cause stress and exhaustion for teachers. This is evident in the scores of the MBI-ES on emotional exhaustion. More than half of the teachers scored high burnout on emotional exhaustion. On the other hand, results didn’t match Hastings and Bham’s (2003) findings that state that students’ disruptive behavior decreases teachers’ self-efficacy since all results of the MBI-ES recorded low burnout on Personal Accomplishment of SET.
5.1.4 Role conflict and role ambiguity, teacher expectations versus reality and the lack of teacher training

On this category SET teachers reported that more training is needed for novice teachers wanting to enter the field of special education. They all believed that what SET learn in theory is much different when practiced in class with students. Some teachers reported on unpleasant incidents that they encountered in their first year of teaching due to the lack of training in the field. Moreover, teachers’ expectation versus reality varies in different aspects. Some differ when it comes to the academics as their effort in teaching does not match the students’ performance; Others in social aspects where they didn’t expect to be also responsible for students social interactions and development with the students, and the fourth category includes the following factors that may lead to burnout: teacher expectation versus reality, teacher’s role conflict and ambiguity, and lack of teacher training. Findings show that novice special education teachers lack training and tend to have different expectations when it comes to teaching students with special needs. Soon enough these teachers are faced with the reality and the challenges that come along with this job; all these findings are in line with findings of Dingle et al. (2011). According to Lavian (2012), and Nichols et al. (2008), SET effectiveness depends on the trainings they do and professional development they get to enhance their ability to introduce different learning strategies and programs and be more prepared for the tasks. The latter also matches what the heads of special education departments reflected on are concerns for their SET.

SET that participated in this study didn’t show any signs of role conflict and role ambiguity and assumed that they have very good communications towards their duties
and responsibilities whether with the head of department, regular teacher or school in general. This is evident since 4 out of 5 schools scored low burnout on personal accomplishment which means that they are satisfied with their type of work with their students.

5.1.5 Workload

Findings related to workload have shown that mostly all the SET had similar tasks. The tasks that were common between all the teachers were: (1) their preparation for the IEP; (2) planning and modifying the lessons, assignments and assessments; (3) attending meetings with parents, administrators and coordinators; (4) attending workshops and development programs; (5) working one on one with students in within a general classroom setting; (6) observing and reporting on students’ progress; and finally (7) meeting and cooperating with regular classroom teachers for the sake of students which matches what has been mentioned in a lot of literature like Kaufhold et al. (2006), Brunsting, et al. (2014) and DeMik (2008). Moreover, as the heads of departments reported that a lot of their SET tasks are outside the classroom. They are expected to attend workshops, cooperate with other teacher and take care of the students’ social and emotional wellbeing which could be the reason behind high levels of burnout detected in 3 out of 5 schools. This latter, matches Gavish and Friedman’s (2010) study that mentions that teachers are not only teachers in the classroom, but they also take different roles towards their students such as counseling in addition to other demands that are now part of the requirements of being a SET.
5.2 Symptoms of SET burnout

No major physical symptoms of burnout were mentioned by the SET. Some only reported being physically tired from standing all day and having to be around the students in different areas like the playground and cafeteria. On the other hand, the psychological symptoms that were highlighted were the exhaustion, fatigue, stress and being tired. This is shown in the MBI-ES that the average score on emotional exhaustion was 27.10 which rates a high level of burnout reflecting Maslach et al. (2001) who state the exhaustion factor as being central to burnout.

On the other hand, attrition was a concern for heads of department is schools 1 and 4. They thought teachers lack of experience, and workload might result in teachers leaving the profession and they were concerned about the difficulty of finding qualified teachers. These findings are in parallel with Johnson (2010) who found moderate correlation between burnout and teachers’ attrition.

5.3 Recommendations for SET on burnout

After analyzing all the findings, common concerns on burnout were voiced by the SET, heads of departments and the researcher. All agreed that SET need to get the proper exposure and training in the field before embarking on the journey of teaching students with special needs. All the findings described the challenges of being a SET and that during the years of studying for being a SET, not enough real life experiences are being given to student teachers. Theory is way different from practice especially when working closely with humans who suffer from physical, psychological or mental disabilities. The SET mostly urged for more training to decrease the levels of frustration of teachers because when they know what to expect things become easier. As stated by
Fore et al. (2002), teachers who get mentoring, support and professional exposure in the field are less likely to suffer from stress and burnout.

