

**Burnout and Professional Well-being of School English-as-a-Foreign-Language  
Teachers: A Systematic Review**

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Date: 11 of November, 2024

Dear: Mereinur Tabuldin

This letter now confirms that your research project titled “Burnout and Professional Well-being of English-as-a-Foreign-Language Teachers: A Systematic Review” has been approved by the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee of Nazarbayev University.

You may proceed with contacting your preferred research site and commencing your participant recruitment strategy.

Yours sincerely,

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## **Abstract**

### **Burnout and Professional Well-being of School English-as-a-Foreign-Language**

#### **Teachers: A Systematic Review**

Burnout is one of the actual mental health issues of the contemporary world. It is an occupational syndrome that affects socio-emotional, personal, and professional tenets of the life and undermines one's well-being, leading to certain consequences in a workplace. This study employs a systematic review to comprehensively examine diverse aspects of international school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' professional well-being and burnout. The main purpose of this systematic review is to make a comprehensive overview of the data on the influence of burnout on EFL teachers' well-being and coping strategies. The research questions aim to explain the relatedness between EFL teachers' well-being and burnout, specific contextual predictors, and coping mechanisms. This review employed the four main inclusion criteria: types of study, the time range, the target population, and the educational context. The exclusion criteria were non-originality, lack of peer-review, non-English publication, restricted access, irrelevant context, and mixed educational levels, settings, and population. Science Direct, Web of Science, and the website of the Nazarbayev University Library were used as main data sources. No registers were used to identify studies. The data search was done in February, 2025. To minimize the risk of bias in the included studies, the MMAT tool was employed, and the report was done based on the PRISMA framework and thematic analysis. The PRISMA diagram was used to present the search results. In total, 16 studies with quantitative, qualitative, mixed-method, and secondary research-based designs were included in this review, with a total number of 4, 295 participants. Key findings indicate that burnout is the result of dynamic interplay of various factors and closely related to EFL teachers' well-being, whereas diverse coping mechanisms

and internal resources can mitigate it. This review is essential for enhancing the quality of studies on burnout in Kazakhstan.

*Key words:* burnout, EFL teachers, school education, well-being, coping strategies, systematic review, thematic analysis

## Андатпа

### Мектептерде ағылшын тілін шет тілі ретінде оқытатын мұғалімдердің кәсіби күйініші мен әл-ауқаты: жүйелі шолу

Кәсіби күйініш — психикалық денсаулыққа жататын қазіргі заманның өзекті мәселелерінің бірі. Бұл — адамның әлеуметтік-эмоционалды, жеке және кәсіби өміріне әсер ететін кәсіби синдром, ол адамның әл-ауқатына нұқсан келтіріп, жұмыс орнында белгілі бір салдарға алып келуі мүмкін. Бұл зерттеуде мектептерде ағылшын тілін шет тілі ретінде оқытатын халықаралық (EFL) мұғалімдердің кәсіби әл-ауқаты мен кәсіби күйінішін жан-жақты зерделеу мақсатында жүйелі шолу әдісі қолданылады. Зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты — кәсіби күйініштің аталмыш мұғалімдердің әл-ауқатына тигізетін ықпалы мен оған қарсы күресу стратегиялары туралы мәліметтерді кешенді түрде талдау. Зерттеу сұрақтары кәсіби күйініш пен мұғалімдердің әл-ауқаты арасындағы байланысты, нақты контекстуалдық факторларды және күресу механизмдерін түсіндіруге бағытталған. Бұл шолуда төрт негізгі іріктеу критерий қолданылды: зерттеу түрі, уақыт аралығы, мақсатты популяция және білім беру контексті. Алып тастау критерийлеріне: түпнұсқалықтың болмауы, рецензияланбауы, ағылшын тілінен өзге тілде жариялануы, шектеулі қолжетімділік, сәйкес келмейтін контекст және аралас білім беру деңгейлері мен популяция жатады. Негізгі дереккөздер ретінде «Science Direct», «Web of Science» және Назарбаев Университетінің кітапханасының веб-сайты пайдаланылды. Зерттеулерді анықтау үшін тіркеу базалары қолданылған жоқ. Деректер 2025 жылдың ақпан айында қаралды. Қамтылған зерттеулердегі көзқарастың ауытқуын азайту мақсатында «MMAT» құралы қолданылып, есеп «PRISMA» әдістемесі негізінде жасалды. Іздеу нәтижелерін көрсету үшін «PRISMA» диаграммасы қолданылды. Барлығы 4295 қатысушысы бар, сандық, сапалық, аралас әдісті және екінші реттік зерттеу үлгілеріндегі 16 зерттеу мақала қарастырылды. Негізгі нәтижелер кәсіби

күйініштің әртүрлі факторлардың өзара әрекеттесуінен туындайтын құбылыс екенін және ол ағылшын тілін шет тілі ретінде оқытатын мұғалімдердің әл-ауқатымен тығыз байланысты екенін көрсетті, ал түрлі күресу механизмдері мен ішкі ресурстар оны азайтуы мүмкін. Бұл шолу Қазақстандағы кәсіби күйініш тақырыбы бойынша болашақ зерттеулердің сапасын арттыруға маңызды үлес қосады.

*Түйін сөздер:* кәсіби күйініш, ағылшын тілін шет тілі ретінде оқытатын мұғалімдер, мектептегі білім беру, әл-ауқат, күресу стратегиялары, жүйелі шолу, тақырыптық талдау.

## Аннотация

### **Профессиональное выгорание и благополучие школьных учителей, преподающих английский язык как иностранный: систематический обзор**

Профессиональное выгорание — одна из актуальных проблем психического здоровья в современном мире. Это профессиональный синдром, затрагивающий социально-эмоциональные, личные и профессиональные аспекты жизни, подрывающий благополучие человека и приводящий к определенным последствиям на рабочем месте. В данном исследовании с помощью систематического обзора всесторонне рассматриваются различные аспекты профессионального благополучия и выгорания международных школьных учителей английского языка как иностранного (EFL). Основная цель систематического обзора — представить комплексный анализ данных о влиянии выгорания на благополучие вышеназванных учителей и стратегиях совладания с ним. Вопросы исследования направлены на объяснение взаимосвязи между благополучием учителей английского языка как иностранного и профессиональным выгоранием, выявление специфических контекстуальных факторов и механизмов его преодоления. Обзор основан на четырех основных критериях включения: тип исследования, временные рамки, целевая группа и образовательный контекст. Критериями исключения являются отсутствие оригинальности, отсутствие рецензирования, публикации не на английском языке, ограниченный доступ, нерелевантный контекст, а также смешение уровней образования, условий и популяций. В качестве основных источников данных использовались базы данных «Science Direct», «Web of Science» и сайт библиотеки Назарбаев Университета. Регистры для поиска исследований не использовались. Поиск данных проводился в феврале 2025 года. Для минимизации риска систематической ошибки был использован инструмент «ММАТ», а отчет составлен на основе методологии «PRISMA».

Диаграмма «PRISMA» использовалась для представления результатов поиска. В обзор были включены 16 научных статей, основанных на количественном, качественном, смешанном и вторичном методах исследования, в которых приняли участие в общей сложности 4295 человек. Основные результаты показывают, что профессиональное выгорание является следствием сложного взаимодействия различных факторов и тесно связано с благополучием учителей английского языка как иностранного, при этом разнообразные стратегии совладания и внутренние ресурсы могут смягчить его проявления. Данный обзор важен для повышения качества будущих исследований по профессиональному выгоранию в Казахстане.

*Ключевые слова:* профессиональное выгорание, учителя английского языка как иностранного, школьное образование, благополучие, стратегии совладания, систематический обзор, тематический анализ.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Teachers play a pivotal role in education, and their pedagogical responsibility is part of their professional identity. In particular, teaching is primarily characterized by a teacher's emotional involvement in their job which may significantly impact both teachers' and students' well-being. Burić (2019) notes that teaching is an emotional labor and certain emotional-labor strategies that teachers employ are a fundamental part of their job. For example, they may express the emotions that are desirable in the professional context while hiding their true emotions and feelings. Teachers inevitably face various challenges that may emerge in certain stages of their professional development and cause a high level of stress.

Burnout is defined as a syndrome that results from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed (WHO, 2019). There are three symptoms: emotional exhaustion, negativism towards one's job, and a sense of ineffectiveness (WHO, 2019). According to Nyghmetzhanova and Hernández-Torrano (2025), work-related burnout is the most common negative phenomenon among Kazakhstani teachers. In this regard, the most frequent work-related factors leading to burnout are increased workload, a lack of professional support, or involvement in multiple administrative tasks (Puzikova et al., 2020, p. 68). Language teachers, like other subject teachers, are engaged in daily social interrelations (Pietarinen et al., 2017, p. 63), not only with students, but with other members of a professional community, and sometimes even with parents. The conditions under which they work vary depending on the institutional culture. Therefore, more research is needed to better understand these conditions leading to burnout among language teachers and find appropriate solutions to prevent it.

## **Background Information**

Language teachers in Kazakhstan work in different levels of education system. In Kazakhstan, education system is divided into pre-primary, primary, secondary, general secondary education, technical and vocational, and higher education levels. Secondary education is defined as an educational institution that offers educational programs for both primary and secondary education, in addition to supplementary programs for students and learners (On the Approval of Standard Rules for the Operation of Preschool, Secondary, Technical, Vocational, Post-Secondary, and Additional Educational Organizations of Relevant Types and Categories, 2023). There are 7,687 schools with 3.7 million students and 556,896 teachers in Kazakhstan. Out of these teachers, 521,112 work in rural areas (Concept of School and Technical and Vocational Education Development, 2023-2029).

Teachers work within the legacy of the soviet education system, as the country was part of the USSR from 1921 till December 1991. The transition from the soviet education system to a modernized one was a challenge for the educational development of Kazakhstan. The current education system of the country is internationally oriented and has a top-down and central-to-periphery dissemination, whereas the highly centralized and bureaucratic nature of the system affects the way reforms are interpreted and implemented and particularly the role of teachers (Yakavets et al., 2023). The goals of the modernization reforms are “to improve the economic competitiveness of the Kazakhstani education and science, educating and training a person on the basis of universal values and increased contribution of science to the country’s economy” (MoES, Ch 4, as cited in Yakavets, 2023, p. 2). In order for the economy to be globally competitive, it is important to develop all levels of the education system. One of these reforms being exercised at all levels in Kazakhstan is the trilingual model of education.

A brief history of the language policy in Kazakhstan helps to contextualize the challenges teachers face. In 2007, the Ministry of Education and Sciences launched the Trinity of Languages reform. Its aim was to establish trilingual competency among the growing generation. The language reform was implemented both in secondary schools and universities (Manan et al., 2023). The reform proposed teaching school subjects such as Kazakh, Kazakh literature, and history in Russian-medium classes in Kazakh, and Russian and Russian literature in Kazakh-medium classes in Russian. However, the focus ultimately changed. English came to be used as a medium of instruction (EMI) of science subjects but not all teachers were psychologically ready to teach their subjects entirely in English. Some teachers were stressed during the training program. According to Karabassova (2020), out of 5,922 teachers, 818 were teaching these subjects in English which indicates that the majority struggled with the reform. In its EMI policy, the government initially intended to use the EMI for all subjects but then this idea was revised (Manan et al., 2023). It was then decided that at least one out of four science subjects (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Computer Science) would be taught in English. The challenges that ensued from the implementation of the EMI policy affected the teachers in Kazakhstan.

Language teachers are mainly involved in developing language competences and skills that learners are expected to acquire by the end of school education but even they may not always be able to teach and communicate effectively because of the stress and anxiety that may result from not being able to meet high standards imposed by the language policy. For example, not all English teachers have sufficient proficiency (Level B2) to teach their subjects in accordance with the CEFR (Common European Framework) or have enough methodological preparedness. In the case of the Content and Language Integrated Learning approach, teachers may be required to have proficiency in English

higher than upper-intermediate (Akbatyeva et al., 2020, p. 159). Furthermore, all language teachers are expected to constantly improve their teaching, which can also be stressful. The purpose of this systematic review is to systematically and comprehensively review the existing empirical studies on burnout among EFL teachers and critically evaluate their quality.

