

Burnout Among EFL Teachers in Indonesia: Levels and Factors

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Abstract

Having highly motivated teachers is vital for effective teaching in foreign language classroom. Nevertheless, burnout may impair teachers' performance and negatively impact how they engage with students. The current study aimed at investigating the level of burnout among EFL teachers in Indonesia. This study was a mixed method study followed by forty-five EFL teachers who are currently teaching in high school level. Using Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey, it was found 57.8% of participants responded they felt high levels of emotional exhaustion, followed by moderate levels (31.1%) and high levels (11.1%). Comparably, approximately 17.8% of the teachers felt they were not depersonalized, compared to 37.8% who felt it was moderate and 44.4% who felt it was extreme. High level of burnout was experienced by teachers with less than five years of teaching experience. Low to moderate level of burnout was found in teachers with more than five years experiences. Regression analysis found that length of experience significantly influences EFL teachers' level of burnout (Sig. <.05). A further interview confirmed the factor that caused burnout among teachers such as teaching administration, adapting with technology, and dealing with misbehave students. This study highlighted the importance of addressing teachers' burnout level.

Keywords: Burnout; EFL; Teachers; Level; Factors

Article History

Submitted:
March 10th 2024

Revised:
April 6th 2024

Accepted:
April 9th 2024

Recommended Citation (APA)

Utami, A., Sidaryanti, & N., Wirahyuni, K. (2024). Burnout among EFL teachers in Indonesia: Levels and factors. *The Art of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TATEFL)*, 5(1), 67-76. <https://doi.org/10.36663/tatefl.v5i1.691>

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are viewed as the leader on instruction in the classroom. In keeping with this, it is critical that teachers are motivated in doing their job if they are to create positive learning environment and outcomes since teaching is one of the most stressful professions (Arismunandar et al., 2022; Wong, 2020). But over time, teachers can be negatively impacted by a variety of variables that influence their performance and motivation such as the constant pressures and fragmented demands from various sources, including students, parents, administrators, and teachers themselves (Asaloei et al., 2020; Thomas & Reyes, 2024; Weißenfels et al., 2022). Those variables may create teacher burnout.

To put it simply, burnout is the result of being overworked. It is also known as chronic fatigue and a decrease in one's drive and energy for work (Genoud & Waroux, 2021). According to Maslach (1986), burnout is a psychological construct that consists of several elements, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion "the feelings of being emotionally overextended and emotional resources depletion, wearing out, loss of energy, and fatigue," is considered a fundamental concept of the burnout syndrome (Brady et al., 2020). Developing unfavorable views and apathy toward those in need of assistance is referred to as depersonalization (Maslach, 1986). As a protective coping mechanism against the stress people experience at work, emotional exhaustion may be the source of these reactions (Zafrul et al., 2021). Reduced personal accomplishment, a third sign of burnout, is the employees' sense of discontent (Khodadoost et al., 2023). Reduced personal accomplishment is described as "a decline in one's feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work" by Maslach and Leiter (1999).

Teaching is a challenging profession, resulting in high levels of burnout among teachers. The responsibilities of the teaching profession include a variety of tasks that frequently contribute to the impression of a demanding workload (Karanfil et al., 2021). Additional instances of workplace expectations include having to attend numerous meetings that take up preparation time, dealing with administrative paperwork, and constantly being subjected to changes and reforms that require rearranging duties and work schedules (Arvidsson et al., 2019; Perrone et al., 2019). Burnout significantly impacted teachers' performance and health. Several studies had identified that burnout could lead to stress and teachers' resignation (Piyakun & Salim, 2023; Preechawong et al., 2021). The results of a study conducted among 2,588 educators from 46 Texas schools showed that there was a significant likelihood of teacher turnover among those with poor mental health, high stress levels, depression, anxiety disorders, and panic disorders (Mack et al., 2019). A study in Malaysia involving English teachers confirmed that teacher with less than 10 years teaching experience had higher emotional exhaustion compared with more experienced teachers (Mousavy et al., 2012). Since burnout is ultimately seen to be a sign of teacher attrition or plans to leave the field, it is crucial to research in the context of education especially in EFL context (Brunsting et al., 2022; Chang, 2022; Seis, 2023).

In today's situation, English teachers are forced to adapt to modern teaching approaches, incorporating digital technology into lessons, and satisfying a range of student expectations (Boukhechba & Bouhania, 2019; Syarifuddin & Hz, 2023). English language teachers must also adjust their pedagogical strategies, include digital resources, adjust to online learning, set up virtual classrooms, and handle distant learning as it occurred during the pandemic due to the quick changes brought about by technological advancements (Iftanti et al., 2023; Munastiwi, 2021). All these responsibilities and shifting dynamics may contribute to increased stress levels and risk of burnout among English teachers (Morska et al., 2022). Focusing on difficult task such as mastering technology and fulling the demand to be able successfully integrating technology could lead teachers to neglect their self-care and mental health support and their professional development (Seis, 2023).

