



# The role of time perspectives in Language Teachers' Burnout

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## Abstract

The present study attempted to investigate the role of time perspectives in language teachers' burnout and its three dimensions, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. For this purpose, a group of 302 English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers were asked to fill out Zimbardo's Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) along with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The results of correlations demonstrated significantly positive relationships between burnout, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization with the past negative and present fatalistic time perspectives ( $p < .01$ ), and significantly negative ones with past positive, present hedonistic, and future perspectives ( $p < .01$ ). On the other hand, personal accomplishment had a significantly negative relationship with past negative and present fatalistic ( $p < .01$ ), and a significantly positive relationship with past positive, present hedonistic, and future perspectives ( $p < .01$ ). Furthermore, according to what structural equation modeling (SEM) showed, language teachers having a negative outlook on the past and a fatalistic perspective of the future were more likely to experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and burnout in general; whereas those with past positive, present hedonistic, and also future time perspectives were more likely to feel personal accomplishment in their career. Finally, the findings were discussed, and the potential implications were drawn.

**Keywords** Time perspective · Burnout · Emotional exhaustion · Depersonalization · Personal accomplishment · Language teacher

## Introduction

The notion of time is not new. It is something that mankind has been dealing with since the beginning of history. In our age of speed and communication, time plays an important role in all dimensions of our lives. From one perspective, the concept of time is a social construction that is subjective both collectively and individually (Bergadaa 1990). In this line, Levine (1997) is of the view that the basic value system of a given culture can be reflected in its norms and beliefs about time; thereby time is considered a social construct. However, time is also a psychological construct, and individuals react towards it in different ways, hence time-related individual differences (Francis-Smythe and Robertson 1999). Therefore, time-related individual differences, which include a number of components, make up the psychological basis.

The trace of academic studies about time-related individual differences goes back to the beginning of the 1900s, with most

of the research having been done in the fields of management, marketing, and psychology (Francis-Smythe and Robertson 1999). From then on, several constructs have been put forward regarding the concept of time. They include punctuality, polychronicity, time attitude, time style, temporal intelligence, and time perspective, amongst many others. As a foundational dimension in the psychological time construction, time perspective includes attitudes, thoughts, and feelings towards one's personal past, present, and future. It is said to be a vital outlook through which the perception of human existence is structured. Essentially, time perspective can be considered as a measure that tells us how the three time frames of past, present, and future can become influential in changing one's behavior and how a given individual adapts to such possible changes, accordingly. Obsession with or negligence of a time frame shows inability in adaptation and causes an imbalance in one's behavior (Zimbardo and Boyd 1999), resulting in many negative outcomes, including occupational ones (Gupta et al. 2012).

One of the most serious occupational issues is burnout. It is typically conceptualized as a syndrome including emotional exhaustion (psychologically worn-out by work), depersonalization (a negative and callous approach towards others), and reduced personal achievements (feeling of work-related dissatisfaction) (Maslach et al. 1996). Since burnout mostly occurs in

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professions that involve being in contact with people, teaching has been considered as a profession that high levels of burnout have been reported (Chang 2009; Maslach et al. 1996). Moreover, compared to other occupations, teachers display significant levels of exhaustion and cynicism (Maslach et al. 1996). Therefore, teacher burnout is a well-known phenomenon. The existing bodies of research suggest that burnout has detrimental consequences for the teachers' occupational well-being and their educational outcomes. Burned-out teachers may show less empathy, praise, and emotional intelligence when dealing with students on a daily basis (Brown et al. 2010). Moreover, since their tolerance for classroom misbehaviors is lowered, burned-out teachers show less closeness and warmth for student-teacher interactions (Gastaldi et al. 2014). They may also get less involved in students' educational needs; for example, they may not go deep into lessons and provide less information (Travers and Cooper 1996). Since students' success is closely knitted to teachers, teacher burnout is a major concern for educational institutions.

It seems that teachers' psychological perspective of time can have an impact on the exhaustion they feel from work. Despite the extensive literature on teacher burnout, the role of time-related individual differences has not been explored much in the area. Only a few studies have delved into the matter. They include the interactions of time management, work demands, and autonomy (Peeters and Rutte 2005); prediction of burnout dimensions by managing time constraints (Kokkinos 2007) and time pressure (Skaalvik and Skaalvik 2009); and the relationship between burnout and teachers' temporal intelligence (Naji Meidani et al. 2018). Language teachers' burnout, in particular, has not received much attention but for a few studies (e.g., Piechurska-Kuciel 2011; Pishghadam, Adamson, Shayesteh, & Kan 2014; Sadeghi and Khezrlou 2016). Since learning a new language markedly differs from learning any other subjects (Guiora 1983), teaching it may also require different skills and processes with reference to the teachers, which may result in higher levels of burnout (Piechurska-Kuciel 2011). Considering the assumed relationship between psychological perspectives of time and burnout, this study attempts to examine the role of time perspectives in the burnout level of a group of EFL teachers.