### **Problem Statement**

Teaching is a socially important job that carries an inherently high level of stress due to its complex nature. It can be characterized as an emotional experience that includes psychological, interactional, and social processes that arise from the dynamic interaction between individuals and their immediate environment (King & Ng, 2018, p. 141).

Psychological processes are characterized by teachers' motivation and behaviour whereas interactional ones relate to the way they make judgments of their capabilities in association with stressors in the environment (Brown, 2012; Eskridge & Coker, 1985, as cited in Zarrinabadi et al., 2023, p. 3). Social processes in its turn are defined by the way teachers interact with others while executing their professional tasks. All of these processes can contribute to teachers' professional well-being.

Burnout is an undesirable health condition that can mediate between the factors causing it and one's decision to leave the profession which is one of the common consequences. Teacher attrition is a serious issue in education. A study in Australia that involved secondary and former school teachers found that burnout was frequently associated with management, workload, paper-work, or arrangement of clubs rather than teaching-related duties (Lawrence et al., 2019, p. 196). It was found that in Australia 21% of school teachers leaving the profession, cited stress and burnout related to excessive workload and permanent mental fatigue (Heffernan et al., 2022, p. 69). Another study demonstrated that 82% of school teachers who participated in the research had left the

profession, citing school leadership and heavy workload as the main reasons for leaving teaching (Brandenburg et al., 2024, p. 9). Thus, teacher burnout is seen as a result of the interplay of teaching and non-teaching-related factors often causing teachers to leave the profession considerably impacting the education system.

Both international and local studies have examined stress and burnout among teachers in Kazakhstan. According to the 2018 TALIS survey, only 3% of the surveyed teachers reported that they experience high stress in their job (TALIS, 2018). However, this is important because the regression analysis revealed that those teachers who reported a lot of stress are more likely to leave the profession within five years (TALIS, 2018). One of the few studies in Kazakhstan found that 58% of school teachers in two rural schools experience burnout (Puzikova et al., 2020, p. 67). Although this study included only two urban schools, it indicates the existence of burnout in Kazakhstani schools. Another study on emotional burnout amongst school students and teachers as well as university students and instructors that was done during the COVID-19 period revealed that 53% of school teachers and instructors felt more tension and were more stressed, whereas 62% of university instructors indicated that they felt more exhausted due to the transition to the distant learning (Kabakova et al, 2023, p. 24). Additionally, Nyghmetzhanova and Hernández (2025) reported that 73% of Kazakhstani teachers had a moderate level of burnout, indicating the persistence of the problem in the country. Thus, teachers in Kazakhstan experience job-related stress and are susceptible to burnout similar to their colleagues in other countries.

There exist four main issues related to the topic of language teachers' burnout in Kazakhstan. Firstly, there is a lack of empirical research on burnout among language teachers who work in secondary urban and rural schools in Kazakhstan. For instance, there are only three studies regarding teachers' burnout that are publicly available. The first

article elaborates on teacher burnout in two secondary rural schools (Puzikova et al., 2020), whereas the second one deals with the prediction of burnout among pre-service English language teacher candidates (Zhetpisbayeva et al., 2021). The third study focuses on emotional burnout among students and teachers during the pandemic period (Kabakova et al, 2023). Secondly, these studies mainly employed the quantitative design. Hence, more studies with the use of various qualitative methods are necessary to understand teachers' experiences more deeply. Thirdly, the sampling of the previous studies included school teachers who work in a single region only. More specifically, there is a lack of research regarding Kazakh, Russian, and English language teachers who work in different regions of Kazakhstan and are currently experiencing burnout, or even have left the profession. Finally, not only does burnout affect teachers but also affects students and their involvement in classes and academic performance (Griffiths & Sönmez, 2020, p. 81). This statement indicates that more empirical data on the impact of teacher burnout on students and their learning are needed. This kind of data are currently scarce in Kazakhstan. Thus, the present systematic review makes it important to enhance the quality of potential studies on teacher burnout in Kazakhstan by addressing the mentioned challenges in literature.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this systematic review is to provide a systematic and comprehensive overview of the existing data on the impact of burnout among EFL teachers working at different levels of school education on their professional well-being by reporting the review process. The thesis includes studies from commonly used databases that serve as a basis for the systematic review.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions will guide this systematic review:

1. How are various aspects of EFL teachers' professional well-being related to burnout in the context of school education?
2. What contextual factors contribute to EFL teachers' burnout in different countries?
3. What kind of coping strategies, or internal resources do EFL teachers employ to handle burnout and maintain their professional well-being?

### **Significance of the Study**

The present systematic review on burnout among school EFL teachers can be one of the few systematic reviews that examines this issue as part of their professional identity and the strategies that they employ to handle it. Another potential contribution of the present review is that Kazakhstani scholars will gain a better understanding of current approaches to exploring burnout. Finally, it can contribute to raising awareness about EFL teachers' burnout among parents, teachers, school leaders, and policymakers.

### **Outline of the Thesis**

The present systematic review comprises six chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion. The introduction includes the problem statement, purpose, the research questions, and significance of the study. The literature review presents a number of publications on teacher well-being and burnout that are used as a theoretical basis of the given study. The methodology chapter offers an overview of the research method employed in this systematic review and provides the detailed information on the research design, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. The findings present the results of the review, while the discussion chapter focuses on the analysis of these findings. Finally, the conclusion chapter presents directions for future research, implications, and recommendations for policymakers and educators based on the analysis of the findings.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the concept of burnout in the context of EFL teachers' professional well-being while elaborating both on theoretical and empirical findings in this area of research. Because of the lack of research on this topic in Kazakhstan, this review focuses more on international studies to understand the concept in-depth.

The general purpose of this systematic review is to broadly study the data on the way burnout affects school EFL teachers's professional well-being, whereby the main research questions are:

1. How are various aspects of EFL teachers' professional well-being related to burnout in the context of school education?
2. What contextual factors contribute to EFL teachers' burnout in different countries?
3. What kind of coping strategies, or internal resources do EFL teachers employ to handle burnout and maintain their professional well-being?

To answer these questions, it is essential to understand the key concepts that form the basis of this systematic review. Therefore, in addition to the theoretical framework that guides the current review, the concepts of teacher well-being and burnout in the school context, various potential factors, and research instruments are presented in this chapter. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary.

### **Teacher Well-being**

Well-being is one of the crucial research concepts that remains controversial because of diverse existing conceptualizations. There have been hedonic and eudemonic approaches to understanding well-being. From the hedonic perspective, well-being is one's ability to gain pleasure while avoiding negative emotions to reach a high level of

happiness (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 141). According to the eudemonic approach, well-being is the ability to use personal resources and strengths in ways that make one's life meaningful and provide opportunities for personal growth (Mercer, 2023). However, well-being is interpreted differently in contemporary literature. For instance, it is defined as "a state of happiness and contentment, with low levels of distress, overall good physical and mental health outlook, or good quality of life" (APA, Dictionary of Psychology, 2020, para. 1).

Herrera et al. (2023) provide a more detailed definition of well-being. According to this definition, well-being is a state of equilibrium in which individuals experience health, happiness, and flourishing through which life satisfaction, self-realization, and the capability to perform socially responsible behaviors are developed and that have a long-lasting positive effect. Unlike the previous definitions, this definition includes the elements of a sense of purpose and social normativity. According to Ryff (2014), purpose in life is one of the core dimensions of psychological well-being that make one's life meaningful (p. 12). These are essential elements because teachers are usually expected to act purposefully and behave according to professional ethics on a constant basis. As a rule, socially accepted behavior is reflected in teachers' professional ethics that they are expected to follow, whereas the purpose refers to the way teachers prepare for their daily job and arrange the teaching process. In this systematic review, all of these elements of well-being are considered fundamental and crucial.

Well-being is the concept based on the hedonistic and eudemonic approaches that also include an emotional component. These two perspectives can be integrated to develop a wider explanation of well-being that is characterized by one's positive emotional experience and a sense of doing well most of the time in life (Compton et al., 1996; Jayawickreme et al., 2012, as cited in Mercer, 2023, p.1055). It is critical to understand

that both positive and negative emotional experiences are directly related to the self-regulation mechanism. This mechanism is particularly important in a teaching profession. It is argued that teachers who can regulate their emotions more effectively are likely to become emotionally and psychologically more involved in teaching activities because they use strong intrinsic and extrinsic processes to evaluate, control, or change their emotions, and these processes enable them to achieve concrete professional objectives (Greenier et al., 2021, p. 11). In this context, intrinsic processes refer to one's motivation and will, whereas extrinsic ones relate to external events. For instance, when teachers experience positive feelings as motivation, pride, and importance, they remain more energetic and can improve their teaching activities continuously. Thus, the emotional component is an essential component of teacher well-being.

Well-being as a complex and multidimensional concept has many sources. Previous studies on psychological well-being largely concentrate on reports of happiness, life satisfaction and positive affect as sources of one's well-being. However, Aristotle claimed that happiness is not the highest goal but it is about activities that one does in accordance with virtue, which means striving to accomplish the best that we have within ourselves (Ryff, 2014, p. 11). In this context, teaching a language allows a teacher to use their inner psychological resources, such as imagination, memory and attention to display their best personal qualities, disclose their cognitive, creative and communicative abilities through various teaching strategies in a classroom and thus become the model for students. In this regard, this explanation of well-being reflects the element of self-realization, meaning that teachers who are more committed to their job can experience the sense of fulfillment and happiness.

In the present systematic review, teacher well-being is understood as a complex phenomenon describing one's positive state of mind that allows a person to have a sense of

purpose and positive attitudes and beliefs towards the profession and other people, experience good emotions and feelings through the use of internal psychological resources which in turn give a meaning to one's life. Therefore, this review provides a more holistic definition of well-being because it embraces psychological, social, and emotional components altogether.

### **Language Teachers' Well-being**

Well-being of language teachers is a specific concept and one of the important directions of contemporary research on multilingual education. It is an essential and multidimensional concept that reflects many aspects of one's life and bears a subjective nature. It is explained based on hedonic and eudemonic experiences. The hedonic component underlines the role of happiness in one's life, whereas the eudemonic focuses on a sense of purpose and personal growth. Both of these approaches underlie the multidimensional framework called PERMA, which refers to positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Sak & Gurbuz, 2024, p. 171). The six-factor model suggested by Ryff (2014) comprises the following dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. According to this model, a language teacher with high a level of psychological well-being can be a self-determining and independent person who has a mastery in managing the environment, a sense of constant development, trusting relationships with others, a sense of purpose, and a positive self-image.

In literature, well-being is considered from the individualistic perspective because of its subjective nature. However, Mercer (2022) examined the social dimension of English language teachers' well-being from the ecological perspective. This approach developed by Uri Bronfenbrenner not only focuses on the connection between an

individual and different social institutions but also on the interactions between them. The study found that different working conditions, such as low pay, poor job security, or extra working hours, had a negative impact on the well-being of Maltese English language teachers that seemed to stem from the business model nature. These findings indicate that work-related issues can emerge from the professional relationships between teachers and employers and at the same time impact on teachers' well-being.

Well-being is a complex notion that is related to other concepts, meaning that it cannot be considered separately from teaching-related qualities. In this regard, scholars examined the relationship between language teachers' well-being and various factors. For instance, the findings of the study on the interplay of teacher immunity, work engagement, and well-being that included 1,135 English language teachers from China, Indonesia, Iran, and Vietnam indicate that their psychological well-being was a better predictor of teacher immunity than work engagement (Wang et al., 2022, p. 12). Teacher immunity is understood as a strong defense mechanism that develops as a response to intense threats which is related to the professional identity, emotional state, and instructional efficiency of language teachers. The results of the study suggest that language teachers' well-being and engagement are interrelated elements of teacher immunity that equip language teachers with a strong affective state to thrive in challenging situations. In contrast, Sak and Gyrbuz's (2024) study on pre-service language teachers' well-being found that well-being within the classroom environment varies among individuals and develops over time, exhibiting non-linear patterns that can change not only during individual lessons but also from one lesson to the next, which is influenced by the interplay of diverse personal and contextual factors.

## **Socio-emotional Aspects of Teaching**

Teaching is a social profession that requires a frequent and dynamic interaction with students and communication with other stakeholders (King & Ng, 2018, p. 141). Teaching also requires a certain degree of socio-emotional competence. According to Gkonou and Mercer (2018), socio-emotional competence is a set of essential life skills that enable individuals to identify and manage their emotions, show care for others, make responsible decisions, foster healthy and positive relationships, and effectively navigate the challenges and difficulties of everyday life.