Given all of these circumstances, it is critical to gain a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon of burnout among English language teachers and the factor causing it because there is a limited of studies on the subject of burnout in EFL context. Stress tends to be ignored and considered a risk of being a teacher. Someone who is unable to handle stress is sometimes labeled a failure as a teacher. However, stress needs to be controlled to prevent burnout. Therefore, this study was aimed at identifying the level of burnout and factor causing burnout among EFL teachers in Indonesian context.

METHOD

Design & Participants

This study was a mix mode survey study aimed at investigating EFL teachers' level of burnout and factor of causing burnout. This study used questionnaire and interview guide. 45 English language teachers, 24 of whom were female and 21 of whom were male, voluntarily participated in this study. They came from diverse region of Indonesia and teaching different level. The participants' ages ranged from 25 to 55 and their teaching experiences ranged from 5 to 25 years

Data Collection

To identify EFL teachers' burnout level, Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators' Survey was used in this study. The survey was originally developed by Maslach (1986). The 22 items with seven-scale point measure the score for one component of burnout; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The reliability coefficients for the subscales were reported by the developers as follows; .90 for Emotional Exhaustion, .79 for Depersonalization, and .71 for Personal Accomplishment. An Indonesian version of MBA was validity and reliability checked by Widhianingtanti and van Lujtelaar (2022). The validity score was 0.907 and the reliability score was 0.916. A follow up semi-structured interview was conducted to identify factor of causing burnout among EFL teachers.

Data Analysis

For every participant, three distinct scores representing one aspect of burnout in Maslach's multidimensional model were computed. Each score was classified as low, moderate, or high based on Maslach's Manual's cut-off points. Due to a negative correlation between the level of burnout and Personal Accomplishment, the score was reversed. Table 1 displays the range of points and the number of items in each subscale in the Inventory.

Table 1. MBI-Educators' Survey Analysis

Subscale	Items	Range Score	Category
Emotional Exhaustion	9	0-16	Low
		17-26	Moderate
		=+27	High
Depersonalization	5	0-6	Low
		7-12	Moderate
		=/+13	High
Personal Accomplishment	8	0-31	High
		32-38	Moderate
		=/+39	Low

Frequencies distribution were analyzed to display the number of participants who experienced the components of burnout at low, moderate, or high levels. Multiple regression analysis was also conducted to identify possible factors of gender and length or experience. A thematic analysis was done to analyze data collected from the interview five with EFL teachers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The three scores each participant received from the MBI-Educators' Survey subscales were divided into low, moderate, and high levels of the perceived state of emotion, and frequencies were examined in order to address the first research question.

Table 2. Burnout Level Among EFL Teachers

Subscale	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Emotional Exhaustion	Low	5	11.1
	Moderate	14	31.1
	High	26	57.8
Depersonalization	Low	8	17.8
	Moderate	17	37.8
	High	20	44.4
Personal Accomplishment	High	7	15.6
Personal Accomplishment	Moderate	13	28.9
	Low	25	55.6

According to Table 2, 57.8% of participants responded they felt high levels of emotional exhaustion, followed by moderate levels (31.1%) and high levels (11.1%). Comparably, approximately 17.8% of the teachers felt they were not depersonalized, compared to 37.8% who felt it was moderate and 44.4% who felt it was extreme. Conversely, a high degree of burnout was indicated by the fact that over half of the participants appeared to feel diminished personal achievement. A further regression analysis was conducted to identify the predictive variables of gender and length of experience. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression Analysis of Gender and Length of Experience Towards MBI Subscale

Source	Dependent Variable	F	Sig.
Gender	Emotional Exhaustion	.077	.782
	Depersonalization	.003	.956
	Personal Accomplishment	.013	.911
Experience	Emotional Exhaustion	11.721	.001
	Depersonalization	4.216	.046
	Personal Accomplishment	9.249	.004

From Table 3, it can be seen that the variable of gender does not influence the MBI subscale (Sig <.05). However, in terms of length of experience, the Sig is below .05 for all subscale. This indicates that length of experience significantly influences EFL teachers' burnout level. EFL teachers with less than five years teaching experience had higher burnout compared to teachers with more than five years of teaching experience.

Factor of causing burnout among EFL teachers were also identified in this study. Through thematic analysis, three themes were identified. Those are teaching administration, adapting pedagogical skills and dealing with students with low English proficiency.

Teaching Administration

Teacher with less than five years expressed complaints about compiling teaching administration such as syllabus, lesson plans and projects. Teachers feels stressed and exhausted in preparing the teaching administration. Teachers with more than five years teaching experiences mentioned similar responses however they seemingly able to cope with the issues. In the interview the teacher said:

“It turns out that the demands of becoming a teacher are many. It's quite tiring even just to write teaching administration.” (T1/<5 years teaching)

“I often feel stressed about meeting the demands of the current curriculum. We are required to prepare quite a lot of administration such syllabus, lesson plan and projects but I am used to it.” (T2/>5 years teaching)

Adapting to Technology-based Teaching

Technological developments require teachers to adapt methods, approaches and strategies in teaching. This is considered difficult by senior teachers who are over 45 years old. However, for teachers who are still in the young category, they are more able to adapt to the use of technology in teaching as stated in the interview:

“For me, as I am old enough, it is very difficult to adjust to using technology in learning. I feel quite clueless in technological matters that are rapidly changing.” (T3/47 years)

“Mastering this technology is quite difficult for me. But this is a requirement in learning. I will try to adapt, although slowly.” (T2/51 years)

As a teacher who is familiar with technology, I feel obliged to apply technology. It's not difficult for me to adapt to technology. (T4/28 years)

Dealing with Misbehave Students

Classroom management is a skill that teachers must have. Teachers with good classroom management will be able to become leaders in the learning process with different student characteristics and be able to find solutions to existing problems. However, teachers who have less than five years of teaching experience feel that it is very tiring dealing with students who misbehave compared to those who have more than five years of teaching experiences.