5.4 Summary

It was found that all SET reported the importance of support from students’ parents, heads of departments and other teachers. Almost all SET had the same type of heavy workload and responsibilities. SET mentioned different challenging behaviors with students and reported being frustrated at times, but they all mentioned that they try to maintain a strong and healthy relationship with their special needs students, especially that these students need a lot of support and affection. Teachers were mostly clear on their role at school.

On the other hand, results in all schools showed an average of low burnout level for depersonalization and personal accomplishment; however, the averages from schools on emotional exhaustion showed a high level of burnout.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented a discussion of study findings in relation to the information derived from the literature review. In the next chapter, conclusion, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are presented.
Chapter Six

Conclusion, Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This chapter presents a summary of the study, limitations in conducting and presenting the study and suggestions for further research.

The purpose of this study was to examine the phenomenon of burnout experienced by current Lebanese special education teachers and check what might be some causes and symptoms and to recommend possible solutions to overcome or avoid burnout. The study aims to check whether SET in Lebanon encounter the same causes of burnout as other regions through comparing the findings in Lebanon with other literature. The MBI-ES was administered to the SET to rate their levels of burnout on the three dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment to rate their levels of burnout on each dimension. Moreover, an interview was conducted with SET and heads of special education departments in the targeted schools to explore the concerns the heads of departments have towards their SET. The heads of departments identified the workload and type of support that the SET have and get and gave insight of the teaching conditions. On the other hand, they highlighted some recommendations for SET to help them cope better with challenging situations. Interviews with the teachers were conducted identify the type of support they had, their experiences in dealing with special education students, their experiences in the field and roles they play as SET. The findings of the first research question: what are the causes of teacher burnout among Lebanese special education teachers? show that SET in Lebanon have
good support from their colleagues and coordinators and lack support from the parents, SET encounter challenging behaviors of students but are able to handle their students and maintain a good relationship with them. Moreover, SET are clear on their roles and duties, but they have a conflict between the expectations of the job and reality due to lack of training and experience. Their workload is heavy; they do have a lot of tasks and responsibility that could be the reason behind their exhaustion. Heads of sections have mentioned the same responsibilities as teachers did so this indicates that SET do not have an issue with role conflict but the workload was a concern. Moreover, heads of departments mentioned that the physical environment and lack of material might be contributing to SET burnout.

The findings of the second research question: what are the symptoms of teacher burnout among Lebanese special education teachers? show that the average of all SET rated high burnout on emotional exhaustion and low burnout on depersonalization and personal accomplishments. SET are emotionally drained and fatigued but still are able to maintain good relationships and interactions with their colleagues and special education students and they feel positive about their accomplishment thus self-efficacy is high.

On the third research question, what are some recommendations to deal with teacher burnout? SET teachers and heads of departments urge novice teachers and prospective teachers to get real life experiences and training in the field to avoid the reality versus expectation conflict and to be prepared for working closely with special education students. Moreover, for current SET it is recommended that they share experiences from the professionals in the field and attend as many seminars and workshops and
professional development sessions as they can to be more in touch with the field of teaching students with special needs.

6.1 Limitations

The first limitation is that the results were interpreted qualitatively which may be influenced by the researcher’s knowledge and skills and by the researcher’s personality and biases on the topic. Moreover, the data of qualitative research is difficult to maintain and assess accurately since some terminologies and vocabulary might differ from one person to another so the interpretation of the transcription of the interviews may differ slightly. The data in this type of research may sometimes not be well understood in comparison to data derived through a quantitative research since this type of data represents personal experiences and reflections on a phenomenon rather than numbers and statistics thus the difficulty of reflecting the data in a visual manner such as graphs and pie charts could be a challenge on the researcher.