## Time Perspective

Time perspective was first put forward by Franck (1939, as cited in Stolarski et al. 2014) and established in its present meaning in a foundational paper named *Time Perspective and Morale*, published in 1942. The concept was later promoted as part of a research program launched by the Zimbardo group at Stanford. They considered time perspective to be "the often-unconscious process whereby the continual flows of personal and social experiences are assigned to temporal categories, or time frames, that help to give order, coherence, and

meaning to those events" (Zimbardo and Boyd 1999, p.1271). In effect, time perspective involves subjective evaluation of the past, the present, and the future. Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) operationalized the three dimensions of time perspective into five categories, including past-negative, past positive, present fatalistic, present-hedonistic, and future. The past-negative perspective consists of a cynical and disapproving attitude towards past memories and traumatic life events. In contrast to past-negative, past-positive is the appreciation of the past with a warm, sentimental, nostalgic and positive feeling towards it. Those who have a present-hedonistic time perspective live at the moment, seek pleasure and novelty and try to live each day to its fullest. Individuals with a fatalistic outlook on the future and life in general, on the other hand, hold a helpless and hopeless attitude, and no control over time. Finally, the future time frame includes planning for and achievement of future goals.

Studies have been conducted to examine what psychological conditions each time perspective relates with. The past-negative perspective has been found to be in correlation with depression, anxiety, dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and interpersonal problems (e.g., Stolarski et al. 2011; Zimbardo and Boyd 1999). On the contrary, the past-positive, as Bryant et al. (2005), Zhang and Howell (2011), and Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) mentioned, is positively associated with high self-confidence, energy, satisfaction, and also happiness. The present hedonistic correlates positively with low self-control, impulsive decision making, and risky behavior (Bryant et al. 2005; Zimbardo and Boyd 1999); whereas, the present fatalistic aspect has a positive relationship with aggression, anxiety, and depression (Zhang et al. 2013; Zimbardo and Boyd 2015). Since the future perspective is of the view that "behavior is dominated by a striving for future goals and rewards" (Zimbardo and Boyd 2015, p. 26), anticipatory behavior and trust in achieving one's goals in the future are characteristic of those who hold a future perspective. Furthermore, they are more optimistic and have better academic performance (Zimbardo and Boyd 1999, 2008). According to Boyd and Zimbardo (2005), there is a harmonious balance between the orientations we have on the past, the present, and the future, which is termed "balanced time perspective." In a study carried out by Drake et al. (2008), participants with balanced time perspective were shown to be significantly happier and more mindful. Balanced time perspective is also claimed to be positively correlated with emotional intelligence and mental health (e.g., Stolarski et al. 2011; Zhang et al. 2013).

Time perspective has been given due attention in the past recent years, thanks to the instruments designed to evaluate the construct in individuals, notably Zimbardo's Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI). Using this instrument or its abridged versions, numerous empirical studies have been conducted to explore the relationship between time perspective and different variables. Among these studies, time perspective

has been found to influence an assortment of life aspects such as satisfaction in marital relationships (Stolarski et al. 2016), fluid intelligence (Zajenkowski et al. 2016), behavior (Harber et al. 2003), financial choices (Sekscinska et al. 2018), snacking (Onwezen et al. 2016), Internet and Facebook addiction (Przepiorka and Blachnio 2016), academic cheating (Orosz et al. 2016), and student learning (Janeiro et al. 2017).

## Teacher Burnout

Teaching, like many human service professions, is very much prone to dealing with high-stress levels, and teachers may undergo emotional problems related to the stress they experience at work (Montgomery and Rupp 2005). Stress, whose presence may be due to societal, organizational, and interpersonal challenges (Guidetti et al. 2018), can have some effects on teachers, such as weakened performance and poor personal health (Folkman et al. 1986). Not only can it affect their physical status, but if continued persistently, stress most likely results in professional burnout. The concept of burnout stands at one end of a job-related continuum, where the opposite pole is engagement, in which people are fully involved in what they are doing, and they feel they have a contributive role (Maslach and Leiter 1997). It gently develops as in the wake of extensive and lengthy work-related stress (Freudenberger 1974; Holland 1982), which can later lead to job absenteeism (Belcastro and Gold 1983), negative or cynical attitudes towards one's students and colleagues (Herman et al. 2018), and job turnover (Maslach & Schaufeli 2017).