“In class there are students who act as they please and I feel a lot of stress to educate these students.” (T1/< 5 years teaching)

“The naughty students are very difficult to control. They don't seem to have given up on carrying out actions that violate school rules. It is very tiring for me to solve this problem.” (T4/< 5 years teaching)

The answers to the first research question showed that teachers had a significant degree of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Surprisingly, diminished personal were reported by more than half of the participating Indonesian EFL teachers, indicating a high degree of burnout. A study conducted by [Donker et al., \(2020\)](#) found that teachers with longer teaching experience seemed to have better emotional skills which showed similar results with the current study. Teachers with shorter teaching experience had higher emotional exhaustion compared to those who are more experienced. A teacher who exhibits a high degree of diminished personal may have lost faith in their ability to make a meaningful contribution to the area through their expert teaching services ([Ilya, 2023](#)).

The first factor identified to have caused burnout among EFL teachers were administrative task. A similar results were found in a study conducted by [Van Droogenbroeck et al., \(2014\)](#) who found that doing teaching administration was believed to be factors of causing burnout among teachers. Sometimes teachers were overloaded by administrative tasks and lead them to job dissatisfaction ([Jomuad et al., 2021](#)). Teachers who have more administrative work on their hands are less likely to prepare lessons and give feedback on students' tasks ([Kim, 2019](#)). In this study, teachers with less than five years experienced claimed that they were stressed preparing the teaching administrative such as lesson plan. A recent study conducted by [Diasti \(2021\)](#) also identified that novice EFL teachers were burdened by administrative works.

The second factor that caused burnout was adapting to technology. In this study, the difficulties of adapting to technology was stressed by teachers who are above 45 years old. Other teachers mentioned their willingness to learn and adapt their teaching skills adjusting the current technological development. Delivering instruction with technology is undoubtedly bring many benefits both for teachers and students ([Choi & Yi, 2016](#); [Tseng et al., 2020](#)). Introducing technology in classroom is highly recommended in today's technological advanced era. However, adapting to new technology could be stressful. The stress known as "technostress" is resulted from the strain that comes with using technology and from having the abilities and expertise required to successfully integrate technology in teaching practice ([Çoklar et al., 2017](#); [Muslimin, 2023](#)). [Thomas and Reyes \(2024\)](#) also pointed out that learning new technology could increase teachers' workload and was identified to be a leading factor of causing burnout.

The third factor identified was dealing with students with misbehavior. Student misbehavior is one of the factors related most strongly to teacher burnout ([Aloe et al., 2014](#)). In a diverse class, students have different background, characteristics and needs. Teachers are required to have good classroom management skills to be able to accommodate those variables. Students who feel left behind tend to seek attention and often commit misbehavior ([Vidić, 2022](#)). Similar findings were identified in a study conducted by [Gilmour et al., \(2022\)](#) who found that teachers' burnout profile were related with classroom management skills especially dealing with students with behavioral disorders. Those who did not experience burnout tend to have better classroom management skills as in this study was not found in teachers with more than five years of teaching experiences. A study by [Kollerová et al., \(2023\)](#) found that teachers' exhaustion was positively associated with disruptive student behaviors and teachers with less experience had higher exhaustion compared to the more experienced in dealing with disruptive student behaviors.

CONCLUSION

This study focuses on identifying level and factors of causing burnout among EFL teachers in Indonesia. The results of the study conclude that teachers experienced diverse level of burnout. Teachers with less than five years teaching experiences were identified to have high level of burnout. Teachers with more than five years teaching experience had low to moderate level of burnout. In terms of subscale of burnout, the emotional exhaustion was the highest score. In terms of factors causing burnout, three factors were identified. They are teaching administration, adapting to technology-based teaching, dealing with misbehave students.

Teachers with less and more than five years of teaching experiences mentioned similar factor of burnout that is teaching administration. Teachers with more than five years' experience and above age of 40 mentioned the difficulties of adapting to technology meanwhile teachers with less than five years were feeling stress dealing with students with misbehavior. To help teachers maintain their motivation in teaching, the role of school principal is important. They are encouraged to give support and appreciation to teachers who had been working very hard. A major shortcoming of the research is the absence of qualitative information that could provide a more profound understanding of the conclusions drawn from the quantitative analysis. In order to comprehend the phenomenon on a larger scale, further study is encouraged to identify the possible effects of burnout towards EFL teachers' life.

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