Another limitation could be that the SET might not be completely open to fully answering all the questions. Some teachers might feel if they tell the complete truth it might jeopardize their credibility in the career as teachers though they were well informed that their answers were completely anonymous and they would not be used for other purposes. On the other hand, some of the MBI-ES were handed the second day which may have caused inaccurate responses and answers may vary because of external factors that might influence the respondents during the time they take the questionnaire.

A third limitation is that the sample chosen for this study does not cover the population so the results can’t be generalized. The sample is relatively small consisting of 56
teachers and 5 heads of departments. All the schools were located in Beirut so that does not demographically cover the Lebanese population of SET. All the schools were private schools so they could be more privileged than public schools. Extensive research should be done on SET in Lebanon in order to generalize the findings.

Finally, more questions could have been added to the interview to get extensive data of different aspects of burnout because some answers do not cover all the categories of the study.

6.2 Suggestions for further research

For more rigorous results and findings more research should be conducted in all areas of Lebanon. Samples should be taken from both private and public school, schools that are inclusive for special education students and schools that are exclusively for special education students. The sample should be bigger and more diverse including both genders. Moreover, the instruments should be chosen to properly cover all the aspects of the research questions in order to get results that are well-founded and coherent for more in depth findings. On another note, from the literature review and findings and based on my experience it was noticed that professional and conscientious special education teachers tend to reach burnout more than mediocre special education teachers which is a matter of concern that should be tackled in further research. In addition, more focus on school structure and the role of special education syndicates should be highlighted in relation to the teacher burnout in order to form more general and effective recommendations.
REFERENCES


El Helou, M. C. (2014). *Causes leading Lebanese teachers to burnout: multiple case studies* (Master of Arts thesis, Lebanese American University, School of Arts and Sciences)


APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The MBI-ES questionnaire

MBI-Educators Survey

How often: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

0- Never
1- A few times a year or less
2- Once a month or less
3- A few times a month
4- Once a week
5- A few times a week
6- Every day

How Often

0-6 Statements:

1. _______ I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. _______ I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. _______ I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. _______
5. _______
6. _______
7. _______
8. _______
9. _______
10. _______
11. _______
12. _______
13. _______
14. _______

Institutional Review Board
Lakeshore American University
15 Jun 2016
APPROVED
Appendix 2: Interview questions of the teachers and Heads of departments

Sample questions of the teacher’s interview

1. What are your tasks as a special education teacher in the school? How do you feel about these tasks?
2. Do you see your students’ improvement in line with effort you put in teaching them?
3. How do you find dealing with students with special needs?
4. How do you feel everyday as you head to your job?
5. Have you experienced any kind of unpleasant feelings during your years of teaching? Give examples.
6. Describe how you feel towards your students.
7. Do think having more training and internships would help special education teacher be more prepared and efficient on the job? Give examples.
8. What kind of support would help you cope better with challenging situations with your students?
9. Were your expectations about the job matching with the reality of the job? Give examples.
Sample questions of the head of section’s interview

1. State all the different tasks that are required of the special education teachers in your department.

2. How do you describe the relationship between special education teachers among each other? And among other colleagues?

3. What are some factors that you feel might affect the special education teachers’ effectiveness in your department?

4. What are some concerns you have about the special education teachers in your department?

5. How do you describe the teachers’ relationship with their students?

6. What are the means used to evaluate the teachers’ performance?

7. What types of support do teachers get to help accomplish their tasks successfully?

8. State a few resources that teachers have access to.
Appendix 3: Researcher’s reflective journal

For as long as I can remember I have always wanted to be a teacher. When I was a student myself I always wanted to be standing in the teacher’s place planning and giving the lessons, correcting papers and handling all the responsibilities that come along. I always pictured myself teaching children, being part of their daily life, talking to them about different things and being their role model. When I applied to collage the only major that was on my mind was Education of course, I didn’t even give it a second thought or tried to apply for any other major. I knew what I wanted and I went for it. As I began to take my courses in education, I grew to like this profession even more from the content I was studying to the interesting courses that I took. But not until I started teaching that I knew that theory is one thing and practice is completely something else.

