

## An Analysis of Burnout in Turkish Elementary School Principals

(Türk İlköğretim Okulu Müdürlerinde Tükenmişlik)

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### Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to analyse burnout levels of elementary school principals. 190 elementary school principals (183 male and 7 female school principals) from Niğde and its districts constitute the survey sample of the research. The data of this research were collected by using the “Maslach Burnout Inventory”. The data were analysed by using SPSS 15.0. In order to analyse the data obtained, mean, standard deviation, Mann-Whitney-U test, variance and Tukey-HSD tests were used. Results of this study show that elementary school principals have “moderate” level of burnout. Also, it was found out that there was a statistical significant difference between elementary school principals in terms of gender in reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalisation sub-scales of the inventory. According to this result, female elementary school principals have higher reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalisation levels than their male counterparts. On the other hand, it was found a statistical significant difference between schools principals in relation to managerial seniority. According to results of this result of the research, school principals were found to differ in reduced personal accomplishment sub-scale so that less experienced school principals have higher burnout levels than their counterparts. It was also found out that there were not any statistical significant difference between elementary school principals in terms of educational level and working place variables. However, when looked at the mean scores of the school principals in relation to educational level and working place variables, senior high school graduates feel lower burnout and the principals working in villages and town feel higher burnout levels than their counterparts working in the city centre.

**Keywords:** burnout, elementary education, Turkish school principals

### Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı ilköğretim okulu müdürlerinin tükenmişlik düzeylerinin analizidir. Bu araştırmanın örneklemi Niğde ve ilçelerinden toplam 190 (183’ü erkek ve 7’si de bayan) okul müdürü araştırmanın örneklemini oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada veriler, “Maslach Tükenmişlik Envanteri” aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Araştırmada veriler SPSS 15.0 programı ile analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmada verilerin çözümlenmesinde aritmetik ortalama, standart sapma, Mann Whitney-U, varyans ve Tukey-HSD testleri kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları, katılımcıların “orta düzeyde” tükenmişliğe sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Araştırmada, envanterin düşük kişisel başarı ve duyarsızlaşma alt boyutlarında okul müdürlerinin tükenmişlik düzeyleri arasında cinsiyet değişkeni açısından farklılık tespit edilmiştir. Elde edilen bu sonuca göre, bayan okul müdürleri erkek meslektaşlarına göre daha fazla düşük kişisel başarı hissi ve duyarsızlaşma yaşamaktadırlar. Bir diğer taraftan, okul müdürlerinin mesleki kıdem açısından tükenmişlik düzeylerinde genç okul müdürleri aleyhine bir farklılık saptanmıştır. Okul müdürlerinin tükenmişlik düzeylerinde çalıştıkları yerleşim birimi ile eğitim durumlarına ilişkin aralarında herhangi bir anlamlı farklılık saptanmamıştır. Ancak, okul müdürlerinin tükenmişlik düzeylerine ilişkin olarak eğitim durumu ve çalıştıkları yerleşim birimi değişkenlerindeki aritmetik ortalamalarına bakıldığında, yükseköğretim mezunu okul müdürleri daha az düzeyde tükenmişlik yaşarlarken, köy ve kasabada görev yapmakta olan okul müdürleri kent merkezinde görev yapan meslektaşlarına nazaran daha fazla tükenmişlik yaşamaktadırlar.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** tükenmişlik, ilköğretim eğitimi, Türk okul müdürleri

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## Introduction

The concept of burnout originated in the writings of the psychologist Freudenberger (1974). Freudenberger (1974) was one of the first researchers to describe the accumulation of stress as leading to “burnout”. In this regard, Freudenberger (1974) first coined the term burnout to characterize a malady experienced by human service professionals who appear to ‘wear out,’ or reach a stage where they are no longer able to perform their tasks effectively, and sometimes even to care about their clients. Freudenberger (1974, p. 159) described burnout as “the feelings of failure and being worn or wrung out, resulting from an overload of claims on energy, on personal resources, or on the spiritual strength of the worker”. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), burnout is described as a complex psychological response of individuals involved in difficult person-to-person relationships as part of their everyday working life.