Since the concept is an international phenomenon, a great body of research in different countries, for instance in Finland (Hakanen et al. 2006), Germany (Schwarzer et al. 2000), Iran (Amini Faskhodi and Siyyari 2018; Pishghadam and Sahebjam 2012), and Spain (Betoret 2006) has been conducted, showing that general measures of teacher stress are related to burnout. Current research studies have also shown there are various sources that are accountable in teacher burnout, among which individual, organizational, and transactional are considered the most important factors (Chang 2009). Individual factors include age, gender, marital status (Schaufeli and Enzmann 1998), personality types (Pishghadam and Sahebjam 2012), and work experience (Lau 2002). Organization factors include the physical characteristics of the job and workplace, such as work overload and increased pressure on the job which can consequently result in less autonomy (van Droogenbroeck and Spruyt 2015), poor acknowledgment on the side of school administrators (Kulavuz-

Onal and Tatar 2017), and inadequate salary, class size, and socioeconomic status of the institution (Khajavy et al. 2017). Moreover, studies have shown that emotional exhaustion, which is known as the core feature of burnout, is a reaction to an overwhelmingly high demands from one's job (Maslach et al. 2001), and it is delineated by "a loss of energy, debilitation, chronic fatigue and the feeling of being worn out" (Skaalvik and Skaalvik 2017, p. 777). Another study on the Job Demands—Resources model showed that demands also have a part in burnout in general and depersonalization in particular, which may deprive teachers of the intended responsive capacity to the students' needs (Maslach et al. 2001). A recent study has revealed that teachers' emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between burnout and organizational outcomes (Magnano et al. 2017). These accounts may lead to a failure in the sense of accomplishment, which is characterized as an intense self-perceived ineffectiveness, meaning that one may feel s/he is no longer doing a meaningful or useful job (Iancu et al. 2018). The last factor, namely, transactional factors are related to the interactions between individual and organizational factors, such as teachers' judgments of students' behaviors, their interactions (Viotti et al. 2016), and social/parental support (Grayson and Alvarez 2006).

## Purpose of the Study

Language teachers are susceptible to burnout due to their high level of involvement with students. Teaching a new language is a demanding task, and becomes even more challenging when it is in a foreign language context, where the most important part of learning happens in the classroom. Time perspectives, based on which individuals can classify their experiences into time frameworks (Zimbardo and Boyd 1999) could indicate one's potential abilities to learn from the past, to adjust to the present, and to get ready for goal-oriented behaviors in the future; thereby, they can have an influence on the amount of psychological deterioration or mental exhaustion one can experience from work. Although teacher burnout has been widely researched and reviewed, to the researchers' knowledge, no study has examined the relationship between teachers' time perspectives and their burnout to date. In view of the above-mentioned theoretical background and the empirical studies reviewed, the current study aims to fulfill the following purposes:

- Firstly, to investigate the relationship between time perspectives with the levels of burnout and its three subconstructs in a group of EFL teachers;
- Secondly, to find out which time perspectives predict burnout and its three subconstructs in the EFL teachers

## Methodology

### Participants and Setting

A total of 302 EFL teachers, including 193 females and 109 males from Tehran (the capital and largest city of Iran) and Mashhad (the second largest city of Iran) participated in the study. They were all randomly selected. Their ages ranged between 18 and 52 ( $M = 30.51$ ,  $SD = 6.24$ ). The distribution of their fields of study was the following: 216 in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), 40 in English literature, 21 in English translation, 17 in general linguistics, and 8 in other fields. It should be mentioned that in Iran those educated in fields other than English are allowed to teach as long as they have an acceptable level of proficiency. Among the participants, 12% were BA students or graduates, 54% were MA students or graduates, 31% were Ph.D. candidates or graduates, and 3% had other degrees. The teachers were all teaching English at private language institutes with their teaching experiences ranging from 1 to 27 years ( $M = 7.75$ ,  $SD = 5.32$ ).

The rationale behind choosing the private language institute sector was its different nature from the public sector. In Iran, private language institutes do not permanently employ their teachers. Therefore, the teachers have to work hard to live up to the expectations of the institute and its learners. Furthermore, the private language institutes adopt a communicative language teaching approach, making the teachers more engaged and involved. Therefore, the teachers are more likely to experience burnout, compared to the public sector, where the teachers are permanently employed and function within a grammar-translation approach.

### Instrumentation

#### Zimbardo's Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI)

ZTPI is the most popular and commonly employed instrument in time perspective studies. It consists of 56 items within five subscales, including past negative (10 items), past positive (9 items), present hedonistic (15 items), present fatalistic (9 items), and future (13 items) (Zimbardo and Boyd 1999). The respondents are asked to select how representative each statement is of them on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from *very uncharacteristic* (1) to *very characteristic* (5) (see Appendix A for sample items). The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the instrument in the current study was 0.71.

#### Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

This instrument, which is the most-widely used self-report questionnaire to measure burnout (Maslach et al. 2008), includes 22 items within three subscales: nine items related to emotional exhaustion, five items for depersonalization, and

eight items for personal accomplishment (Maslach and Jackson 1981). The items are rated in two separate ways. The first one is by frequency, in which the items are scored from *never* (0) to *every day* (6); and the second one is by intensity, where the items are scored from (0) *none* (0) to *very much* (7). The rationale behind it is that if the scores in the frequency and intensity of the items are higher, the respondents experience more levels of burnout. The scores from personal accomplishment should be reversed (see Appendix B for sample items).

In the present study, the Persian translation of MBI (Badri Gargari 1995), which has accurate reliability and validity indexes, was used. Moreover, only the frequency scale was employed. Maslach and Jackson (1981) were of the view that the frequency scale is of more use for assessing burnout and that there exists a moderate relationship between the frequency of experiencing different feelings and the level of intensity they are felt. The calculated Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the questionnaire in this study was 0.91.

### Procedure

An online Google Docs version of the two questionnaires was prepared by the researchers and sent to 465 EFL teachers via Telegram. The questionnaires were sent to telegram groups whose members were EFL teachers at private language institutes in Iran. It is worth mentioning that choosing these members was random. The researchers asked them to respond to the questionnaires and return them as soon as possible; moreover, they ensured them about the confidentiality of the study. A total of 302 teachers returned the questionnaires completed. Informed consent was gained from all the individuals who participated in this study. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to calculate descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlations. In addition, the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) software was employed to do confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM).

## Results

### CFA

To examine the construct validity of the measures used in this study, MBI and ZTPI, CFA was run. Based on the CFAs conducted, the association between each sub-factor of the proposed models was analyzed. The goodness of fit indices for the models used in this study are: chi-square divided by the degree of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Root Mean Square Analysis (RMSEA), Standardized Root Mean, and Square Residual (SRMR). Moreover, the chi-square ( $X^2$ ), degree of freedom ( $df$ ), and Akaike Information

Criterion (AIC) values of the models have been reported. The threshold ranges for an accepted model are indicated by  $\chi^2/df < 3$  (Hu and Bentler 1999),  $CFI \geq .90$  (Bentler 1990),  $RMSA \leq .08$  (Hair et al. 2006), and  $SRMR \leq .08$  (Hair et al. 2006). All the mentioned indices must be reported for a model (Kline 2015). As indicated in Table 1, all the goodness of fit indices for the CFA models lied within the acceptable fit thresholds. Therefore, it can be concluded that both measures had an excellent fit.

Furthermore, Common Method Bias (CMB) was analyzed using Harman’s single factor test. The test determines if the majority of the variance in the data can be explained by a single factor (Harman 1976). In this method, all items from every construct are loaded into a factor analysis (Chang et al. 2010). Thereby, factor analysis was run on the data. All variables were loaded onto a single factor. If the single factor accounts for the majority of covariance among the measures (more than 50%), then common method variance exists (Podsakoff et al. 2003). The results of our analysis revealed that the variance of the single factor was 15.55%, indicating that there is no common method bias.

### Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive results, along with correlation estimates between all variables are presented in Table 1.

As can be seen in Table 2, among the subscales of time perspective, the future perspective had the highest mean ( $M = 3.70, SD = .47$ ), while the present fatalistic had the lowest ( $M = 2.73, SD = .55$ ). Among the subscales of ZTPI, the past negative had a significantly negative relationship with the past positive ( $r = -.29, p < .01$ ), and the present hedonistic ( $r = -.30, p < .01$ ), and a significantly positive relationship with the present fatalistic ( $r = .49, p < .01$ ). The past positive was significantly and positively related to the present hedonistic ( $r = .22, p < .01$ ) and the future ( $r = .14, p < .05$ ), and negatively related to the present fatalistic ( $r = -.13, p < .05$ ). Finally, the present fatalistic was significantly and negatively related to the future ( $r = -.17, p < .01$ ).

Results of the correlations among the independent and dependent variables revealed that the past negative was significantly and positively related to emotional exhaustion ( $r = .42, p < .01$ ), depersonalization ( $r = .34, p < .01$ ), and burnout ( $r = .41, p < .01$ ) and negatively related to personal accomplishment ( $r = -.26, p < .01$ ). The past positive time