Relationships between teachers and students are one of the key aspects of the teaching occupation that can be rewarding and at the same time lead teachers to becoming emotionally drained and discouraged (Huberman & Vandenberghe, 2010, p. 3). In order for teachers to foster and manage the relationships with students and stakeholders, they should possess both emotional and social competences. More specifically, these skills are emotional and social intelligence. Goleman (1995) defines emotional intelligence as the capacity to comprehend one's own emotions and those of others, effectively manage emotions, and have a positive outlook on life. In contrast, he defines social intelligence as one's ability to manage relationships effectively in order to foster healthy and balanced connections. In this regard, language teachers may find themselves in various situations both within and out of a classroom in which they are expected to use these skills to handle diverse work-related issues. This in turn requires that teachers be resistant to any stressor that may emerge in the relationships with students, colleagues and parents. According to Wang and Wang (2022), emotional intelligence negatively correlates with burnout. Furthermore, Delawele and Mercer (2018) note that language teachers' emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and linguistic security determine both their professional well-being and relationships with learners. Accordingly, the lack of these skills can have

negative consequences not only for teachers themselves but also for the academic performance of students and the relationships with them.

### **The Definition of Burnout**

Burnout is considered as an occupational syndrome that is caused by a high level of stress in a workplace and that develops over time (WHO, 2018). It is characterized as a multidimensional construct because it comprises three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal effectiveness. These in turn can emerge due to a number of contextual factors.

Burnout is one of the most widespread mental health issues among teachers along with stress, anxiety, and depression (Agyapong et al., 2022, p. 19). According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word *burnout* has a number of meanings. However, it came to be used in the meaning of a negative health condition in the 1970s. The Cambridge Dictionary defines burnout as “extreme tiredness caused by working too much.” Freudenberg (1974) was the first to define burnout as a health issue that presents in various symptomatic forms, with both the symptoms and their severity differing from person to person. More specifically, he described burnout as a set of symptoms including exhaustion that results from excessive demands at work with the following physical signs: fatigue, headache, sleeplessness, and shortness of breath (p. 160). In addition, the behavioral signs are: “quickness to anger,” irritation, frustration, suspiciousness, rigid thinking, and “depressive looks and actions” (p. 161). He also noted that burnout can develop over the course of a year as several factors begin to influence it. On the other hand, Maslach (1976) defined burnout as the emotional and physical exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal effectiveness that can happen among individuals who mainly work with people.

In addition to the physical and emotional components described in the previous definitions, Maslach (1976) also added that burnout can be characterized as “attitudinal

exhaustion which leads to one's negative attitude towards people and a decline in the quality of work." As suggested by the definitions so far, this syndrome can be considered as a response to a chronic stress that results from frequent interpersonal interactions (Mearn & Cains, 2016, p. 27). Because teaching is characterized by a high degree of social interaction, involvement with learners, and stress, it is likely to cause a feeling of burnout (Frenzel & Stephens, 2013, as cited in Bing et al., 2022, p. 2). Teacher burnout can be best understood as a condition at an individual level that can happen at any stage of teachers' professional development and stem from various factors in the professional environment, as well as from their responses to job-related stressors.

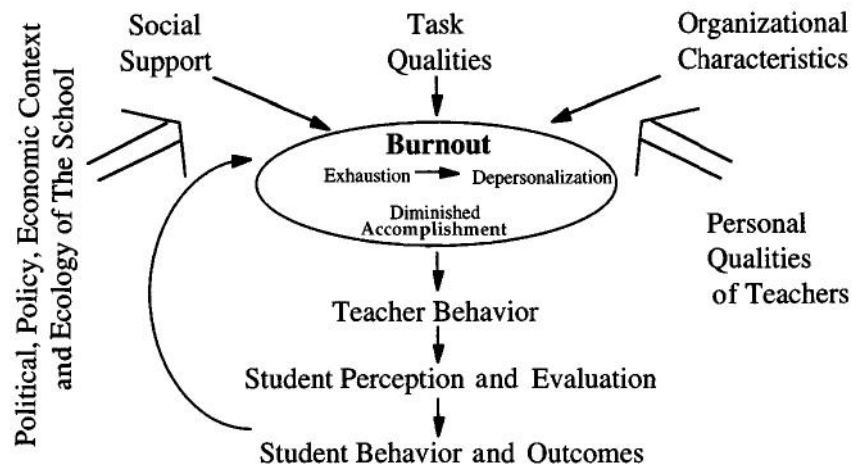
Overall, burnout is a syndrome characterized by one's low resilience to social stressors that gradually lead a person to feeling physically and emotionally exhausted and forming negative attitudes towards other people thus resulting in poor personal accomplishment. All of these symptoms are likely to contribute to worsening teaching quality.

### **Burnout in School Education**

Burnout is especially a complex problem in a school setting. In this context, school can be defined as the collectivistic organization where teachers share job demands and responsibilities and might face unfavorable conditions. According to Huberman and Vandenberghe (1999), burnout may occur when certain aspects of the job or its organizational environment hinder teachers from pursuing their values. More specifically, teachers can experience burnout due to the factors, such as conflicting demands, high expectations from within and outside the institution, limited resources, or a lack of recognition. These pressures can be intensified by increasing job responsibilities and minimal support which undermine teachers' sense of professional success and personal well-being. Burnout impacts not only teachers' health and job satisfaction but can also

negatively affect students, who may suffer from decreased attention and support. The problem might be compounded by school environments that fail to provide meaningful professional growth and emotional support, leading to high teacher turnover and diminished educational outcomes for students (Huberman & Vandenberghe, 1999). In this regard, the organizational context could be one of the crucial variables that contribute to teacher burnout. However, one of the recent studies in Belgium, which employed a multilevel approach, revealed that it is not the school context that is the most significant contributor to teacher burnout but the way teachers perceive, appraise and respond to individual- and school-level job demands and resources. This aligns with the understanding that burnout is primarily “an internal psychological phenomenon” (Droogenbroeck et al., 2021, p. 302).

The model proposed by Maslach and Leiter shows how burnout occurs in the school setting and a complex interaction of factors that can contribute to it. In this model, burnout is understood as a phenomenon that is impacted by multiple factors that range from political and economic context and ecology of the school to the nature of the profession. According to this model, emotional exhaustion emerges first which is then followed by depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment develops later. It can also be assumed that organizational factors contribute to each dimension of burnout separately. For instance, various organizational factors, such as overload, or interpersonal conflict can predict emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. On the other hand, the impact of personal qualities of teachers and students is also critical to understand. As can be seen from the model, all three components can negatively impact teacher behavior which in turn can affect the way students perceive and evaluate the teacher. The negative impact of burnout on student perception can then lead to the changes in their behavior, thus resulting in conflicts and low learning outcomes.

**Figure 1***A Proposed Model of Teacher Burnout*

Proposed model of teacher burnout.

*Note:* Huberman, A. M., & Vandenberghe, R. (1999). Introduction: Burnout and the teaching profession. In R. Vandenberghe & A. M. Huberman (Eds.), *Understanding and preventing teacher burnout: A sourcebook of international research and practice* (pp. 1–12). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Most studies being analyzed in this review focus on various aspects of teacher burnout in schools. Zhunusbekova and Askarqzy (2023), who did an experimental research on burnout among school teachers in Almaty, concluded that burnout emerges regardless of work experience, meaning that it can occur at any stage of professional development. Furthermore, possible causes bear a contextual nature. Another study that was done in Kazakhstani rural lyceum and gymnasium schools underlines that the appropriate organizational culture might prevent burnout among teachers and that its emergence depends on the quality of management culture and the communication quality between a school principal and teachers (Puzikova et al., 2020, p. 68). This study included 114 subject teachers from two rural schools. The study found that 53,58% teachers had a moderate level of burnout, whereas 12% of them had a high level of burnout. The authors reported that heavy workload and a lack of support might lead to teacher burnout which

indicates the quality of internal organizational culture in Kazakhstan (Puzikova et al., 2020, p. 68).

Another empirical study that was done among female school and faculty members during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kazakhstan revealed that they experienced a high level of stress. The authors concluded that having good access to modern technology and material security along with positive organizational factors, such as social climate, participatory management, performance feedback, and clear goals can contribute to the reduction of stress (Kenebayeva et al., 2022, p. 15). Notably, six female faculty members, which was 1% of the sampling, reported that they even thought about suicide after the first wave of the pandemic. This systematic review differs from the previous local studies in terms of a comprehensive approach to exploring burnout among school EFL teachers.

### **Potential Predictors of Burnout**

There are several models that aim to explain the factors causing burnout. The first model, suggested by Oranje, includes three main perspectives: interactional, psychological, and environmental (Oranje, 2001, as cited in Zarrinabadi, 2023, p. 3). Based on the first perspective, burnout results from individual misjudging of one's abilities in relation to stressors in the surroundings, whether imagined or real (Brown, 2012; Eskridge & Coker, 1985, as cited in Zarrinabadi et al, 2023, p. 3). From the psychological perspective, burnout is mental and physical exhaustion that affects individuals for a long period of time and has a negative emotional impact on them (Kremer-Hayon & Kurtz, 1985, p.234). The third source of stress lies in environmental factors, such as high workload, negative teacher-student relationships, or lack of recognition and appreciation. According to the second model that was developed by Christina Maslach, these causes are divided into individual and situational factors whereby the former includes age, gender, marital status and experience, and the latter pertains to job pre-requisites, professional requirements, and

organizational expectations (Zarrinabadi, 2023, p. 3). The study by Lou and Chen (2016) that was done among Chinese university language teachers revealed some contextual factors. Based on their findings, the authors identified five possible causes of burnout: job-related, student-related, management-related, teacher development, and family factors (p. 651).

Various empirical studies suggest a number of personality-related factors based on one's individual differences that can predict burnout. For instance, Bing et al. (2022) revealed that both self-efficacy and emotional self-regulation contribute to the prediction of burnout among Chinese English teachers (p. 7). In particular, they demonstrated that the way language teachers perceive their capability in satisfying their professional needs is likely to impact their level of stress, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization which means that teachers, who perceive themselves more confident and capable of making use of various instructional, classroom management, and engagement techniques, can withstand the potential factors causing emotional exhaustion and depersonalization compared to those who lack these qualities. Additionally, Burić et al. (2022) found that teachers with higher level of engagement experience higher level of self-efficacy. It was also found that emotional regulation can be a significant factor affecting language teachers' job satisfaction and attitudes. Language teachers, who have better emotional regulation and management skills, are better able to cope with stressful situations and are less likely to experience emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Bing et al., 2022, p. 7). Similarly, emotional regulation was found to be linked to burnout among Iranian English teachers (Bing et al., 2022, p. 24).

According to Burić (2019), teaching can be characterized as an emotional labour. This suggests that teacher emotional labour plays a significant role in explaining language teachers' engagement and motivation. This allows to suppose that motivation can be a

predictor of teacher burnout. Sato et al. (2022) found that externally motivated English teachers in Chile were more likely to feel demotivated than those who were self-motivated (p. 9). These findings demonstrated that those who chose to become teachers because of imposed ideas may be more prone to burnout than teachers who chose the profession willingly. Additionally, Asqarkyzy and Zhunusbekova (2020) observed that burnout levels can directly influence teacher motivation and shape their behavioral strategies in stressful situations. The authors note that when educators are intrinsically motivated to constantly enhance their skills and explore new methods and approaches, they are more likely to excel in their profession.

Other findings report that language teachers experience at least one of the following stressors: heavy workload, financial issues, and irregular working hours. They also reported experiencing challenging life event stressors, such as financial difficulties, change in living conditions and employment issues (Macintyre et al, 2019, p. 33). Additionally, the study that was done in Ethiopia found that psychosocial factors, such as job-demands, role-clarity, or student demotivation can significantly influence work-related burnout among secondary school teachers (Blay et al., 2024, p. 8).

Nayernia and Babayan (2019) studied the possible relationship between burnout and self-assessed language proficiency among 110 English teachers who work in private institutions in Iran. The study revealed that except for the reading subskill, all the other proficiency subskills were the predictors of different dimensions of burnout. More specifically, it was found that the teaching writing subskill predicted emotional exhaustion, whereas the speaking skill could be a predictor of depersonalization. Both speaking and listening subskills were found to be the predictors of personal accomplishment. It was noted that teachers with higher language proficiency feel less tired and are more effective in teaching compared to their less proficient colleagues who feel more depleted,

experience more negative feelings towards their students and consider themselves less competent in their job.