Burnout has been variously defined. Maslach & Zimbardo (1982, p. 37) described the influences of job setting on eventual burnout as “to the extent that job characteristics can either promote or reduce emotional stress, they become important factors in the burnout syndrome”. Maslach & Jackson's (1981) model of burnout has three factors: a) “emotional exhaustion” which is described as feelings of being emotionally over-extended and exhausted, b) “reduced personal accomplishment” which is experienced by teachers as decreased feelings of competence and achievement and a tendency to evaluate oneself negatively with respect to work, c) “depersonalisation” which is the development of negative feelings and attitudes about profession. Literature (Wong & Cheuk, 1998; Adams, 1999) offers a complex etiological model of burnout, and emphasises the interaction of individual, organisational, and societal factors. Certain demographic variables, including age, marital status, and gender were also found to be related to burnout (Maslach & Zimbardo, 1982; Poulin & Walter, 1993).

Somewhat clinical approach cited above, there are social psychological orientations that view burnout as the loss of idealism and enthusiasm that can be organizationally induced, although this orientation, too, recommends coping strategies (Cherniss 1980, 1992; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach & Zimbardo, 1982). Likewise, Pines & Aronson (1988) portray burnout as a mental exhaustion induced by emotionally demanding situations. Pines (1993) suggests that such situations create an existential crisis in which the individual comes to question his or her role identity.

Most approaches to improving education in Turkey appear to fail; some succeed in certain schools only to fail elsewhere. Various programmes to school reform fail because the chief administrators in the Ministry of National Education, known as *MEB* and in Local Education Authorities neglect to consider school principals’ burnout who are currently in post in schools.

Their burnout is of very importance because students' achievements are highly related to their burnout which is affected with work status, gender and work experience, etc. (Gürsel, Sünbül & Sarı, 2002).

In recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in the problems of school principals' specifically, their *job burnout* (Smith-Stevenson, 1994; Combs, Edmonson & Jackson, 2009; Babaoğlu, 2006; Koçak, 2009; Dönmez & Güneş, 2001; Byrne, 1999; Dworkin, 1987; Gürsel, Sünbül & Sarı, 2002; Sünbül, 2003). Burnout directly affects school principals' professional lives in their work, particularly through its effect on their emotional well being (Sünbül, 2003). Additionally, school principals' burnout is crucial in the chain of the education reform, particularly in Turkey where education system urgently needs to be improved (Gürsel, Sünbül & Sarı, 2002).

The school principal's professional world is characterized by overwhelming responsibilities, information perplexities, and emotional anxiety (Friedman, 2002). According to Sergiovanni (2001), principals are facing an ever-changing and always expanding job role. School administrators and school teachers alike, are faced with the difficult task of managing a school or classroom successfully, maintaining a healthy family life, and preserving their own individual wellness. This balancing act with students, parents, family, administrators, and peers frequently leads to stress and potential burnout.

For the school principal, researchers have identified conditions that cause stress in the daily demands of the job (Friedman, 1995). Common stressors have been students' lack of poor academic achievement, student discipline issues, declining resources, and the public's misunderstanding of the principal's role. Researchers have stated that these role conditions contribute to principal burnout (Gmelch & Gates, 1997; Whitaker, 1996).

Despite long hours and increasing demands, elementary school principals generally report high levels of satisfaction with their work (Doud & Keller, 1999). Yet over the past two decades, principals have reported increased levels of exhaustion, resulting in declining physical and mental health (Brock & Grady, 2002). Generally, burnout refers to an extreme form of job stress (Cherniss, 1988; Maslach & Zimbardo, 1982), and stress has been found to be the most common predictor of burnout (Torelli & Gmelch, 1992).

Even though some studies have explored burnout, they are lacking in how locus of control is related to different aspects of job attitudes for teachers in particular (Marso & Pigge, 1997). It was investigated how elementary school principals' burnout is related to gender, managerial seniority, education level and working place in this study. It is hoped that the findings of this study would contribute to an understanding of the role of burnout and some demographic

characteristics. Also, the findings would be helpful for other researchers in policy discussions and efforts to improve school principals' quality of work life and performance in developing countries such as Turkey.