perspective had a significantly positive relationship with personal accomplishment ( $r = .25, p < .01$ ) and a significantly negative relationship with emotional exhaustion ( $r = -.21, p < .01$ ), depersonalization ( $r = -.23, p < .01$ ), and burnout ( $r = -.27, p < .01$ ). The present hedonistic time perspective, likewise, had a significantly positive correlation with personal accomplishment ( $r = .37, p < .01$ ), and a significantly negative correlation with emotional exhaustion ( $r = -.21, p < .01$ ), depersonalization ( $r = -.17, p < .01$ ), and burnout ( $r = -.30, p < .01$ ). The present fatalistic, on the other hand, was significantly and positively related to emotional exhaustion ( $r = .35, p < .01$ ), depersonalization ( $r = .31, p < .01$ ), and burnout ( $r = .36, p < .01$ ), and negatively related to personal accomplishment ( $r = -.25, p < .01$ ). Finally, the future perspective had a significantly positive relationship with personal accomplishment ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ), and was significantly and negatively related to emotional exhaustion ( $r = -.19, p < .01$ ), depersonalization ( $r = -.26, p < .01$ ), and burnout ( $r = -.29, p < .01$ ). It should be noted that according to Cohen (1992), correlations between .10–.30 are considered small. Accordingly, the correlations between the past negative and personal accomplishment, the past positive with burnout and all its components, the present hedonistic with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, the present fatalistic and personal accomplishment, and finally the future with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and burnout have small effect sizes, and thus, their strength of relationship is considered weak.

### SEM

To check the predictive power of each of the independent variables regarding the dependent ones, SEM was conducted. Models were proposed for the prediction of burnout (Model 1), the prediction of emotional exhaustion (Model 2), the prediction of depersonalization (Model 3) and the prediction of personal accomplishment (Model 4). The table below reports the fit indices for the four models presented. Based on the threshold ranges mentioned earlier, all the indices fall in the acceptable range (Table 3).

As Fig. 1 demonstrates, the past positive ( $\beta = -.19, p < .05$ ), the present hedonistic ( $\beta = -.24, p < .01$ ) and the future ( $\beta = -.22, p < .01$ ) perspectives are significant negative predictors of burnout, whereas the past negative ( $\beta = .31, p < .01$ ) and the present fatalistic ( $\beta = .29, p < .01$ ) are significant positive predictors of it. Accordingly, language teachers having a negative view towards the past and a fatalistic perspective of the present are more prone to experience burnout.

Figure 2 shows the relationships among the time perspectives and the emotional exhaustion subscale of burnout. As the model demonstrates, there are significantly positive paths from the past negative ( $\beta = .31, p < .01$ ) and the present fatalistic ( $\beta = .29, p < .01$ ) perspectives to emotional exhaustion.

**Table 1** The goodness of fit indices for MBI and ZTPI

Model	$\chi^2/df$	$\chi^2$	$df$	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	AIC
MBI	2.11	4.22	2	.91	.05	.05	201.28
ZTPI	2.45	9.8	4	.90	.04	.04	221.38

**Table 2** Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variables	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. PN	3.07 (.72)	1.00								
2. PP	3.37 (.55)	-.29**	1.00							
3. PH	3.41(.58)	-.30**	.22**	1.00						
4. PF	2.73 (.55)	.49**	-.13*	.02	1.00					
5. Future	3.70 (.47)	.11	.14*	-.04	-.17**	1.00				
6. EE	1.77 (1.12)	.42**	-.21**	-.21**	.35**	-.19**	1.00			
7. DP	.91 (.94)	.34**	-.23**	-.17**	.31**	-.26**	.66**	1.00		
8. PA	4.48 (1.06)	-.26**	.25**	.37**	-.25**	.30**	-.54**	-.59**	1.00	
9. Burnout	1.49 (.91)	.41**	-.27**	-.30**	.36**	-.29**	.89**	.82**	-.84**	1.00

PN Past negative, PP Past positive, PH Past hedonistic, PF Present fatalistic, EE Emotional exhaustion, DP Depersonalization, PA Personal accomplishment

\* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .01$

The other paths are significantly negative: the past positive ( $\beta = -.19, p < .05$ ), the present hedonistic ( $\beta = -.24, p < .01$ ), and the future ( $\beta = -.22, p < .01$ ). Thus, language teachers who have a past negative and present fatalistic temporal perspective will feel more emotional exhaustion.

The next figure demonstrates the predictive power of the time perspective subscales regarding depersonalization. As shown in Fig. 3, similar to the two previous models, there are significantly positive paths from the past negative ( $\beta = .30, p < .01$ ) and the present fatalistic ( $\beta = .27, p < .01$ ), while significant negative paths from the past positive ( $\beta = -.18, p < .05$ ), the present hedonistic ( $\beta = -.17, p < .05$ ), and the future ( $\beta = -.20, p < .01$ ). Therefore, language teachers with past negative and present fatalistic perspectives are at a higher risk of experiencing depersonalization.