In addition to previous predictors, Khani and Mirzaee (2014) found that two contextual factors of time pressure and discipline could also directly lead to burnout among Iranian English teachers. The findings showed that as teachers get more burned out, they become more inclined to leave the profession and search for other professional alternatives outside of educational settings (Khani & Mirzaee, 2014). The study from Iran suggested that the time perspectives of language teachers may predict burnout, and it found that both the past negative and the present-fatalistic perspectives had a significantly positive relationship with burnout, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, and a significantly negative relationship with personal achievement (Meidani et al., 2019).

Another Iranian study explored the relationship between perfectionism, reflection, and burnout. According to Shirazizadeh and Karimpour (2019), language teachers' reflection was a significant correlate of their burnout with less reflective teachers experiencing more burnout. The findings of this study also revealed that although perfectionism is not a direct cause of teacher burnout, it influences burnout through the mediations of reflection. The results of recent study indicated that fixed teaching mindsets positively predicted emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, whereas growth teaching mindsets and self-efficacy significantly predicted personal accomplishments and teacher professional identity (Zarrinabadi et al., 2023, p. 12). These findings indicate that teachers with a growth mindset believe in their ability to improve their teaching skills to feel more accomplished and competent. In this case, they would probably strive to enhance their skills to cope with professional challenges which in turn requires the ability to reflect on the teaching process. On the other hand, teachers, who hold fixed negative attitudes towards teaching and do not believe that they can ameliorate their teaching competence,

would not make attempts to develop appropriate strategies to withstand work-related stress which may indicate the lack of reflective skill.

Overall, empirical studies show that a number of diverse factors contribute to burnout among language teachers. As was demonstrated, these factors vary depending on the cultural context in which language teachers work. It is crucial to comprehensively approach this issue because various contextual factors may underlie its emergence depending on the contextual characteristics of the education system of the country. Therefore, this systematic review is an attempt to better understand EFL teachers' burnout in the educational context of Kazakhstan.

### **Personality and EFL Teachers' Burnout**

Teacher burnout is as an individual psychological phenomenon that can occur at any period of teachers' professional development and result from a number of factors related to the professional environment and also by the way they respond to job-related stressors. When they respond to these stressors and cope with them, their personality manifests itself in a certain way. For instance, there exist certain personal traits and abilities that determine the way language teachers can handle burnout. Alomoudi (2023) found that a high level of professional autonomy among English teachers from Saudi Arabia is associated with a lower level of burnout. Professional autonomy is one's capacity to self-regulate, act, think, and make decisions independently and is seen as one of the key personal characteristics. Teacher agency and decision-making are considered as prerequisites of professional autonomy. An and Tao (2024), who focused on the impact of self-efficacy and well-being of 403 Chinese EFL teachers, revealed that self-efficacy and well-being significantly impacts the reduction of burnout among English teachers. Self-efficacy is understood as teachers' beliefs in their own abilities to arrange and execute specific teaching tasks, cope with professional challenges and perform effectively in their

roles in a particular educational setting. The study demonstrated that English teachers whose self-efficacy and sense of well-being is strong are less prone to burnout in the educational environment. Similarly, Zhang et al., (2023) revealed a positive relationship between self-efficacy, language proficiency, and job satisfaction. The results suggest that those English teachers who have a higher level of perceived self-efficacy demonstrate greater proficiency in language instruction and classroom management which in turn enhances their job satisfaction.

Various studies exist on the relationship between diverse personal traits and burnout. For instance, Bagheri (2024) found that English teachers with a high level of tolerance for ambiguity experienced lower levels of all three dimensions of teacher burnout. The study was done in Afghanistan and collected data from 154 Afghan English teachers. Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2016) examined the role of creativity in teaching, the influence of teaching styles on teacher burnout, and the impact of burnout on English teachers' creativity. The study included 193 English teachers from two cities of Iran. Additionally, 1,710 English language learners were invited to assess their teachers' creativity through the survey. It ultimately revealed that English teachers, who adopt a more student-centred teaching style and demonstrate a higher level of creativity, are less likely to experience burnout. On the other hand, Hu (2023) revealed that self-compassion and emotional labor strategies among English teachers in China positively impact their resilience. The study demonstrated that higher levels of self-compassion are linked to a higher level of teacher resilience. Bobek (2002) defines resilience as one's ability to adapt to challenging circumstances and enhance one's skill to cope with pressure and traumatic situations. Both self-compassion and resilience are interrelated constructs and important personal traits that can help an individual cope with burnout.

One of the essential personal characteristics that can help deal with burnout is grit. It is defined as a non-cognitive personality trait characterized by enduring passion and perseverance toward achieving significant long-term goals. It empowers individuals to persistently pursue their objectives over extended periods, even in the face of challenges and setbacks (Duckworth et al., 2009, p. 541). According to a study conducted in Iran, grit was found to be a significant predictor of lower burnout among English teachers (Sadoughi et al., 2024, p. 14). Additionally, it was demonstrated that reflective teachers are more capable of coping with daily stress, whereas perfectionism can impact burnout through the mediation of reflection, meaning that it is not a direct cause (Shirazizadeh & Karimpour, 2019, p. 10). Overall, language teachers' personal qualities can have a significant impact on their professional well-being and the way they withstand the work-related stress and burnout.

### *Understanding Stress and Coping Strategies*

To understand burnout, it is important to first understand the nature of stress itself. One of the models that examine the stress is the cognitive theory of psychological stress and coping proposed by Susan Folkman and Richard Lazarus in 1984. Folkman and Lazarus's (1986), theory emphasizes a transactional perspective. It views the individual and the environment as being in a dynamic, reciprocal, and bidirectional relationship. Stress is defined as the interaction between the individual and the environment, where the individual perceives the demands as exceeding their resources and threatening their well-being. The theory underlines cognitive appraisal and coping as essential mediators that influence the outcomes of stressful interactions between individuals and their environment, both in the short and long term.

Cognitive appraisal is the process through which an individual evaluates whether a specific interaction with the environment is significant to their well-being. It is divided

into two types: primary and secondary. In the first appraisal, a person assesses the potential benefit or harm of the environment to the self-esteem, and personality characteristics, such as values, goals and beliefs help to define the benefits and harms that a person finds relevant to the well-being in a specific circumstance. In the second appraisal, an individual evaluates the possible solutions to address the harm, or enhance the opportunities. These solutions may include: altering the situation, accepting it, gathering information, or refraining from an impulsive action. In contrast, coping involves an individual's cognitive and behavioral efforts to handle the internal and external demands of a person-environment interaction that is perceived as challenging. It has two primary functions: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping (Folkman et al., 1986, p. 572). Problem-focused coping strategies include assertive interpersonal efforts to change the situation and calm, rational, and deliberate problem-solving approaches. Emotion-focused coping strategies include techniques such as distancing, self-regulation, seeking social support, escape-avoidance, accepting responsibility, and engaging in positive reappraisal. Both cognitive appraisal and coping are transactional variables, which means that they do not pertain either to the individual, or the environment but to the interaction between the two within a specific context. Thus, the cognitive theory helps to understand the way individuals respond and cope with various stressors which will be discussed further.

### **Overcoming Burnout and Intervention**

Burnout is a considerable challenge that needs to be addressed appropriately. Overcoming burnout implies the use of certain coping strategies that can improve one's psychological well-being and requires the ability to regulate emotions. Emotion regulation is defined as "an individual's ability to modulate an emotion or a set of emotions" (APA, Dictionary of Psychology, 2020, para. 1). Furthermore, Hu (2023) revealed that teacher emotion regulation can indirectly predict teacher resilience through the mediation of

emotional labor strategies. It is argued that language teachers, who manage their emotions more effectively, are more resilient and are more likely to engage emotionally, cognitively, and psychologically in their teaching. By skillfully using intrinsic and extrinsic processes to modify, assess, or control their emotions to achieve specific goals, these teachers may demonstrate higher energy, put more effort into their teaching, and experience feelings of encouragement, pride, importance, and inspiration, allowing them to become deeply and joyfully immersed in their professional roles (Greenier et al., 2021).

Intervention programs directed towards reducing burnout is one of the ways to help teachers overcome burnout. Specifically, several intervention programs exist to help teachers with burnout. One of these programs is an empowering intervention program based on Alfred Adler's individual psychology. Adler's individual psychology is a holistic, encouragement-centered, and optimistic approach that employs empowering techniques like cognitive restructuring to build confidence and courage in discouraged clients, supporting them in changing their perspectives and lives (Watts, 2003, as cited in Ghasemi, 2022, p. 356). Ghasemi (2022) employed this approach to understand its effect on the burnout level of English language teachers in Iran. In particular, he used various cognitive restructuring techniques to facilitate mental empowerment among 60 teachers with a high level of burnout and lower achievement motivation. The study revealed that the intervention program successfully reduced burnout, promoted cognitive and behavior change, and confirmed teacher empowerment as an effective method to improve motivation and reduce burnout.

Another intervention program from Kazakhstan examined the effect of the Teacher Professional Training Program on female teachers' ability to resist against teaching-related stress. The study used a quasi-experimental method that aimed at comparing an intervention and a control group, each consisting of 25 teachers from pedagogical

excellence centers. The results suggest that the training with resilience-building elements were successful in decreasing work-related stress and enhancing resilience in female teachers (Shakimova et al., 2024, p. 8). The intervention program led by Madaliyeva et al. (2015) focused on reducing the level of burnout and increasing productivity among teachers while improving their emotional competence by means of a correctional training program. It involved 240 teachers aged from 30 to 45 with a university degree who were then equally divided into experimental and control groups. The study revealed the positive impact of the training program on teachers. In particular, the positive dynamics was observed in developing emotional skills of participants in the experimental group.

### **Measurement of Teacher Burnout**

A number of instruments exist that measure burnout and most of them are self-report questionnaires. They can be divided into two main categories: generic instruments and specific instruments (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022, p. 17). The widely used instrument is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) that belongs to a generic instrument because it is usually used to assess the syndrome of burnout regardless of one's occupation and is based on its own theoretical model. However, this questionnaire also has a specific version for educators (MBI-ES). The questionnaire consists of 22 items that are distributed in three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional effectiveness. Each statement is evaluated on a frequency scale that ranges from "never" to "always." High scores on each scale may indicate burnout.

Another alternative instrument associated with teacher burnout is the Teacher Burnout Questionnaire. It contains 14 items and is based on the MBI developed by C. Maslach. Other general questionnaires can also be used to measure teacher burnout but they need to be properly adapted to the teaching profession.

Questionnaire for the Evaluation of Burnout Syndrome (CESQT) comprises 20 items across 4 dimensions: enthusiasm for work (low scores indicate burnout), psychic burnout, indolence, and guilt. This questionnaire has two versions: CESQT and CESQTDP. The former was designed for individuals who work with people and the latter for those who do not have contact with people.

Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) is the questionnaire that contains 19 questions across the following dimensions: personal, work-related, and client-related burnout.

Oldenburg Burnout Inventory developed by Evangelia Demerouti (OLBI) consists of 16 items and measures two dimensions: exhaustion and disengagement from work.

Burnout Clinical Subtypes Questionnaire (BCSQ) has 36 items that assess three subtypes: frenetic, under-challenged, and worn-out. It also has a short version: BCSQ-12 that consists of 12 items.

Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) has 33 items and is divided into two parts: BAT-C, which refers to core symptoms (exhaustion, cognitive and emotional impairment, mental distance) and BAT-S: secondary symptoms (psychological and psychosomatic complaints).

Shirom–Melamed Burnout Questionnaire (SMBQ) comprises 22 items that cover emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, cognitive weariness, tension, and listlessness. It has an updated version: Shirom–Melamed Burnout Measure (SMBM) that consists of 14 items (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022, pp. 17-19).

Overall, all of the mentioned instruments can be used to measure teacher burnout depending on the goals of the research. The results of this systematic review can also serve as a basis for creating an additional qualitative data instrument, thus contributing to the existing methodological approaches.