As the understanding of burnout continues to be refined, studies that examine school principals and burnout will be helpful to those who provide support to school leaders and are concerned about principal attrition and pending shortages. The purpose of this study was to examine elementary school principals' burnout levels in relation to gender, managerial seniority, education level and working place.

## **Method**

The "general survey method" was adopted in the research (Karasar, 2005), because there were some advantages for using the method. That approach was also used to receive a variety of responses from a number of subjects participated in this study (Ekiz, 2003).

## ***Subjects***

Participants of the study were selected from 212 elementary schools were 190 school principals from elementary schools in Nigde, Turkey. Each subject was visited in his/her school and the purpose of the study was explained to the school principals. They were asked to complete the questionnaire in order to make a contribution to the study. The subjects were assured for the anonymity and confidentiality for their responses. A total number of 190 elementary school principals responded to the survey returning the questionnaire to the researcher himself. Of the 190 subjects, 183 (96,31%) are males while 7 (3,68%) are females. 34 (17,89%) of the elementary school principals have 1-5 years, 28 (14,73%) of them have 6-10 years, 53 (27,89%) of them have 11-15 years, 39 (20,52%) of them have 16-20 years, 22 of them (11,57%) and 14 (7,36%) of them have 26 and above years of managerial experience. 132 (64,47%) of the elementary school principals work in villages and towns, 41 (21,57%) of them work in country centre and 18 (9,47%) of them work in the city centre. In terms of education level variable, it can be said that 36 (18,94%) of the elementary school principals are the graduates of the senior high school and 149 (78,42%) of the school principals are the undergraduates and 5 (2,63%) of them have the postgraduate level of education.

## ***The Instrument***

In this study, "Maslach Burnout Inventory" (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) was used in order to collect data to answer the research questions. Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is a commonly used instrument to measure professional burnout worldwide. In this study burnout was assessed with the Turkish version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson,

1981). The Maslach Burnout Inventory, which was developed by Maslach & Jackson (1981), defined as “increased feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur amongst individuals who do work in relation with people. Similar to the original version of the inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), the Turkish version also contains three sub-scales (emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment) and 22 items (Izgar, 2001). MBI yields three separate scores for each sub-scale; the higher the score on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation sub-scales, the higher the level of burnout. The personal accomplishment sub-scale was scored in the opposite direction so that the lower the score, the higher the level of burnout. Cronbach’s Alpha levels representing the internal consistency of the sub-scales were .86 (emotional exhaustion) .64 (depersonalisation) and .74 (reduced personal accomplishment). General Cronbach’s Alpha level of the inventory was calculated as .89 so that these results indicate that Maslach Burnout Inventory has a high internal consistency to be used in the research. On the other hand, the demographic data were obtained from author constructed form included questions about gender, managerial seniority, education levels and working places.

### ***Procedure***

The procedure in the present study was completed in some consecutive steps. Firstly, a cover letter was written to the questionnaire to explain the purpose of the study to the subjects and some extra explanations were sustained when possible to the subjects. Secondly, the elementary school principals completed the questionnaire without indicating their names or other identifying details and then returned them in an envelope to the researcher himself.

### ***Data Analysis***

The data collected for this study were analysed by using Mann Whitney-U test and variance analysis (F test). The Mann Whitney U test was used to compare between elementary school principals’ burnout levels in terms of gender. The managerial experience, education levels and the working places of the school principals were compared with the help of one-way ANOVA (variance) test and Tukey-HSD test was used in order to find the variance of the difference.