My first two years of teaching went smoothly. The first year I taught special education students at a center I was enjoying what I was doing and enjoying working closely with the students with special needs in a one-on-one setting. The next year, I applied for a job as a special education teacher for elementary students with special needs. I got accepted and it was my second year of teaching as a special education teacher. I enjoyed going to my job and working with my colleagues in a friendly and supportive environment. Dealing with my special needs students was not easy but it was worthwhile. I had small groups of students in the elementary level and I was teaching English and Science. My tasks were clear and focused on important responsibilities towards my students in particular and towards my department in general. Nothing was overwhelming, though tiring at times but that was within the normal range.
The second year went by and I took more responsibilities and started working one-on-one with special education students after my working hours at schools. When it came to work at school, I started feeling that my duties are increasing and my tasks are no longer the ones I believed I had, I suddenly found myself responsible for so many duties related to school and to students. The duties seemed too simple at first but with time the accumulation made me feel worn out and exhausted at the end of every week. Working on my weekly lesson plans in order to modify and accommodate the material to suit my students’ needs, writing student’s individualized education plans (IEP), and meetings with parents, coordinators and colleagues were tasks I knew I was responsible for but there came the other tasks that at first may seem as part of the what the teacher has to do, and I’m not saying I didn’t know I need to be working on these tasks but as they came along and accumulated with many other things I had to do I felt it was too much. Changing bulletin boards, planning for events, working on activities related to events, staying after hours to prepare for school events, attending all the school meetings that dealt with different topics (even if a teacher lost her phone there would be a meeting about that topic), dealing with my special education students’ behavior and attitude in class, in the playground, at the cafeteria on their way to class, in the hallway, at the school gate and basically everywhere else was starting to take a toll on me.

Working closely with my special education students, I felt that every day was a challenge I wanted them to see the change in them. I wanted them to succeed. I thought that their success reflected on mine and their failure reflected on mine as well. I became too involved with the students that at times I felt like something within me wants to explode as I explained and worked hard with them and didn’t see the results I expected. I
told myself that I was expecting too much, but my internal voice didn’t influence me much. I insisted to give in 110% of my time, energy and effort just to see these special education students succeed. What made me feel more responsible towards these students was the pressure of the parents. With every meeting and every encounter, parents of students I taught put on me a huge responsibility with the high expectation that they had for their children. They always made me feel as if I possess a super power that would help their children overcome their difficulties but ironically, most of the parents were not willing to collaborate as they should and be part of their children’s change for the better. My students suffered from different learning difficulties but their emotional, psychological and behavioral problems that interfered with their proper education and negatively affected their social skills which were an even bigger challenge for me to work on. I had to put double and triple the effort with my students compared to regular students just to see a glimpse of improvement and change. At times I felt ecstatic to see them improve and other times I felt that no matter how hard I try I still have a very long and hard way to go thought with them. I would deal with students bullying and being bullied, students throwing tantrums and crying, students verbally insulting me and others around them, students who never followed instructions and rules, students who no matter how hard I tried were never able to sit, listen and work on given tasks. These were the extract same student that I was responsible for five days a week, they were the students I was supposed to “fix”, they were the students that I have to “teach” following the school curriculum and the IEPs that I had written. Yes, I know I am a special but No I didn’t bargain for all this, this was just too much pressure put on one person. After all I am dealing with humans, humans who needed me and depended on me, how can I fail them? That was just too much to digest.
As my second year of teaching at the school ended, I went on my summer break and had time to recharge and regain my energy and enthusiasm for a new academic year. But there was something different this time, I was different, my attitude towards the job was different. I wasn’t the same person I was three years ago. My summer break did not mend what the hectic year of work had damaged. My third year kicked off, and within the first week we as teachers were bombarded with many additional tasks that the school started to require of every teacher, in addition to new rules that restricted teachers’ freedom and free time. I tried having a positive attitude and tried to focus on my work with students but with the increasing demands that were put on teachers it felt impossible to master everything, and for me this thought alone brings me down. I’m the type of person that feels obligated to do any given task I have with complete dedication and effort but somehow this felt impossible.