## **Summary**

In conclusion, a variety of literature on burnout provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to teacher burnout, its multidimensional nature, and its impact on EFL teachers' professional well-being. Maslach's framework and the transactional model of stress help to understand how individual and contextual factors interact to shape burnout experiences. This systematic review highlights that teacher burnout is also influenced by personal traits, organizational environments, and external pressures. The next chapter draws on the methodology employed in this systematic review.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter provides an explanation of the research methods and data analysis procedures that will be applied to the present study to explore burnout among EFL teachers in the context of school education. In this systematic review, I provide an overview of the studies on language teachers' burnout and its impact on their professional well-being by doing a systematic review of the empirical studies, whereby the purpose is to report research findings. Firstly, the chosen research design is presented followed by search strategies and inclusion and exclusion criteria. Secondly, the chapter focuses on data analysis procedures and ethical considerations related to the study. Finally, it concludes with a summary.

To report the results of the systematic review, I followed the essential items of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) Statement, a commonly used framework used to provide a structured approach to ensure transparency, completeness, and accuracy in research reporting and which is intended for studies that include synthesis (Page et al., 2021). The PRISMA Statement and its extensions provide an evidence-based and minimum set of recommendations aimed at promoting transparent and comprehensive reporting of systematic reviews (Sarkis-Onofre et al., 2021, p. 1). The PRISMA statement can be beneficial because it is primarily based on strictly determined items that help increase transparency of the studies being reviewed and minimize bias. Such a rigorous approach can help to make the review process more objective and manageable.

#### **Research Design**

This study conducted a systematic review to examine burnout among EFL teachers who work at different levels of school education. The systematic review is a structured

approach to literature review that aims to identify, evaluate, and synthesize the most reliable evidence on a specific research question, providing well-informed, evidence-based conclusions (Cherry et al., 2024, p. 2). As was mentioned above, synthesis is an essential element of the systematic reviews. Research synthesis is the process of reviewing literature using a transparent, systematic, and often pre-registered methodology to identify, extract, and integrate information, all driven by specific research questions (Chong & Plonsky, 2024, pp. 1569-1594). According to Chong (2024), systematic review relates to configurative reviews that emphasize meaning-making by interpreting and synthesizing information. Its purpose is to comprehensively analyse both qualitative and quantitative evidence presented in primary studies.

Unlike traditional literature reviews, systematic reviews strive to locate all relevant evidence on a given topic, prioritizing studies that present empirical data rather than theoretical or conceptual discussions (Aromataris & Pearson, 2014, p. 54). Literature reviews, in general, play a crucial role in identifying what is known and unknown about a phenomenon, as well as in highlighting gaps that require further research (Newman & Gough, 2020, p. 4). The rationale behind the use of systematic review method is that it allows for a researcher to explore the current state of the issue in the given context more comprehensively and from multiple perspectives. Burnout is primarily a multifaceted issue influenced by an aggregate of organizational and individual factors that can have a negative impact on teachers' well-being in the long-term perspective. The school environment is a specific context that presents (language) teachers with a range of challenges and issues that necessitate a more holistic approach to examination. The systematic review can be beneficial and valuable because it consolidates the findings from diverse studies, providing a holistic understanding of such a complex phenomenon as burnout and its effect on language teachers' professional well-being. It can also help to

identify under-researched areas, or highlight whether burnout impacts language teachers differently from teachers in other subject areas.

In this review, empirical studies on language teachers' burnout were primarily reviewed. The systematic review of empirical studies can be relevant and valuable because it compiles results from multiple studies, providing a clear picture of what the body of evidence indicates about the phenomenon and minimizes the risk of bias by following a structured protocol.

### **Search Strategies**

The search of studies on the impact of burnout among language teachers working in school education on their professional well-being was carried out in February 2025 using the website of the Nazarbayev University Library and involved Science Direct, Web of Science to identify the relevant studies. These databases and the website were selected primarily because of a significantly large quantity of available studies on burnout compared to other databases and websites.

ScienceDirect is a leading full-text scientific database run by Elsevier that provides access to a vast collection of peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and other academic content across various disciplines. It includes 23 million of articles and chapters and more than 2, 900 peer-reviewed journals. Manuscripts are submitted and then go through the editorial review. After passing the initial screening process, the manuscripts undergo a peer-review, usually single-blinded or double-blinded review. Experts assess them based on the methodology, validity, significance, and contribution to knowledge. The rigorous selection process ensures the quality of the content published in journals.

Web of Science is a multidisciplinary citation database operated by Clarivate Analytics that indexes high-quality research journals. It contains more than 34, 000 journals that go a rigorous process of evaluation based on 28 criteria, such as ISSN

registration, publication history, peer-review process. These are categorized into 24 quality criteria (such as editorial board expertise, peer-review, content relevance, and citation practices) aimed at ensuring editorial rigor and best practices along with four impact criteria (comparative citation analysis, author citation analysis, editorial board citation analysis, content significance) that identify the most influential journals in their respective fields using citations as the primary measure of impact.

The search criteria included types of study, availability, resource type, subject areas, publication date and the following terms: “burnout” AND “language teacher” AND “school education.” These key terms clearly reflected the main aspects of this systematic review: burnout as a central concept, language teachers as a targeted sampling, and school education as a specific context. Initially, the “well-being” was one of the key terms but it was excluded due to the irrelevant search results. Most studies focused on the concept of well-being and were not connected with language teacher burnout.

The search process mainly bore a cross-disciplinary nature and included studies from educational psychology, social sciences, and health. The online library was useful in searching relevant articles because it had access to a number of electronic sources. The EBSCO database was used as a source of search as well but it did not have the following relevant search filters: availability, resource type, and publication date. Therefore, the advanced search was conducted again based on “everything” that was available on the website with the use of relevant search criteria. In total,  $n=1,105$  studies related to language teachers’ burnout working in school education were identified.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

The studies were selected based on four main criteria: types of study, the time range, the target population, and the context.

According to the first criterion, original peer-reviewed empirical and meta-analytic studies published in English regardless of research location were considered. Originality can be understood as authors' unique contribution to the research of the issue, while a peer-review implies the review made by other experts in the same field of knowledge. The key terms included in the search process were: burnout, language teachers, and school education. By taking original and peer-reviewed studies into consideration, this systematic review aimed to identify available literature that present an empirical value on burnout among EFL teachers working in school settings.

The second criterion was the time range. The studies included in the present review are from January 1, 2019 till December 31, 2024. The choice of the time period can be explained by the publication of new studies on language teachers' burnout that employed a multi-level and mixed-method approaches and whose sample sizes were large enough to get meaningful data. Another rationale behind the choice of this timeline lies in a specific interest in pandemic and post-pandemic period which was marked by significant challenges and changes in the educational process of many schools worldwide. More specifically, these years witnessed a sharp transition in the teaching paradigm from a face-to-face to a virtual mode of delivery, particularly, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic which can be characterized as a breaking point. According to Safari and Pourhashemi (2024), a number of unexpected issues arose due to the closure of many schools and English teachers had to adapt their teaching methods according to the autonomy and personal perspectives to the ongoing changes. The shifts in teaching mode that occurred due to the abrupt halt of in-person instruction brought numerous unforeseen challenges for all stakeholders, particularly English teachers and students in public middle schools.

During the mentioned period, the educational process in Kazakhstan also underwent significant changes that revealed a number of issues in the system of school

education. Specifically, the rapid shift to distance learning led to numerous challenges, primarily due to the lack of distance education infrastructure, inadequate technological support, and limited access to digital resources, especially in rural areas. Furthermore, female teachers faced heightened stress as they juggled increased workloads alongside additional household responsibilities and childcare, while also experiencing a rise in domestic violence, all of which negatively impacted their mental health (Kenebayeva et al., 2022, p. 14). The chosen timeline is particularly important to understand the consequences of the challenges brought by the pandemic, though it might not have directly contributed to teacher burnout in all existing cases.

The target population for the present systematic review was language teachers who work at primary, secondary and high schools. The choice of language teachers is primarily related to the fact that language teaching requires sustained cognitive and emotional engagement due to the interactive and communicative nature of the subject. They usually not only facilitate meaningful communication with learners but also make assessments and search for new resources to design lessons. Language learners also adapt their teaching to learners' needs depending on circumstances. Furthermore, they are expected to maintain relationships with different learners and stakeholders that may not always go smoothly. Much of the existing in research in Kazakhstan focus on general education teachers without looking into unique challenges faced by language teachers. In this context, language teachers may experience burnout due to the unique nature of their subject and working conditions that may differ from those of teachers in other subjects.

The school context is a critical stage in students' cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development, and language teachers play a fundamental role in shaping their proficiency and communication skills. It can also be characterised as a complex internal system of interactions between teachers and learners and other stakeholders. In schools,

language teachers can frequently deal with specific challenges, such as different levels of student involvement, discipline issues, and external pressures from parents and school administration. Language teachers also might be overloaded with extra tasks from the administration, or activities that are not related to language teaching. All of these factors can contribute to burnout among language teachers in school settings. Thus, the present systematic review includes empirical and meta-analytic studies published between 2019 and 2024 that examine language teachers working in schools.

### **Exclusion Criteria**

Articles that are non-original, not peer-reviewed, not published in English, restricted due to commercial interests, or those that do not specifically examine language teachers' burnout within school education, as well as studies covering multiple educational levels and settings simultaneously, are excluded.

### **Analysis of the Data Selection Process**

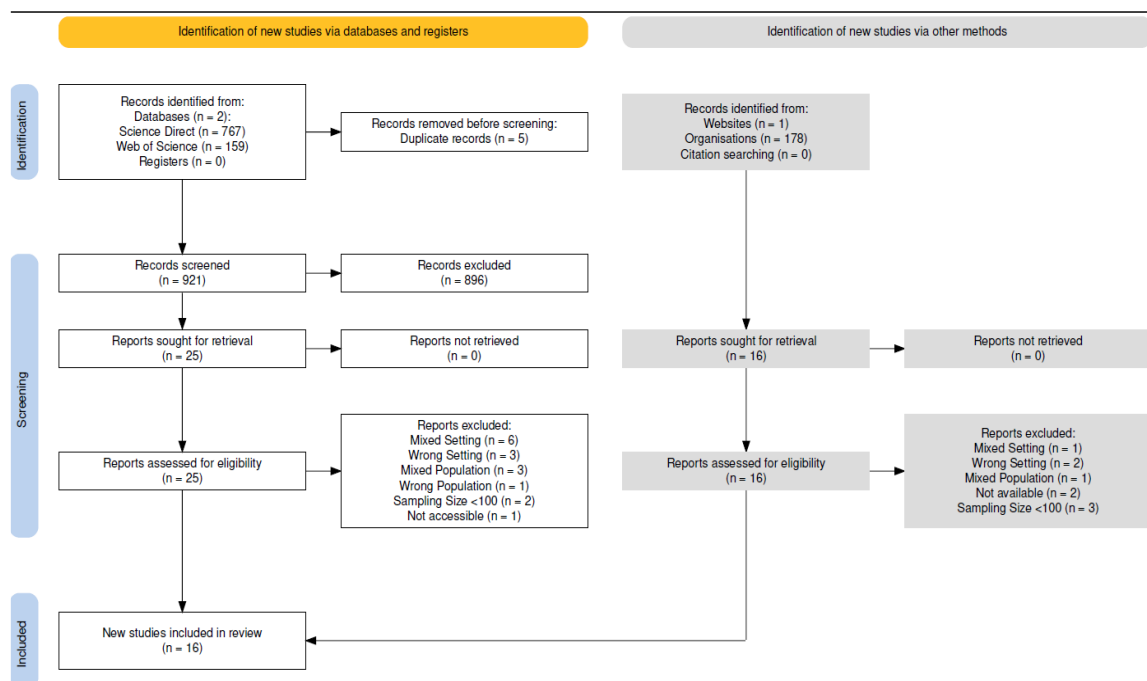
To demonstrate the process of data selection, the PRISMA flow diagram is presented below. The search results in both databases and on the website of the library resulted in  $n=1,105$  articles. The identification, screening and inclusion processes were carried out manually without the usage of any automatic software due to the subscription requirements.