### **Findings**

In order to find out the general burnout levels in sub-dimensions of elementary school principals, statistical descriptive analyses are given in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

*Burnout Levels of Elementary School Principals*

<i>Burnout Sub-Scales</i>	$\eta$	$\bar{X}$	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
EE	190	8,16	6,14
PA	190	10,52	4,76
DP	190	8,13	3,74

As one looks at the Table 1 above, it can be clearly seen that the elementary schools principals have “low” level of emotional exhaustion [ $\bar{X} = 8,16$ ], “moderate” level of reduced personal accomplishment [ $\bar{X} = 10,52$ ] and “moderate” level of depersonalisation [ $\bar{X} = 8,10$ ]. In a five-Likert type of burnout inventory, 27 and above scores mean “high” level of burnout, 17-26 scores mean “moderate” level burnout and 0-16 scores mean that there is no burnout for the emotional exhaustion (EE) sub-scale of Maslach Burnout Inventory. For the reduced personal accomplishment sub-scale of the burnout inventory, 0-31 scores show “high” level of burnout, 32-38 scores show “moderate” level of burnout and 39 and above scores show “low” level of burnout. 13 and above scores mean “high” level of burnout, 7-12 scores mean “moderate” level of burnout and 0-6 scores indicate “low” level of burnout in the depersonalisation sub-scale of the burnout inventory. In order to compare the elementary school principals’ burnout levels according to gender, the Mann Whitney-U test was made since the number of the female school principals are under 20. The results of the Mann Whitney-U test are given in Table 2 below.

**Table 2**

*Burnout Levels of Elementary School Principals in Relation to Gender*

<i>Burnout Sub-Scales</i>	<i>Gender</i>	$\eta$	$\bar{X}$	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>M W-U</i>	<i>p</i>
EE	Male	183	8,14	6,28432	210	-,142	2140,50	,887
	Female	7	8,33	5,05334				
PA	Male	183	10,18	4,56942	210	-2,941	1553,00	<b>,004*</b>
	Female	7	13,16	5,46663				
DP	Male	183	7,95	3,77981	210	-1,963	1632,50	<b>,051*</b>
	Female	7	9,54	3,23001				

According to the Table 2 given above, elementary school principals differ statistically in reduced personal accomplishment [ $t_{(210)} = -2,941, p < .05$ ] and depersonalisation [ $t_{(210)} = -1,963, p < .05$ ] sub-scale in terms of gender. There was not found any difference in emotional exhaustion sub-scale of the inventory in relation to the gender variable of the elementary school principals.

According to the results obtained, female school principals have higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment [ $\bar{X} = 13,16$ ] than male school principals [ $\bar{X} = 10,18$ ]. Similarly, female school principals have been found out to have higher levels of depersonalisation [ $\bar{X} = 9,54$ ] than those male school principals [ $\bar{X} = 7,95$ ]. School principals' managerial seniority was compared in relation to their burnout. The results of the one-way ANOVA (variance) analysis are given in Table 3 below.

**Table 3**

Descriptive Statistical Analyses of the Elementary School Principals in Relation to Managerial Seniority

Burnout Sub-Scales	Managerial Seniority			F	p
	Seniority	$\eta$	$\bar{X}$		
EE	1-5 years	34	7,74	1,58	,165
	6-10 years	28	8,86		
	11-15 years	53	8,94		
	16-20 years	39	8,61		
	21-25 years	22	7,30		
	26 + years	14	2,57		
PA	1-5 years	71	10,25	4,24*	,001
	6-10 years	51	11,41		
	11-15 years	39	10,38		
	16-20 years	31	12,09		
	21-25 years	13	8,53		
	26 + years	7	4,28		
DP	1-5 years	71	8,54	,72	,608
	6-10 years	51	8,43		
	11-15 years	39	8,05		
	16-20 years	31	7,38		
	21-25 years	13	7,07		
	26 + years	7	7,57		

The year of the managerial experience of elementary school principals was compared with the help of F test in Table 3 above. According to the statistical analysis, the elementary school principals were found out to differ significantly in reduced personal accomplishment sub-scale [ $F_{(5-206)} = 4,24, p < .05$ ] of the burnout inventory. In order to find the variance of the statistical significant difference, the Tukey-HSD test was made. According to the result of the Tukey-HSD test, there is a significant difference between the elementary school principals with 1-5 years of managerial experience and 26 and above years of managerial experience [ $IJ = 5,96781, p < .05$ ].