It was that one day, the day I’ll never forget. Schools were off, it was spring break, I was sitting at home wanting to plan for the first week of school after spring break when I suddenly broke down and started to cry, screaming and shouting “No” “No No” “I don’t want to go back, I don’t want to teach, I don’t want to be part of this system, I don’t want to work with students, I don’t even care if they learn or not!” The next few days I felt my body ache like never before, my chest was hurting, I felt dizzy and had completely lost my appetite for food. It was the first time I ever felt this was, yes I have felt sick before, but not this way, this time it was different, and it was actually weird for me. At that time I did not relate these symptoms to anything I just thought that I was sick. This is when my anxiety kicked in and I felt very worried as days went by and my body did not recover from these symptoms. School started after spring break but
my brains were on switch off mode. I was not functioning at all. All that I thought about
day and night was my pain. I had abdominal pain, constant headaches and dizziness.
After a few days of worry I started suffering from insomnia, I would wake up all night,
shaking, sweating and my heart pumping heavily. That was it I said to myself, “I’m
dying!” there is no other explanation. At that time I didn’t know better. I really thought I
was dying. I started crying every night thinking I have some sort of a dangerous disease.
And I being the introvert I am haven’t told anyone of what I felt. I took a doctor’s
appointment and went seeking answers he said it was nothing major just stress. Stress!
What stress, I always use the word stress on daily basis, is that what stress feels like? It
couldn’t be, I was not convinced with the doctor’s words, I was sure I was suffering
from a dangerous disease. After ten days of this suffering my body was drained and all
what my mind could think about was my illness. Close people around me started to
notice that I haven’t been feeling well; I even looked and acted different all the time. I
used to go to school try my best to pass time and work with special needs students
despite their challenging behaviors I put an effort not to collapse. I used to spend my
breaks lying on a couch in the teacher’s room, talking to no one. I felt the urge to cry all
the time. After that I had to confront my father and close friends about my feelings and I
told them I was convinced I had a deadly illness because all my physical symptoms
indicate so, and even if the doctor said otherwise I was not convinced. My surrounding
eventually realized that I was suffering from panic attacks and high rates of anxiety
which affected me physically rendering me unable to perform my daily activities as I
should. I was emotionally exhausted and I felt it but did not want to believe it was
psychological, because I felt my body scream with pain and wanted to know the reason
until I eventually found out that my physical symptoms were psychosomatic symptoms
which was a term I later on learned from my doctor. With all the aches, pain and body numbness that I felt all the time I was starting to be ineffective at work. I didn’t care about my students’ feelings, work and progress. All I wanted everyday was the week to end so I would go to my bed and not leave it for two whole days. I was isolated and my perception of reality was not the same. Everything felt different, I felt as an external to this world. I tried to Google the symptoms for my feelings and all I would get was the term “depersonalization”, I didn’t understand what it was and if people were ever able to feel this way. I was so disappointed in myself and never thought there would come a day when I won’t be me anymore. That’s the best way I could put it. My day was filled with cries, tears, and breakdowns. I didn’t believe in my potential any longer. After all with the weak person I was, it was impossible for me to be efficient at anything I do. All my regular daily activities were a burden to me. I couldn’t go shopping; I couldn’t visit the grocery store I couldn’t sit and communicate with a group of people. All I wanted to do was be alone.

That’s when I decided I need to resign. I thought sitting at home for a while would do me good; being away from the responsibilities would help me recover. I didn’t want to work with students because I believed I was harming them instead of benefiting them. I thought to myself “What could a helpless person like me offer to these students.” I stopped believing in myself. I no longer had a passion for anything and I felt emotionally numb. I needed professional help to take this step, I talked to many professionals in the field who helped me understand that I wasn’t the first person to feel that way; they assured me that these reactions were accumulations of stress and workload. I wished I was prepared for this ahead of time, I wish I had the chance to talk
to people who have been through this before I did so could have gotten some tips or advice on how to deal with the situations I have been through. Maybe, just maybe I could have spared myself all the breakdowns and sleepless nights that I went through.