At the stage of identification,  $n=5$  duplicates were manually removed from the second database, whereas  $n=12$  duplicates were removed from the list of studies that was received on the website of the library. After removing the duplicates, I carefully screened  $n=921$  articles based on the topic and the purpose of this systematic review. In total,  $n=896$  studies were deemed irrelevant and excluded. These articles mainly focused on either burnout among general education teachers, or diverse aspects of school education. During the screening stage,  $n=25$  studies from the two databases and  $n=16$  studies from

the online library were further evaluated for eligibility according to the titles through a thorough review of abstracts. Studies that did not address at least of one of the research questions of the present systematic review, or were done in mixed settings and included general education teachers were excluded, thus resulting in  $n=9$  studies left from the two databases and  $n=7$  articles left from the website of the library. Studies whose sample size was less than 100 and those that were not publicly accessible, or available in English were removed as well. Finally,  $n=16$  studies were included in this systematic review.

**Figure 2**

### *Data Search Procedure*



### **The Quality Assessment Tool**

The Mixed Method Assessment Tool is the measurement tool that evaluates the quality of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method studies and consists of five major criteria for the qualitative, randomized controlled, non-randomized, quantitative descriptive, and mixed methods (Hong et al., 2018, p. 285). Regarding the reliability of the tool, 261 studies were preliminary assessed. It was found that the average time to evaluate

each study using the MMAT was 13 minutes, with mixed method studies taking the longest (18.7 minutes), followed by qualitative (12.5), non-randomized studies (8.4), and randomized controlled ones (7.4). The reliability of the MMAT varied by criterion, and ranged from fair to perfect. Two qualitative items showed lower inter-rater agreement: consideration of researcher influence on findings ( $k = 0.21$ ), and consideration of contextual relevance of findings ( $k = 0.36$ ) (Souto et al., 2014, p. 501). Overall, the MMAT was found to be an effective assessment tool for assessing diverse studies, though its reliability for the previous two items still needs to be improved.

In this systematic review, the MMAT was used to assess the quality of the diverse contextual studies on school EFL teachers' burnout. The assessment criteria were adapted to the needs of the review – the screening questions and four criteria were removed due to the similar formulation of questions. Below are the five questions that guided the quality assessment process.

1. Is the employed approach appropriate to answer the research question?
2. Are different data collection methods adequate to address the research question?
3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?
4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?
5. Is there coherence between data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?

**Table 1**

*Quality Assessment*

<b>Studies</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Q5</b>
Atashpanjeh et	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

al., 2020

Amirian et al., 2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Erdağ & Tavit, 2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Karanfil & Yeşilbursa, 2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sato et al., 2022	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Morska et al., 2022	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Emir et al., 2023	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
İlya, 2023	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Zhang et al., 2024	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bagheri et al., 2024	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rezai, 2024	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ayalew et al., 2024	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	Yes
Iravani et al., 2024	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Chunyan & Ying, 2024	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lucena & Ojeda, 2024	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Zeng et al., 2024	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

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### **The Reflexive Thematic Analysis**

The Reflexive Thematic Analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyze, report, and interpret patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Byrne (2021) provided multiple examples of the implementation of this method based on his study and highlighted its usefulness and applicability to other areas of qualitative research. In this systematic review, thematic analysis was used to present findings in a more analytical way so that these allowed to make meaningful conclusions. It can also be approached as a realist method that can represent reality and uncover or deconstruct its underlying layers. The findings of the present systematic review are presented according to the research questions and specific thematic patterns related to each of them.

The thematic analysis comprises six main phases: engaging in an in-depth review of data, developing initial codes, identifying potential themes, evaluating and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and composing the final report. Byrne (2021) notes that the process of analysis is not always linear, meaning that a researcher can move flexibly between these phases. In this systematic review, themes were identified and developed based on research questions and key patterns of each study.

To identify and develop themes, I reviewed main aspects of each study carefully and take into consideration (a purpose of study, research questions, research design,

methodology, findings, conclusions and limitations). During the second phase initial codes from findings of each study were produced. These codes are essential to identify a semantic content, or a latent feature of the data being reported and refer to the fundamental unit or element of information that can be meaningfully analyzed in relation to the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998, as cited in Brown & Clarke, 2006, p. 88).

### Figure 3

#### *Initial Coding Process*

1	Initial coding
2	
3	<b>Low salary</b>
4	<b>Working environment</b>
5	<b>Work and life balance</b>
6	<b>School climate</b>
7	<b>Emotional intelligence</b>
8	<b>Relationships with colleagues and admnstrn</b>
9	<b>Cyberloafing behavior</b>
10	<b>A lack of time</b>
11	<b>Demands</b>
12	<b>Proactive personality</b>

In the third phase, all the initial codes were sorted into overarching themes. For instance, “low salary” and “working conditions” were logically converted into a broader “poor working conditions and economic benefits” theme.

### Figure 4

#### *Broader Themes*

1	Broader Themes
2	
3	<b>Poor working conditions and economic benefits</b>
4	<b>Job engagement, commitment and (dis)satisfaction</b>
5	<b>School Climate and Professional Relationships</b>
6	<b>Effect of Emotional self-regulation</b>
7	<b>A lack of resources</b>
8	<b>Demands and expectations</b>
9	<b>Personality as a Factor</b>
10	<b>Age and Teaching Career</b>
11	<b>Personal Coping Mechanisms</b>
12	<b>Professional Competence (TAL, pedagogical content knowledge)</b>
13	<b>Type of School as a Factor</b>
14	<b>Stress and Professional Support</b>

In the fourth phase, these significant themes were refined to verify whether they clearly reflect the coded findings. In this stage, I read the data extracts again to check whether the themes form a coherent pattern. Further, I reviewed the themes in relation to the whole findings and checked whether these reflect the meaning of the whole data. In the fifth stage, each individual theme were defined and named based on their essence. For example, the previous “poor working conditions and economic benefits” broader theme was finally reformulated into the “financial and social recognition” theme.

In the final sixth stage, I provided concrete data that captured the essence of three research questions and reflected the phenomenon being studied.

## Figure 5

### *Final Themes*

1	RQ 1 Impact	RQ2 Causes	RQ 3 Coping Strategies
2	Theme 1	Theme 1	Theme 1
3	Job satisfaction and Commitment	School environment and Workload	Personal coping strategies
4	Theme 2	Theme 2	Theme 2
5	Emotional and Psychological Well-being	Job demand and stressors	Support System and Professional Development
6	Theme 3	Theme 3	Theme 3
7	Work Engagement and Professional Identity	Interpersonal and Institutional Factors	The Role of Intrinsic Motivation
8	Theme 4	Theme 4	
9	Social and Interpersonal Relationships	Personal and Psychological factors	
10		Theme 5	
11		Financial and Social Recognition	

In conclusion, the reflexive thematic analysis provided a structured yet flexible approach to identifying patterns within data, enabling a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being researched. By systematically coding, refining, and defining themes, this method ensured that findings are presented in a coherent and meaningful way. In this systematic review, the application of reflexive thematic analysis across qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies allowed for a comprehensive synthesis of insights, thus facilitating more analytical conclusions. Through this rigorous process, the key

themes emerging from the data will contribute to a nuanced understanding of the research questions.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical issues related to the selection of relevant studies for the present systematic review can be the absence of ethical approval, the use of identifiable information regarding research participants of the studies, distortion of data interpretation, selective reporting without using inclusion and exclusion criteria, and personal biases and assumptions about burnout. To minimize these issues, a rigorous selection method based on criteria was employed in this systematic review.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the methodology of the study was outlined in detail, encompassing the research design, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. The adoption of a systematic review ensured a comprehensive exploration of burnout among EFL teachers in school education by integrating mixed studies. In the next chapter, key findings are presented.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

This chapter presents the report of the systematic review regarding the impact of burnout among language teachers on their professional well-being in the context of school education. The purpose of the present systematic review was to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing data on the impact of burnout among language teachers who teach at different levels of school education on their professional well-being. The review process was carried out manually based on the PRISMA framework and resulted in 16 studies that were included in the final report. In this chapter, I present the results of the reflexive thematic analysis according to the order of research questions. The chapter concludes with a summary.

### **Results of the Review**

For this systematic review, a total of 16 studies that employed diverse research designs were deemed suitable for inclusion. Before including them, their quality was assessed through the use of the adapted version of the Mixed Method Appraisal Tool (MMAT). These studies include 7 quantitative, 2 qualitative, 6 mixed-method designs and 1 secondary research that were conducted in various countries between 2019 and 2024 and were published in diverse journals included in the leading databases, such as ScienceDirect and Web of Science. The wide context made it possible to analyze multiple contextual findings on school language teachers' burnout rigorously selected for this systematic review, although it focuses on a school setting only. Most studies employed various types of sampling, such as convenience sampling, or cluster sampling. Notably, several researchers used a randomized sampling to recruit research participants. Additionally, data collection instruments and analysis procedures vary depending on the research questions, hypotheses, and the statements of purpose of the studies. The essential details of these 16 studies are presented in the table below.

**Table 2***Reviewed Studies*

<b>Author(s), year</b>	<b>Setting, country</b>	<b>Research participants</b>	<b>Research Design</b>	<b>Data Collection Instruments / Procedures</b>	<b>Data Analysis Procedures</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Atashpanjeh et al., 2020	High School, Iran	103 English teachers 15 interviewed teachers	Mixed Method	MBI-ES, Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, A semi-structured Interview	Correlation Analysis, ANOVA	The inappropriate education system, non-standard criteria of evaluation, low salary, struggling students, working environment, a lack of equipment, community and parents, and type of school are related to ETs' burnout and job satisfaction.
Amirian et al., 2021	Secondary School, Iran	124 junior and high school EFL teachers	Quantitative	MBI-ES, Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, Wang and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale, Short Big Five Inventory	Correlational Analysis, Sequential Multiple Regression Analysis, ANOVA	Emotional intelligence is the strongest predictor of burnout among EFL teachers. EI and SE exhibit a moderate negative correlation with burnout.

Karanfil & Yeşilbursa, 2021	State and private schools, Turkey	244 EFL teachers 12 interviewed teachers	Mixed Method	MBI-ES, semi-structured interviews,	Descriptive statistics, MANOVA, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, transcription, content analysis	Demands of principals, parent expectations, student behavior, a heavy workload, competitiveness, a lack of time and job descriptions contribute to EFL teachers' burnout in private schools, whereas state school teachers indicated student behavior, mobbing, geographical area, a lack of resources and autonomy as main factors leading to burnout.
Erdağ & Tavil, 2021	Public primary schools, Turkey	108 EFL teachers	Quantitative	The Teacher Burnout Scale, a multiple response questionnaire	Descriptive analysis, a multiple response analysis	Teachers with low level of burnout mainly used problem focused coping strategies than those who had a higher level of burnout.
Sato et al., 2022	Public, private, and subsidized schools, Chile	154 EFL teachers 15 interviewed teachers	Mixed Method	Questionnaires, semi-structured in-depth interviews	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Bivariate Correlations	Teachers who were motivated externally experienced a negative influence of de-motivators. Teaching

					(two-tailed Pearson)	experienced mediated the role between de-motivators and teacher motivation. It negatively predicted teacher burnout. Internally motivated teachers appear to experience less burnout.
Morska et al., 2022	Schools, Poland	140 English language teachers 20 interviewed teachers	Mixed Method	MBI, semi-structured interviews	Likert Scale, The Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Teachers, who reported using digital technologies intensively, are less prone to burnout. However, more mid-career female teachers can be at risk of burnout while balancing professional responsibilities and family commitments.
Emir et al., 2023	Primary State School, Lower and Upper Secondary Schools, Turkey	3 interviewed English language teachers	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews, observations, and post-interview	Constant comparison method of categories and themes, transcription of data	Job dissatisfaction, political factors, a lack of social support, and feeling of incompetence were identified as primary stressors leading to burnout.