As seen in Fig. 4, the past positive ( $\beta = .21, p < .01$ ), the present hedonistic ( $\beta = .30, p < .01$ ), and the future ( $\beta = .25, p < .01$ ) perspectives are significantly positive predictors of personal accomplishment, whereas the past negative ( $\beta = -.16, p < .05$ ) and the present fatalistic ( $\beta = -.18, p < .05$ ) are significantly negative predictors of it. Therefore, language teachers with past positive, present hedonistic, and future time perspectives are more likely to feel personal accomplishment in their career.

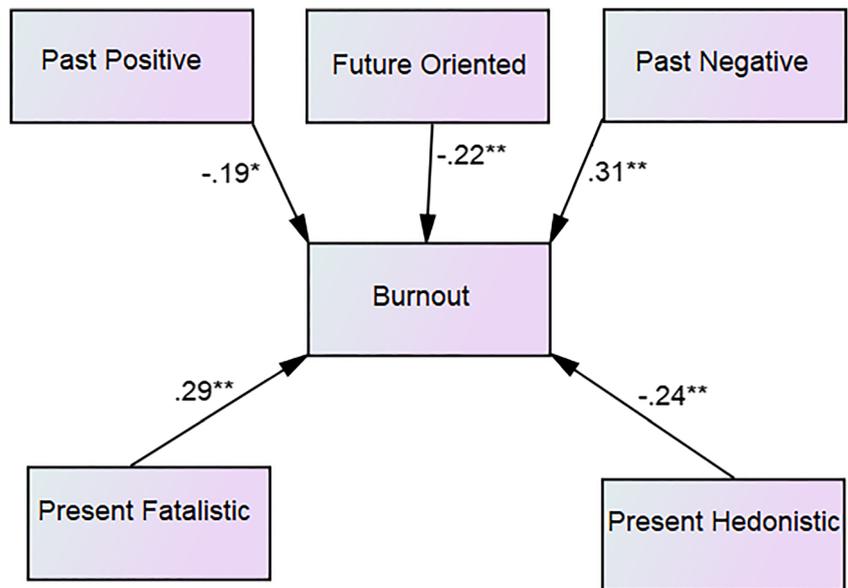
**Table 3** The goodness of fit indices for the SEM

Model	$X^2/df$	$X^2$	$df$	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	AIC
1	2.13	8.52	4	.92	.04	.04	202.36
2	2.17	8.68	4	.92	.04	.05	236.89
3	2.15	8.60	4	.91	.04	.04	211.46
4	2.14	8.76	4	.92	.04	.06	209.39

## Discussion

The first aim of the present study was to find out the relationships between burnout and its subconstructs with the five time perspectives in a group of EFL teachers. The findings revealed that the past-negative and the present-fatalistic had a significantly positive relationship with burnout, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, and a significantly negative relationship with personal achievements. Since these two time frames both involve a passive attitude towards life, they are associated with stress, exhaustion, hopelessness, and despair, although the reasons differ. Regarding the past-negative, the individual remembers the painful and negative experiences from the past, replays them in his/her mind, and overgeneralizes them to his/her entire life (Zimbardo et al. 1997). Teachers with this time frame keep on reviewing their past mistakes, failures, and upsetting memories, and they just cannot let go of them. Naturally, they would feel no energy to continue or function well, and would instead be emotionally exhausted, drained, and indifferent to their students. As indicated earlier, the present-negative is linked with aggression, neuroticism, depression, and bad social relations, which are the exact conditions found in a burnt-out teacher; s/he is bad-tempered, oversensitive, and shows contentious and antagonistic reactions (Maslach 1986). The present fatalists, likewise, feel no energy due to their belief that nothing can be changed, and that whatever they do will come to nothing (Zimbardo et al. 1997). This sense of powerlessness causes fatigue, laziness, and lack of concern towards students, as well. As our review of studies demonstrated, the three remaining time perspectives are generally associated with positive outcomes. The future time perspective, among them, has