A year has passed since my resignation. I am feeling better, but I didn’t find the old me yet. I am coping better with situations, but I haven’t overcome my fears yet. I have pushed myself to be productive and challenged myself to get out of with vicious cycle of anxiety and stress but I’m still unsure I have what it takes to be an effective person yet. I am not sure what I want to do next, I’m not sure if I’ll overcome this internal struggle within myself but one thing I’m sure of is that I don’t want to be a teacher again.
Appendix 4: Approval from Mindgarden

For use by Hiba Baalbaki only, Received from Mind Garden, Inc. on February 29, 2016

mind garden

www.mindgarden.com

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Instrument: Maslach Burnout Inventory, Forms: General Survey, Human Services Survey, Educators Survey

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Sincerely,

Robert Most
Mind Garden, Inc., www.mindgarden.com
Appendix 5: Letter to schools

To: 

Beirut, Lebanon

June 10, 2016

Object: Consent to collect data for an LAU research study entitled “Teacher Burnout Causes, Symptoms and Recommended Solutions: A study on Special Education Teachers in Lebanon”.

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to request permission for my students to be able to collect data from your special education teachers and coordinators. Hiba Raalbaki is a Graduate student at the Lebanese American University (Department of Education) and would be visiting your facility only in order to complete a research project related to Special Education.

The data collected, which is based on a 15 minute interview (only with one teacher and the special education coordinator) and a 10 minute questionnaire (attached to this letter) will be kept anonymous and will not be used for any other purpose.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need any additional information.

If you have any questions about this study, or you want to talk to someone outside the research, please contact the: IRB Office, Lebanese American University 3rd Floor, Dorm A, Byblos Campus. Tel: 00 961 1 786456 ext. (2546)

Sincerely yours,

[Redacted]

Dr. Mona Nabbabi, Advisor

[Redacted]

School of Arts and Sciences
Department of Education

Acknowledgement

Name: 

Signature: 

Date: 