Zhang et al., 2024	Junior High Schools, China	210 English language teachers	Secondary Correlational Research	Use of data from the database	Multiple imputation analysis, path analysis, descriptive statistics, correlational analysis	Teachers' job satisfaction has a negative impact on their professional turnover intention; dissatisfaction with salary and student behaviour increases the likelihood of teachers leaving junior high school; both general job satisfaction and satisfaction with school management are negatively associated with organizational turnover intention; TB negatively affects all three types of turnover intention; job satisfaction serves as a partial mediator in the relationship between burnout and turnover intention.
İlyay, 2023	State and Private Schools, Turkey	132 EFL teachers	Quantitative	MBI-ES	Multiple Regression Analysis, ANOVA	Most of EFL teachers experienced a significant decline in personal accomplishment. Age was the strongest predictor of burnout that was statistically significant only in relation to

						depersonalization. As teachers age, they feel more isolated, perceive students as objects, and approach tasks mechanically.
Zeng et al., 2024	High School, China	802 senior EFL teachers	Quantitative	MBI, questionnaires	CFA, SEM, Descriptive Statistics, Correlational Analysis	Supervisory support was found to be a direct precursor of personal accomplishment, while the relationships with colleagues and time pressure were direct predictors of all three aspects of burnout.
Chunyan & Ying, 2024	Primary and middle schools, China	420 EFL teachers	Quantitative	Proactive Personality Scale, Foreign Language Teaching Enjoyment, MBI-ES	Expectation Maximization, SEM, CFA	Proactive personality has a positive relationship with teaching enjoyment which may be associated with lower levels of burnout among EFL teachers.
Rezai, 2024	State schools, Iran	413 EFL teachers,	Mixed Method (sequential explanatory)	Teacher Assessment	Cronbach's alpha,	TAL had a significant effect on EE, DP, and SAPP. EFL teachers, who

		18 interviewed teachers		Literacy Questionnaire, Teacher Job Stress Scale, The Teacher Job Burnout Inventory, a focus group interview	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, Descriptive Statistics, CFA, SEM	are competent in assessing students' knowledge and make informed decisions, might be ready to better handle stress and experience less burnout.
Ayalew et al., 2024	Public Primary Schools, Ethiopia	100 EFL teachers, 13 interviewed teachers	Mixed Method (explanatory)	MBI-ES, A five- point Likert scale questionnaire	Descriptive and Inferential Statistics	Work overload, perceived stress, a lack of pedagogical content knowledge, lack of motivation, low social value, low salary had a significant effect on EE, while perceived stress, lack of social value, and work overload were the best predictors of DP. Dissatisfaction, lack of social value, and lack of motivation were the best predictors of RA. Job burnout had a negative effect on teachers' work engagement.

Iravani et al., 2024	High School, Iran	824 EFL teachers	Quantitative	Cyberloafing Scale, CFA, MBI-ES	Multiple Regression Analysis	Three dimensions of burnout, particularly, DP significantly contributed to the various aspects of cyberloafing behavior.
Bagheri et al., 2024	High School, Iran	417 EFL teachers	Quantitative	English Language Teacher Commitment Questionnaire, Revised School Level Environment Questionnaire, MBI	The Hierarchical Regression Analysis	TB and school climate seem to predict EFL teachers' job commitment, though the latter was a stronger predictor of TJC.
Lucena & Ojeda, 2024	Secondary Schools, Spain	8 interviewed EFL teachers	Qualitative	Semi- structured interview	The Content Analysis	The factors affecting secondary EFL teachers' well-being were negative relationships with colleagues and school administration, pressure and anticipation from policy makers and teachers' perceived ability to manage emotions and personal limitations.

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## **Thematic Analysis of the Findings**

The main purpose of this systematic review is to provide a holistic overview of the findings on the impact of burnout among school EFL teachers on their professional well-being. According to the findings, the problem of burnout among school EFL teachers is highly contextual and affects some important aspects of teachers' professional well-being. The factors range from the work-life balance to questioning the appropriateness of the education system.

Most studies focused on the quantitative analysis of emotional intelligence, coping strategies, demographic factors, teacher self-efficacy, proactive personality, professional behaviour, school climate and EFL teachers' burnout (Amirian et al., 2021; Bagheri et al., 2024; Chunyan & Ying, 2024; Erdağ & Tavid, 2021; İlya, 2023; Iravani et al., 2024; Zeng et al., 2024).

The studies that employed a mixed-method approach mainly concentrated on factors, such as working environment workload, low salary, type of school, competitiveness, a lack of resources, mobbing, demands of administration, motivation, use of digital technologies, level of Teaching Assessment Literacy, and a lack of social value (Atashpanjeh et al, 2020; Ayalew et al., 2024; Karanfil & Yeşilbursa, 2021; Morska et al., 2022; Rezai et al., 2024; Sato et al., 2022).

The qualitative findings indicated the role of job dissatisfaction, political factors, a lack of support, and negative professional relationships, external pressure, and emotional self-regulation (Emir et al., 2023; Lucena & Ojeda, 2024), whereas the secondary research focused on the relationship between burnout and turnover intention (Zhang et al., 2023). The thematic analysis of these findings is structured according to the order of research questions and is provided below.

## **Research Question 1**

### ***Job Satisfaction and Commitment***

The themes related to school EFL teachers' well-being and burnout emerged from the findings of various contextual studies and reflect diverse aspects of professional well-being. More specifically, these themes reflect the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction, commitment, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, a sense of competence, teacher assessment literacy, social and interpersonal relationships. These studies mainly were conducted in Iran, China, Turkey, Ethiopia, and Spain.

Atashpanjeh et al. (2020) examined the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction of Iranian school language teachers. The aim of this quantitative study was to study the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction among English language teachers and reveal the influence of teaching experience and gender on their burnout and job satisfaction. In total, 103 English teachers participated in the survey, 15 of whom were selected for the semi-structured interview. It was demonstrated that job satisfaction is related to teacher burnout. Less satisfied teachers are reported to differ from satisfied teachers in terms of job performance. The findings indicate that English teachers who experienced a high level of burnout had a decreased level of job satisfaction. On the contrary, teachers who had a higher salary tended to be more satisfied with their job.

Zhang et al. (2023) explored the relationship between job burnout and turnover intention among English language teachers working in Chinese junior high schools. The study had its purpose to study the relationship between various types of turnover intention, job satisfaction, and burnout among English teachers. The study employed a correlational research, and data were extracted from the existing database. The final data included 210 English language teachers who work in China. The results demonstrate that teachers' overall job satisfaction negatively influences their decision to leave the profession.

Burnout is reported to increase turnover intention, whereas job satisfaction serves as a partial mediator between burnout and turnover intention. It was revealed that burnout had an indirect effect on three dimensions of turnover intention which was mediated by job satisfaction and satisfaction with specific aspects of their job, such as salary, school administration, and students' abilities. Those English teachers who feel burned out due to a steady stress are reported to feel dissatisfied with various aspects of teaching, which in turn increases turnover intention. Job satisfaction was found to partially mediate the effect of burnout.

Bagheri et al. (2024) examined the impact of teacher burnout and school climate on teacher job commitment in Iran. The quantitative study aimed to reveal whether the two variables could be predictors of teacher commitment and identify the potential relationship between them. The sampling included 417 Iranian EFL teachers working in junior high schools. It was found that teacher burnout and school climate could predict EFL teachers' commitment to their job. Although both variables had an effect on teacher commitment, school climate was found to be a stronger predictor. The findings indicate that teachers' mutual collaboration and participation in the decision-making process, student behaviors, students' willingness to learn the language, a proper supply of equipment, school resources and teaching innovation play a critical role in predicting and reinforcing EFL teachers' commitment to teaching. The next subsection draws on emotional and psychological aspects of school EFL teachers' professional well-being.

### ***Emotional and Psychological Well-being***

The emotional and psychological variables play an important role in teaching. The thematic analysis demonstrated an intricate connection between school EFL teachers' burnout and emotional and psychological tenets of their professional well-being. The

analysis comprised the following initial codes: emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, self-image and beliefs, type of school, and other personal factors.

In the Iranese context, Amirian et al. (2021) studied the interplay of burnout among EFL teachers and emotional intelligence, personality traits, teaching experience, self-efficacy, school type, gender, academic degree, and age. The purpose of the study was to reveal the relationship between burnout and these variables. The study included 124 EFL teachers who have BA, MA, and PhD degrees and work in secondary schools. The findings demonstrate that emotional intelligence and self-efficacy negatively correlated with burnout, whereas a strong relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy was found. The moderate negative correlation between EI and SE indicate that those teachers who have a high emotional intelligence and confidence in their teaching skills are less prone to burnout. The strong correlation between EI and SE indicates that teachers with a high level of EI have a strong self-efficacy.

İlya (2023) examined the role of age, gender, teaching experience, and type of school in predicting the level of burnout among Turkish EFL teachers. The study aimed to reveal the level of burnout of 132 EFL teachers working at different levels of school education in Turkey. The study revealed that the majority of teachers mainly experienced diminished personal accomplishment, suggesting that they lost belief in their contributions to teaching.

Zeng et al. (2024) explored the mediating impact of teacher self-efficacy on the relationship between school-related variables and burnout among EFL teachers in China. The sampling included 802 senior high school teachers from three southern regions of the country. The results indicate that supervisory support is a direct precursor of personal accomplishment, meaning that such a support from the school administration can enhance teachers' sense of personal effectiveness. It was confirmed that teacher self-efficacy plays

a significant mediating role in the relationship between school setting and both emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment, but not in the relationship between school context and depersonalization. Additionally, time pressure was also found to have a significant indirect effect on one's personal accomplishment, suggesting that those teachers who experience time pressure tend to display a higher level of self-efficacy.

Bagheri et al. (2024) also found the relationship between burnout and school-related factors. More particularly, authors highlighted the role of teachers' self-image and belief. It is argued that teachers' beliefs regarding their teaching practice, the way they engage students in class activities and boost learning effectiveness influence their job satisfaction, self-image and level of burnout. Next, the findings regarding school EFL teachers' engagement and competence are presented.

### ***Work Engagement and Professional Competence***

Work engagement and professional competence are the final themes that were formulated based on the analysis of the five initial codes: work engagement, a sense of competitiveness, cyberloafing behavior, Teacher Assessment Literacy (TAL), and job stress.

Ayalew et al. (2024) examined the EFL teachers' burnout and burnout-related factors among public primary schools in Ethiopia. The aim of this mixed-method study was to study the relationship between diverse factors and three dimensions of burnout. The sampling consisted of 100 EFL teachers who were selected through cluster and judgmental sampling methods. Researchers further interviewed 13 of them. It was demonstrated that burnout had a negative effect on EFL teachers' work engagement.

Iravani et al. (2024) examined the relationship between burnout and cyberloafing behavior of EFL teachers in Iran. Cyberloafing is defined as a non-work related usage of Internet. The purpose of the study was to explore the extent to which Iranian EFL teachers

engage in cyberloafing behaviours in public high school classrooms and analyze potential differences based on two demographic factors: educational level and school type. The second aim was to examine whether the burnout levels of Iranian teachers can significantly predict their engagement in cyberloafing behaviors in high school classrooms. The sampling comprised 824 EFL teachers from Iranian public high schools. It was found that teachers engaged in cyberloafing behaviours at a moderate level and were mainly active in the sharing aspect. The multiple regression analysis revealed that all the three dimensions of burnout, particularly, depersonalization contribute to all the aspects of cyberloafing behavior. The positive influence of DP is explained by the fact that EFL teachers exhibiting symptoms of DP may be more exposed to engaging in cyberloafing behaviours, such as sharing and accessing online content over time.

Rezai et al. (2024) examined the relationship between teacher assessment literacy, job stress and job burnout in Iran. In total, 413 EFL teachers were randomly selected for this study, and 15 of them were further interviewed. The quantitative findings indicate that EFL teachers with TAL were less prone to teacher job stress and were less inclined to quit teaching. TAL is reported to be positively related to job stress and have a significant effect on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, self-assessment purposes and principles. According to the qualitative results, TAL enhances teachers' work productivity, improves teachers' social reputation, allows teachers to efficiently manage the classroom, and brings beneficial feedback effects. Overall, the main argument of the authors is that those EFL teachers, who are competent in assessing their students' knowledge and make informed decisions, might handle stress better and experience less burnout. In the next subsection, I present the findings on social and interpersonal determinants of school EFL teachers' burnout.

### *Social and Interpersonal Relationships*

Teaching is the social profession based on interpersonal relationships between various stakeholders. The findings indicate the relationship between social and interpersonal relationships and burnout among international school EFL teachers. The two initial codes that formed the final themes are supervisory support, relationships with colleagues and school administration.

Zeng et al., (2024) also found that relationships with colleagues have a direct effect on the three aspects of burnout which indicates that colleagues' support can alleviate the burnout symptoms and improve a sense of personal achievement.