Similarly, there is a significant difference amongst the elementary school principals with 6-10 [IJ= 7,12605,  $p<.05$ ], 11-15 [IJ= 6,09890,  $p<.05$ ] and 16-20 years of managerial experience and those who have 26 and above [IJ= 7,81106,  $p<.05$ ] years of managerial experience in relation to the reduced personal accomplishment sub-scale of the burnout inventory. In other words, the elementary school principals with 1-5 years of managerial experience have higher reduced personal accomplishment level [ $\bar{X} = 10,25$ ] than those with more years of managerial experience such as school principals with 26 and above years of managerial experience [ $\bar{X} = 4,28$ ]. These results indicate that elementary school principals with more managerial experience have less reduced personal accomplishment level of burnout. In Table 4, school principals' education level was compared in relation to their burnout and the results of the one-way ANOVA (variance) analysis are given below.

**Table 4**

Descriptive Statistical Analyses of the Elementary School Principals in Relation to Education Level

<i>Burnout Sub-Scales</i>	<i>Education Level</i>	$\eta$	$\bar{X}$	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	
EE	Senior High School	36	8,16	1,121	,328	
	Undergraduate	149	8,02			
	Postgraduate	5	11,57			
PA	Senior High School	36	11,02	,642	,527	
	Undergraduate		149			10,35
	Postgraduate		5			12,00
DP	Senior High School	36	7,66	1,601	,204	
	Undergraduate	149	8,14			
	Postgraduate	5	10,42			

According to the results of the one-way ANOVA (variance) analysis made in Table 4 above in terms of the burnout levels of the elementary school principals in relation to education levels, it can be seen that there is no statistically significant difference in any sub-scale of the burnout inventory [ $p>.05$ ]. In light of the data obtained above, it can be said that the school principals do not differ in their burnout levels in terms of education level variable. But, when one

looks at the mean scores of the burnout levels of the elementary school principals in terms of education level, it can be seen that the school principals who are the graduates of senior high school have less burnout levels in all sub-scales of the burnout inventory. On the other hand, it was seen that the elementary school principals with postgraduate level of education have more burnout levels than those with undergraduate level of education and the graduates of senior high school. The results of the one-way ANOVA (variance) analysis of the burnout levels of the elementary school principals in relation to working place variance are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistical Analyses of the Elementary School Principals in Relation to Working Place

<i>Burnout Sub-Scales</i>	<i>Working Place</i>	$\eta$	$\bar{X}$	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
EE	Village and Town	132	8,55	,915	,402
	Country Centre	41	7,25		
	City Centre	18	7,46		
PA	Village and Town	132	10,63	,467	,627
	Country Centre	41	10,70		
	City Centre	18	9,71		
DP	Village and Town	132	8,21	,366	,694
	Country Centre	41	8,25		
	City Centre	18	7,57		

According to the results of the one-way ANOVA (variance) analysis made in Table 5 above in terms of the burnout levels of the elementary school principals in relation to working place variable, it can be seen that there is no statistically significant difference in any sub-scale of the burnout inventory [ $p>.05$ ]. In light of the data obtained above in Table 5, it can be said that the school principals do not differ in their burnout levels in terms of working place variable, but when one looks at the mean scores of the burnout levels of the elementary school principals in

terms of working place variable, it can be seen that the elementary school principals who work in villages and towns have more burnout levels in all sub-scales than those who work in country and city centres. The elementary school principals who work in city centre have the least burnout level of all.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

According to the results obtained in the study, the elementary school principals have “low” level of emotional exhaustion and “moderate” level of reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalization. There are studies which support these findings of the study in the literature. In the studies carried out by Izgar (2001), Sarros (1988), Ceyanes (2004), Combs, Edmonson & Jackson (2009), Ceyanes (2004) and Arslan-Özyurt (2007), school principals have “moderate” level of burnout. However, Babaoğlu (2006), Aydın (2002) and Aksu & Baysal (2004) found out different findings from these studies that they stated that school principals had “low” levels of burnout. The findings obtained from these studies (Babaoğlu, 2006; Aydın, 2002; Aksu & Baysal, 2004) state that school principals have “low” level of emotional exhaustion so that this finding can be said to be parallel to the related finding of the current study. Maslach & Jackson’s (1981) stages of burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment) are also supported by these findings.