15 Jun 2016
Approved
Appendix 6: Tables

Table 15: Purpose, research questions and instrumentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The purpose of this study is to examine the causes and symptoms of burnout for special education teachers in Lebanon and to recommend possible solutions.</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Journal Questionnaire Items</th>
<th>Questionnaire Items</th>
<th>Teacher Interview Questions</th>
<th>Head Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the causes of teacher burnout among Lebanese special education teachers?</td>
<td>• Responsibility overload</td>
<td>➢ I feel I'm working too hard on my job.</td>
<td>1. What are your tasks as a special education teacher in the school? How do you feel about these tasks?</td>
<td>1. State all the different tasks that are required of the special education teachers in your department.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Slow improvement of students compared to effort put in teaching them</td>
<td>➢ Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.</td>
<td>2. Do you see your students’ improvement in line with effort you put in teaching them?</td>
<td>2. How do you describe the relationship between special education teachers among each other? And among other colleagues?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Challenging students’ behaviors</td>
<td>➢ I feel students blame me for some of their problems.</td>
<td>3. How do you find dealing with students with special needs?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. What are the symptoms of teacher burnout among Lebanese special education teachers? | • Continuous fatigue  
• Anxiety attacks  
• Depersonalization | ➢ I feel frustrated by my job.  
➢ I don’t really care what happens to some students.  
➢ I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job. | 4. How do you feel everyday as you head to your job?  
5. Describe how you feel towards your students. |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3. What are some recommendations to deal with teacher burnout? | • Share concerns with other professionals  
• Seek consultation from psychologist  
• Get involved in professional training programs | 6. Do think more training and internships would help special education teachers be more prepared and efficient on the job? Give examples. | 4. What are some concerns you have about the special education teachers in your department? |
| | | 7. Were your expectations about the job matching with the reality of the job? Give examples. | |
Table 16: Causes and symptoms of burnout derived from SET in school 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Teacher in school 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching conditions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• With the support of the school administration and coordinator everything becomes more flexible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We need to work and cooperate with the regular teacher for better results with students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• We need the help of therapists and psychologists and special education centers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parents support is required for the students’ sake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenging behaviors of students with special needs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students who don’t express themselves are hard to understand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students who feel unaccepted are challenging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role conflict and role ambiguity, teacher expectations versus reality and the lack of teacher training</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unattained objectives with students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You can’t work with these students as you thought and learned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students need extra effort and work in order to grasp concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workload</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preparing IEP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preparing and modifying lesson plans and assignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One on one teaching and in class teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Following up on student’s progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meetings with parents, regular teachers and coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 17: Causes and symptoms of burnout derived from SET in school 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Teacher in school 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>• We need the coordinators guidance&lt;br&gt; • We need support from regular teachers, we can’t do our job as SET without them understanding how we work with the students&lt;br&gt; • Many parents are their kids’ problem if they are not cooperative we can’t do our job as we should</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging behaviors of students with special needs</td>
<td>• Students with terrible behavior are a major concern&lt;br&gt; • Some kids are not easy to handle and love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role conflict and role ambiguity, teacher expectations versus reality and the lack of teacher training</td>
<td>• If you think you’ll treat all your students the same you have to think twice&lt;br&gt; • There is a lack of training for beginners in the field&lt;br&gt; • The more effort you put the better results you see with students&lt;br&gt; • You have to cater for each student in a different ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>• Preparing and modifying lesson plans and assignments&lt;br&gt; • One on one teaching and in class teaching&lt;br&gt; • Following up on student’s progress through observations and informal assessments&lt;br&gt; • Using different programs and methods to teach&lt;br&gt; • Prepare material for teaching&lt;br&gt; • Meetings with parents, regular teachers and coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes</td>
<td>Teacher in school 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching conditions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Support** | • Without the parents’ help we can’t achieve our goals with the students  
• It’s a cycle of collaboration between regular teachers, the coordinator and parents  
• Consistency of the administration rules are important especially regarding the behavior and discipline rules for the students |
| **Challenging behaviors of students with special needs** | • Students’ lack of concentration and mood swings  
• Student’s disruptive behavior needs consistency and effort to eliminate  
• Student’s behavior is a big responsibility |
| **Role conflict and role ambiguity, teacher expectations versus reality and the lack of teacher training** | • I didn’t know the work was that exhausting, I had a different view of things  
• I sometimes have a conflict of whether I need to be a strict teacher or a loving to my students  
• What you plan to work on with students doesn’t always match the reality, you always need to do a lot of adjustments and changes |
| **Workload** | • Preparing IEP  
• Preparing and modifying lesson plans  
• Changing bulletin boards and class setting  
• Differentiating lessons, assignments and instruction  
• Meetings with parents, regular teachers and coordinator  
• Attending workshops |
Table 19: Causes and symptoms of burnout derived from SET in school 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Teacher in school 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching conditions</strong></td>
<td>__________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Support | • Support of parent is very much required  
• We need to work along with regular teachers  
• Coordinator is a very important source for support |
| Challenging behaviors of students with special needs | • Some groups of students are difficult to handle and make you get out of your mind because of their lack of discipline  
• Some students are socially incompetent and as their teacher you have to work on that |
| Role conflict and role ambiguity, teacher expectations versus reality and the lack of teacher training | • I needed more exposure to different school setting that cater for special education students  
• What I believed relating to how to world as a SET changed with experience  
• You need to know your students or you won’t be able to match your expectations with them |
| Workload | • Preparing IEP  
• Working a lot at home  
• Prepare academic activities and social skills activities  
• One on one teaching and in class teaching  
• Preparing and differentiating lessons, worksheets and assignments  
• Meetings with parents, regular teachers and coordinator |
Table 20: Causes and symptoms of burnout derived from SET in school 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Teacher in school 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching conditions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>• My team’s support is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I need parents to be supportive of what I do with their kids</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The need the help and cooperation of the regular teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support from my coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging behaviors of students with special needs</td>
<td>• All special education students need time and patients to understand their behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role conflict and role ambiguity, teacher expectations versus reality and the lack of teacher training</td>
<td>• I am not only a teacher I also work as a social facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You need extra effort with students for them to real the objectives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• I needed more guidance as a beginner, I didn’t know what to expect</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A lot of times I need to repeat my plans and reset my objectives to meet the students capabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>• Preparing IEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Preparing and modifying lesson plans and assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Modifying plans, assignments, and assessments</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Differentiate activities and lessons to meet all the student’s needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meetings with my department, parents, regular teachers and coordinator</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Repeating lesson plans</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 21: Causes of burnout derived from the researcher’s reflective journal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>The researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching conditions</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Support**                                              | • Working with the regular teacher and their help is essential  
• Support from coordinator and administration  
• Parents support wasn’t always available |
| **Challenging behaviors of students with special needs** | • Dealing with rude, impolite and undisciplined students  
• Students who are hard to contain  
• Students who didn’t listen and didn’t stay on task  
• Students who bullied others |
| **Role conflict and role ambiguity, teacher expectations versus reality and the lack of teacher training** | • A lot of expectations from students that didn’t match the outcome  
• It wasn’t about only teaching in class, students needed follow outside the classroom, in the playground, in the cafeteria and hallway |
| **Workload**                                             | • Preparing IEP  
• Preparing and modifying lesson plans and assignments  
• One on one teaching and in class teaching  
• Following up on student’s progress  
• Meetings with parents, regular teachers and head of section  
• Modify and accommodate the material to suit the students’ needs |
Appendix 7: IRB Approval Letter