**Fig. 1** The schematic representation of the relationships among time perspectives and burnout

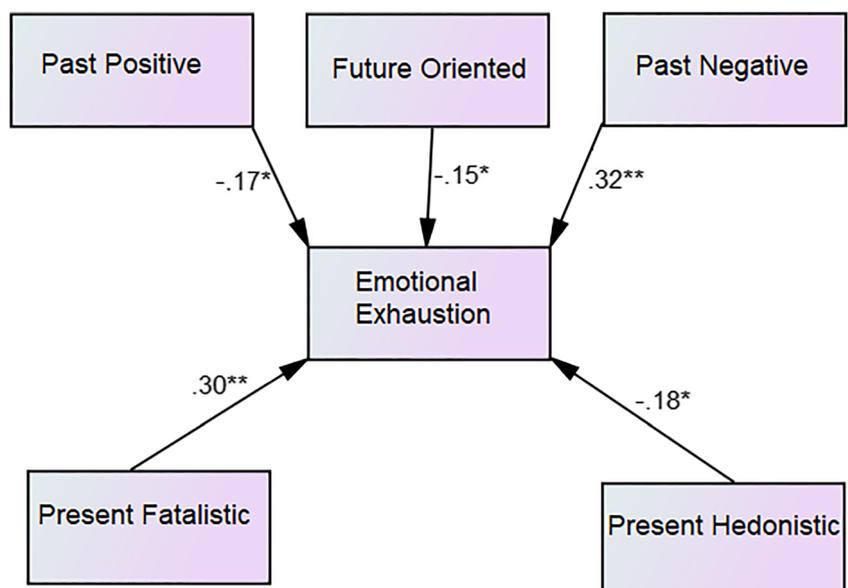


also been negatively linked with loneliness and depressive symptoms (e.g., Bergman and Segel-Karaps 2018). Thus, as expected, a positive attitude towards the past, ability to live at the moment and enjoy it and desire to plan and accomplish future aims relates positively to personal accomplishment, and negatively to burnout.

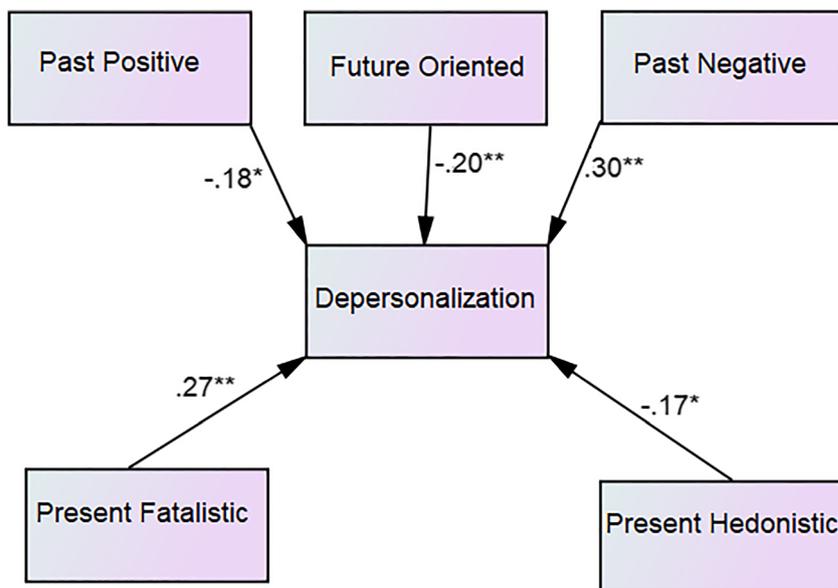
The second aim of this study was to find out which time perspectives anticipate levels of burnout and its dimensions. The results of SEM revealed that language teachers with past-positive, present-hedonistic, and future time perspectives are less susceptible to experience burnout, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, and are more prone to feel having personal achievements in their job. On the contrary, those with past-negative and present-fatalistic time perspectives will probably feel more burnt-out, emotionally exhausted, and

depersonalized, and less inclined to experience personal accomplishment. The obtained results are somewhat in accordance with those of time perspective studies done in other areas. For instance, Przepiorka and Blachnio (2016) showed that the past-negative and the present-fatalistic were positive predictors of Internet and Facebook addiction, while the future perspective was a negative one. Also, the future orientation has been related to many positive outcomes for individuals such as superior socioeconomic status, higher academic accomplishments, and lower number of health risk behaviors (Zimbardo and Boyd 1999). Since the past-negative and the present-fatalistic time perspectives are negative evaluations of time, they generate negative emotions in individuals. The other time perspectives, being positive evaluations, bring about positive emotions, in other words, the