When the elementary school principals’ burnout levels are analysed in relation to gender, it was found out that there are statistical significant differences between elementary school principals in terms of reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalisation sub-scales. Elementary school principals differ in terms of their burnout level means so that female school principals have higher level of reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalisation than their male counterparts. Maslach & Zimbardo (1982), Maslach & Jackson (1985) state that *gender* is a critical variable since it is considered as an important predictor of burnout. In most studies (Örmen, 1993; Whitaker, 1996, 2005; Girgin, 1995; Friedman, 2002; Tümkaya, 1996; Sarros, 1988; Torun, 1995; Maslach & Jackson, 1985; Vızıl, 2005; De Robbio, 1995; Izgar, 2001; Tomic & Tomic, 2008; Oplatka, 2002), gender variable is considered as an important predictor of burnout. In this regard, Girgin (1995), Sucuoğlu & Kulaksızoğlu-Aksaz (1996), De Robbio (1995) and Chesnutt (1997) found similar findings to the related findings of the current study so that these findings also support the related findings of the current research. On the other hand, in the studies carried out by Babaoğlu (2006), Aksu & Baysal (2004), Combs, Edmonson & Jackson (2009), Arslan-Özyurt (2007) and Koçak (2009), it was found out no statistical significant difference between school principals in terms of gender variable so that it can be said that the findings of these studies do not have parallel results with the results of the current research.

When the elementary school principals' burnout levels are analysed in relation to managerial seniority, it was found out that there was a statistical significant difference in elementary school principals' burnout levels in terms of their managerial experience. According to the results obtained in the study in relation to managerial seniority variable, it was found that there was a statistical significant difference between school principals who have 1-5 years of managerial experience and 26 and above years of managerial experience. Also, there was found significant difference between school principals with 6-10, 11-15, 16-20 years of managerial experience and school principals with 26 and above years of managerial experience. The results of the study indicate that more experienced elementary school principals in management have less burnout levels. When the managerial experience levels of school principals fall down to 1-5 years of managerial experience, less experienced elementary school principals have higher burnout levels than their experienced counterparts. The findings obtained from the studies carried out by Izgar (2001), Graf (1996), Aydın (2002), Aksu & Baysal (2004), Babaoğlu (2006), Girgin (1995) and Koçak (2009) also support the related finding of the study so that it was also seen in these studies that less experienced school principals feel higher burnout than their experienced colleagues. The findings of the stated studies have parallel results with the related finding of the current study. In light of the data gathered in the literature, it can be stated that managerial seniority variable is a crucial indicator of principal burnout so that as the managerial experience of school principals rises, their burnout levels fall down. Less experienced school principals begin their profession with enthusiasm and idealism since they have great expectations from their work. They want to work more to develop their school organisation and the students. However, heavy work load, problems and bureaucratic processes demoralise these school principals (Gümüşeli, 2009) so that they feel more burnout in the initial years of their profession. As the years pass and their managerial experience raises, they get accustomed to those problems and other processes and their working efforts begin to fall down. In the end, they learn how to cope with the problems they face so it occurs that they feel less burnout in their professional lives.