NOTICE OF IRB APPROVAL—EXEMPT STATUS

To: Ms. Hiba Baalbaki
Advisor: Dr. Mona Rababi
School of Arts and Sciences

Date: June 15, 2016
RE: IRB #: LAUSAS-MN-15/June/2016
Protocol Title: Teacher Burnout Causes, Symptoms and Recommended Solutions: A Study on Special Education Teachers in Lebanon

Your application for the above referenced research project has been approved by the Lebanese American University, Institutional Review Board (LAU IRB). This research project qualifies as exempt under the following category:

B. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and

(ii) any disclosure of the human subjects’ responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, or reputation.

This approval is limited to the activities described in the Protocol (exempt) Application and all submitted documents listed on page 2 of this letter. Enclosed with this letter are the stamped approved documents that must be used.

APPROVAL CONDITIONS FOR ALL LAU APPROVED HUMAN RESEARCH PROTOCOLS - EXEMPT

LAU RESEARCH POLICIES: All individuals engaged in the research project must adhere to the approved protocol and all applicable LAU IRB Research Policies. PARTICIPANTS must NOT be involved in any research related activity prior to IRB approval date or after the expiration date.

EXEMPT CATEGORIES: Activities that are exempt from IRB review are not exempt from IRB ethical review and the necessity for ethical conduct.

MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS: Certain changes may change the review criteria and disqualify the research from exemption status; therefore, any proposed changes to the previously approved exempt study must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation.

NOTIFICATION OF PROJECT COMPLETION: A notification of research project closure and a summary of findings must be sent to the IRB office upon completion. Study files must be retained for a period of 3 years from the date of notification of project completion.

IN THE EVENT OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH ABOVE CONDITIONS, THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR SHOULD MEET WITH THE IRB ADMINISTRATORS IN ORDER TO RESOLVE SUCH CONDITIONS. IRB APPROVAL CANNOT BE GRANTED UNTIL NON-COMPLIANT ISSUES HAVE BEEN RESOLVED.
If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact the IRB office by email at christine.chalhoub@lau.edu.lb

The IRB operates in compliance with international guidelines of Good Clinical Practice, the US Federal Regulations (45CFR46) and (21CFR56) of the Food and Drug Administration. LAU IRB Identifier: FWA00014723 and IRB Registration # IRB00006954 LAURB#1

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>IRB Exempt Protocol Application</td>
<td>Received 9 June 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>Received 9 June 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Study</td>
<td>Received 9 June 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter To School</td>
<td>Received 10 June 2016, Amended 13 June 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview questions with introduction</td>
<td>Received 10 June 2016, Amended 13 June 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>MBI educators survey with introduction</td>
<td>Received 10 June 2016, Amended 13 June 2016</td>
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<td>NIH Training – Mona Nabhani</td>
<td>Cert. # 207839 Dated (1 April 2009)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIH Training – Hiba Baalbakl</td>
<td>Cert. # 2046190 Dated (6 April 2016)</td>
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