**Fig. 2** The schematic representation of the relationships among time perspectives and emotional exhaustion



**Fig. 3** The schematic representation of the relationships among time perspectives and depersonalization

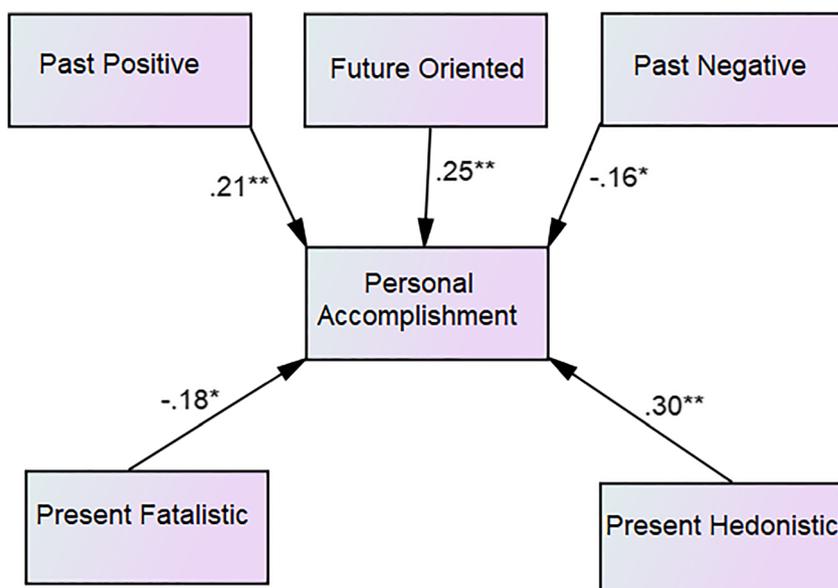


past-positive, the present-hedonistic, and the future focus on pleasant memories, the pleasant here, and pleasant dreams, respectively. Thereby, the outcomes of the study are consistent with those of Carson (2006) and Keller et al. (2014), regarding emotions as predictors of teachers' burnout, and in particular with the findings of Khajavy et al.'s (2017) study, in which negative emotions were found to be direct predictors and positive emotions as inverse predictors of burnout in EFL teachers.

The findings have demonstrated that the past-negative and the present fatalistic perspectives are positively linked with burnout, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization in language teachers and are counter to personal achievements, while the past-positive, the present-hedonistic, and the future perspectives are against burnout, emotional exhaustion, and

depersonalization, and in line with personal accomplishment. Accordingly, the past-negative and the present fatalistic can be considered as negative elements and the past-positive, the present hedonistic, and the future time perspectives, as positive ones in teacher burnout. The results of the current study contribute to the existing literature on teacher burnout, and specifically EFL teacher burnout. An important implication of this study relates to reflective teaching, which is regarded as an essential component in teacher efficiency, especially in second/foreign language teachers (Farrell 2007). Considering that reflective teaching is a process through which teachers think over their past teaching practices and analyze them, they should not do it within a past-negative time perspective; that is, they should reflect on their mistakes, and learn from them, but not dwell on them. Apart from their mistakes, they need to recall their positive experiences

**Fig. 4** The schematic representation of the relationships among time perspectives and personal accomplishment



too, for it will raise their feeling of personal accomplishment, and decrease their burnout. Overall, teachers' emotionality (Pishghadam et al. 2013) and sensory relativism (Pishghadam et al. 2016) towards the past makes a significant impact on their feelings towards their career. Moreover, since goal selection is inherently a future-perspective behavior (Deci and Ryan 2000), language teachers can increase their sense of personal accomplishment and reduce their exhaustion by setting goals for themselves in their teaching process. At the same time, language teachers are recommended to enjoy their classroom experiences each day as it comes and appreciate every moment of it. Furthermore, as the future time perspective is partly correlated with positive future consequences (Boyd and Zimbardo 2005), the institutions where teachers work are required to grant them the rewards they deserve, for if not, it may deteriorate their future time perspective. Finally, Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) put emphasis on the very fact that temporal perspectives are usually unconscious and that hardly ever do most people take a metacognitive stance regarding their understanding of their own past, present, and future (Zimbardo and Boyd 2008). Thus, it seems that conscious thinking about time perspectives needs training and awareness-raising. In other words, changing time perspectives is a conscious process. Thereby, the findings of this study should be incorporated into pre-service and in-service training programs of language teachers in order to fine-tune their attitudes towards time.

This study is not without limitations. Firstly, it was run with self-report measures, which are subject to weakness, meaning that participants may claim something in contrast to reality in order to look better, submit inaccurate answers, or may not even be perfectly aware of their inner feelings. Secondly, factors such as age, gender, and educational level were not controlled. Finally, the participants were selected based on convenience sampling, which limited the sample size, and also the generalizability of the results. It is recommended that future studies investigate the role of time perspectives in burnout across teachers of different subject areas and contexts and with a larger number of participants. Many other potential teacher variables also exist that can be investigated in relation to time perspective, such as teachers' classroom behavior, personal characteristics, teaching practices, interactions with students, colleagues, and the educational institution, and their level of teaching success.

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## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Ethical Approval** All procedures performed in the study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

**Conflict of Interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

## Appendix 1

### Appendix A: Sample items of ZTPI

Past negative:

I often think of what I should have done differently in my life.

Past positive:

It gives me pleasure to think about my past.

Present hedonistic:

I try to live my life as fully as possible, one day at a time.

Present fatalistic:

My life path is controlled by forces I cannot influence.

Future:

I believe that a person's day should be planned ahead each morning.

### Appendix B: Sample items of the MBI

Emotional exhaustion.

I feel emotionally drained from my work.

Depersonalization

I do not really care what happens to some students.

Personal accomplishment.

I deal very effectively with the problems of my students.

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