According to the results of the elementary school principals' burnout levels in relation to education level variable in the study, it was found out that there was not statistical significant difference amongst the school principals. However, elementary school principals differ in terms of their mean scores so that the graduates of senior high school have lower level of burnout than those to undergraduates and postgraduates in relation to education level variable. It was also found out that the elementary school principals who have postgraduate level of education feel higher burnout than those to the graduates of senior high school and undergraduates. Dönmez & Güneş (2001), Friedman (1995), Aydın (2002) and Arslan-Özyurt (2007) found out that there was significant difference between school principals in terms of education level variable

Maslach & Jackson (1981) and Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter (2001) also state that the people who have high levels of education (i.e., undergraduates, postgraduates) tend to feel high burnout than their counterparts. Similarly, Rothman and others (as cited in Çimen, 2007) also state that people who have high levels of education tend to have high burnout than their colleagues. Aksu & Baysal (2004), in their study, found that school principals who have postgraduate level of education feel higher burnout than the school principals who are senior high school graduates. The findings of these studies support the related finding of the current study since it was found in this study that the school principals with postgraduate level of education have higher level of burnout than the school principals who are senior high school graduates.

When the elementary school principals' burnout levels are analysed in relation to working place in the study, it was found out that there was not statistical significant difference amongst the school principals. However, the elementary school principals differ in terms of their mean scores so that the school principals working in villages and towns have higher burnout levels than their counterparts working in country centres and city centre. In the studies carried by Ellis (1983), Graf (1996), Aksu & Baysal (2004), Izgar (2001 and Yerlikaya (2000), it was found out that the elementary school principals working in rural areas (villages and towns) feel higher levels of burnout than their colleagues working in city centre. The school principals were found to feel the emotional exhaustion in the first rank in the study. In this regard, according to Girgin (1995), Izgar (2001), Gezer, Yenel & Şahan (2009), schools in Turkey have some problems dealing with socio-economic problems, physical infrastructure problems, teacher quantity and quality problems, transportation problems, etc. Elementary school principals working in rural areas in Turkey have to cope with these problems since there is some incapability of these schools so that the coping with these problems make school principals feel higher burnout than their counterparts working in city centres. The conditions of rural areas such as villages and towns can have some drawbacks for school principals so that they have to cope with the problems rather than focusing on education and these problems cause to principal burnout. In the studies carried out by Girgin (1995), Izgar (2001), Gezer, Yenel & Şahan (2009), it was found that teachers and school principals working in rural areas feel higher burnout than their colleagues working in city centres. The finding of these studies support the related finding of the current study since it was found out that elementary school principals working in villages and towns (rural areas) feel higher burnout than their counterparts in the study. In light of the data obtained in the study, the following suggestions can be put forward below:

1. In order to make school principals cope with professional burnout, seminars and courses should be organised so that principals are made to understand the effects of stress and burnout on their professional lives at schools.

2. The physical infrastructure of elementary schools, especially in rural areas, should be developed and some changes should be made on the working place changes in order to prevent principal burnout.
3. School principal education programmes at universities should be developed so as to include burnout coping strategies in related departments.
4. School principals should be informed about burnout syndrome and less experienced and/or inexperienced school principals should be reinforced in all aspects dealing with school affairs so as to prevent principal burnout at earlier ages.
5. As less experienced and/or inexperienced school principals feel higher burnout than their counterparts, special in-service education should be organised for these group of school principals.
6. The main source of burnout seems as if it comes from the school itself so that school principals should organise the school by considering preventing the impacts of burnout.
7. Less experienced and experienced school principals should be met in order to share their experiences about the burnout syndrome, then experienced school principals should be made less experienced school principals help to cope with their problems. In order to make this come into existence, tea parties and seminars should be organised by Local Directorates of National Education.
8. Successful school principals should be awarded and reinforced when and where possible.
9. Elementary education supervisors should be educated so as to help the school principals feeling burnout in order to make them cope with the burnout syndrome.
10. Especially, school principals working in rural areas (villages and towns) should be reinforced from all aspects, and then the authorities at Local Directorates of National Education should take steps to help these school principals wherever and whenever possible.
11. “Maslach Burnout Inventory” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) was used in this study so that different types of burnout inventories in the literature can be used in different studies.

12. Other burnout researches can be carried out in different institutions such as high schools and universities.
13. School principals' burnout levels can be compared with other variables such as locus of control, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship, organizational trust, communication skills, etc. Also, some other researches can be carried out on the relationship between burnout and these variables.
14. Some other burnout studies can be carried out on the administrations of Local Directorates of National Education.

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