Lucena and Ojeda (2024) examined the well-being of in-service EFL teachers in Spain. This qualitative study aimed to improve the understanding of factors affecting teacher well-being and the coping strategies that teachers use in everyday life to withstand burnout. The sampling included 8 EFL teachers from seven secondary schools of Andalusia. The results demonstrated that one of the detrimental factors that affect EFL teachers' well-being is the negative relationship with colleagues and school administration. These Spanish EFL teachers found having a sense of community and feeling the support of school administration beneficial.

Thus, English language teacher's burnout is closely inherent to the following dimensions of professional well-being: job satisfaction and commitment, emotional and psychological well-being, job engagement and professional identity, and social and interpersonal relationships. As was demonstrated, these aspects and language teacher burnout are interrelated and have a different degree of relationship. In the following subsection, I present key findings of the second research question.

## **Research Question 2**

### ***School Environment and Workplace Conditions***

The second research question was related to the specific contextual factors leading to school EFL teachers' burnout. The initial codes of the findings range from type of school to a lack of social value. These codes were reformulated into final themes that reflect various aspects of teaching. The first one relates to the working environment and conditions. The findings are from Iran, Turkey, Poland, and Ethiopia.

Atashpanjeh et al., (2020) found that the inappropriate education system, working environment, non-standard evaluation criteria, type of school, a lack of equipment affect Iranian EFL teachers' job satisfaction and cause burnout. Authors indicate that these factors can have significant impact on the teaching and learning processes, transmission of information, and overall the quality of teaching.

Emir et al. (2023) examined the role of stressors that contributed to EFL teachers' burnout during the emergency remote teaching. The study aimed to reveal possible causes of burnout among Turkish EFL teachers during the pandemic period. This qualitative study included three EFL teachers working in a primary state school, a lower secondary school, and an upper-secondary secondary school, respectively. The technical challenges, inadequate student learning environments, and unforeseen policy changes were found to be important internal political factors that caused burnout during emergency remote teaching. Next, specific factors concerning various work-related demands and stressors are presented.

### ***Job Demands and Stressors***

Job demands and stressors were found to play a significant role in school EFL teachers' burnout. The main codes that formed these key themes are: heavy workload, work overload, a lack of time and job descriptions, time pressure, perceived stress,

irregular class hours, communication with parents, time-consuming preparations, insufficient usage of L2, and challenges with monitoring.

Karanfil and Yeşilbursa (2021) examined the level and potential reasons of burnout among English language teachers in the Turkish school context. The objective of the study was to determine the level of burnout of the English teachers based on demographic variables (age, gender, marital status, years of experience, workload, level of education, official position, and type of school) by comparing private and state schools in Turkey. The findings of this study demonstrate that heavy workload, work overload, long working hours, a lack of time and job descriptions, time pressures, contribute to private school EFL teachers' burnout. Similarly, Ayalew et al., (2024) found that work overload and perceived stress were significantly related with emotional exhaustion and these also were the best predictors of depersonalization. Emir et al., (2023) also found that extra workload, which involved a great number of communication sources, keeping parents informed about learners' conditions, longer preparations, less usage of L2, challenges in monitoring students' involvement, a number of irregular class hours, were the main stressors that made them feel dissatisfied with their job during the pandemic period. The next subsection draws on interpersonal and institutional factors that may cause school EFL teachers' burnout.

### ***Interpersonal and Institutional Factors***

The thematic analysis revealed a number of variables related to the interpersonal relationships and institutional factors that can contribute to EFL teachers' burnout. The main initial codes that underlie the final themes range from poorly equipped classrooms to a lack of pedagogical knowledge and mobbing. The studies that highlighted these factors were conducted in Turkey and Iran.

In the Turkish context, Karanfil and Yeşilbursa (2021) found that state school EFL teachers mainly indicated mobbing, student behavior, geographical area, poorly equipped classrooms, the teaching materials, and unstable policies as reasons contributing to their burnout, whereas those who work in private schools referred to the competitiveness among teachers, demands from policymakers, and parental expectations. Atashpanekeh et al. (2020) also mentioned that some teachers struggle to feel at ease at work because of the influence of community and parents. Besides, Ayalew et al., (2024) found that a lack of pedagogical content knowledge had a significant effect on emotional exhaustion. Next, personal and psychosocial variables are presented.

### ***Personal and Socio-emotional Factors***

The thematic analysis showed that main three personal variables related to EFL teachers' burnout are age, experience, and a sense of incompetence, whereas key psychosocial factor is the lack of social support.

İlyas (2023) found that age was the most significant predictor of all three symptoms of burnout, though it statistically interacted with depersonalization only. The study suggests that as teachers age, they feel more isolated, perceived students as objects, and approached their tasks mechanically. According to Karanfil and Yeşilbursa (2021), state school teachers with burnout also experienced a lack of autonomy.

Morska et al. (2022) examined the impact of digital technologies on foreign language teachers' burnout. The study focused on positive and negative influence of digital technologies concerning foreign language teachers' age, experience, and level of burnout. Specifically, the aim was to explore the immediate influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on teachers who were required to use online learning technologies and discuss the potential implications of this influence on teachers' perception of technologies in teaching a language. The sampling consisted of 140 EFL teachers from 18 Polish schools, 15 of

whom were selected for the interview. The results demonstrated that English teachers with 10 to 15 years of teaching experience and whose average age was 38 years old were more susceptible to burnout as they applied digital technologies to their teaching.

Emir et al. (2023) found that EFL teachers also experienced a lack of social support and a feeling of incompetence that were identified as one of the primary stressors leading to burnout. Additionally, Lucena and Ojeda (2024) highlighted teachers' perceived ability to regulate emotions and personal limitations as one of the detrimental factors to Spanish EFL teachers' well-being. In the next subsection, the financial and social aspect are reported.

### ***Financial and Social Recognition***

The financial and social variables can also predict school EFL teachers' burnout along with other contextual factors. In particular, the following two initial codes underlie these themes: a lack of motivation and social value, and low salary.

Ayalew et al. (2024) also found that a lack of motivation and social value and low salary had a significant relationship with emotional exhaustion, while a lack of social value was the best predictor of depersonalization. At the same time dissatisfaction, a lack of social value and motivation were reported to be the best predictors of reduced accomplishment. Similarly, Atashpanjeh et al. (2020) found that a low salary can predict EFL teachers' burnout.

Overall, studies demonstrate that various contextual factors contribute to school EFL teachers' burnout, and these can be either external, such as a global pandemic, unplanned policy changes, or the quality of communication between teachers and school management, or internal ones, such as motivation, a sense of competence, or emotional self-regulation. Next, I report the findings of the third research of question.

### **Research Question 3**

#### ***Personal Coping Strategies***

Personal strategies are essential elements of one's professional well-being. The thematic analysis showed that school EFL teachers from Turkey, China, Chile, and Poland use different coping strategies to handle, or prevent burnout. Key eight initial codes that determined the final theme include problem-oriented strategies, emotion-oriented strategies, emotional regulation, proactive personality characteristics, personal hobbies, usage of digital technologies, constant personal development, and setting professional boundaries.

Erdağ and Tavil (2021) examined the levels of burnout among primary EFL teachers in Turkey. The aims of the study were to determine the levels of burnout and examine the potential relationship between the burnout level and employed coping strategies. The sampling consisted of 108 EFL teachers. The findings indicate that EFL teachers with a low level of burnout used more coping strategies than those who had minor, significant, or higher level. Teachers with all levels of burnout are reported to gain from both problem-oriented and emotion-oriented coping strategies, though the teachers with a low burnout level predominantly employed problem-oriented strategies. More specifically, the teachers with a high level of burnout mostly avoided confrontations and strived to rest after work, acknowledged their personal limitations and tried to encounter problem-focused strategies. Meanwhile, the teachers with a significant level of burnout mainly strived to control their feelings, have a rest, be actively involved in domestic life, identify any personal and academic issue, dedicate themselves to a hobby at least an hour a week and find problem-oriented strategies. Those teachers who had an insignificant level of burnout preferred to rest after work, tried to control their feelings, engage in a personal activity for a minimum of an hour a week, and find possible strategies to solve the issues.

The teachers with a low burnout level tried to rest, manage emotions, take actions to cope with issues, get themselves engaged in hobbies at least an hour a week, discuss issues and show their emotions to others, make plans in advance, acknowledge their personal limitations, find problem-based strategies to solve the issues, and devote themselves to home life.

Chunyan and Ying (2024) studied the relationship between proactive personality, teaching enjoyment, and burnout. The aim of the study was to find out how proactive personality characteristics are related to teaching enjoyment and burnout and examined their relationship. The sampling comprised 420 EFL teachers working in primary and middle schools from diverse Chinese provinces. The results demonstrate that proactive personality traits are positively related with teaching enjoyment, whereas teaching enjoyment can play a mediating role in the relationship between proactive personality and burnout. The negative association between proactive personality and burnout implies that a proactive person may be more active in seeking resources to handle teaching-related challenges. These findings suggest that proactive characteristics may enhance teaching enjoyment, serving as a potential safeguard against burnout.

Another compelling finding is related to the use of digital technologies in language classrooms. Morska et al. (2022) also found that Polish EFL teachers, who reported applying digital technologies quite intensively in their classes, displayed a low burnout level.

According to the findings by Lucena and Ojeda (2024), Spanish EFL teachers mainly adopted the following coping strategies: personal hobbies (running, playing a musical instrument, and hiking), constant professional development (CPD), and establishing boundaries. Notably, CPD was the most prevalent strategy among all the participants. Next, the theme related to support and professional development is presented.

### ***Support System and Professional Development***

The support and professional development were also found to be crucial variables reducing burnout symptoms among school EFL teachers in the international context. The thematic analysis included two initial codes that can be useful for reducing, or protecting from potential burnout: colleagues' support and Teacher Assessment Literacy.

In their study, Zeng et al. (2024) highlighted the role of relationships with colleagues and suggested that cooperative colleagues can help reduce the burnout symptoms, thus improving a feeling of accomplishment. Besides, Rezai et al. (2024) found that those teachers, who possessed teacher assessment literacy, were less stressed and susceptible to burnout. This means that TAL can be a protective mechanism against stress and burnout. Authors highlighted the importance of professional development for preventing burnout. In the next subsection, motivation is presented as an important mechanism that can deter burnout.

### ***The Role of Intrinsic Motivation***

The thematic analysis demonstrated that motivation can be a significant resource that can prevent teacher burnout. The single study on this theme focused on the impact of demotivating factors and intrinsic motivation on school EFL teachers' burnout in Chile.

Sato et al. (2022) explored the relationship between teacher motivation and perceived burnout among Chilean EFL teachers. This sampling included 154 EFL teachers from 10 regions of Chile, and 15 of them were invited for the interview. This mixed-method study revealed that internally motivated teachers tend to experience less burnout, thus underlining the role of intrinsic motivation in preventing teacher attrition.

Interestingly, qualitative results indicate that the teachers with a considerable experience were mainly motivated internally, and channeled the influence of demotivating factors into a positive drive for continued teaching. The study demonstrated that teacher motivation

can deter burnout, highlighting the importance of teaching experience for enhancing the intrinsic motivation.

Thus, studies demonstrated that school EFL teachers employ various coping strategies and rely on specific internal psychological resources to manage burnout and maintain their professional well-being. The findings emphasize the importance of both personal and external resources in balancing EFL teachers' professional well-being.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the findings of 16 different international studies were carefully reviewed and reported. These results reflect diverse aspects of school EFL teachers' professional well-being and their connection with three dimensions of burnout. Notably, most reported studies were conducted in Iran, Turkey, and China and mainly employed quantitative, or mixed method designs, and convenience sampling to recruit research participants. These findings emphasize the close relationship between EFL teachers' burnout and their job satisfaction and commitment, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, professional identity, social and personal relationships, type of school and other school-related factors. The results also demonstrated that both internal and external forces can predict school EFL teachers' burnout ranging from type of school and age to the inappropriate education system and global pandemic. Regarding the coping strategies, the studies demonstrated that teachers with different burnout levels make use of diverse strategies and that various coping mechanisms and internal psychological resources can help overcome, or prevent burnout among school EFL teachers. All of these findings demonstrated the influence of burnout on school EFL teachers' professional well-being by revealing a different degree of relationship between burnout and different variables which aligns with the primary purpose of this systematic review. The next chapter draws on the

connection between theories and empirical studies covered in literature review and the findings of the systematic review.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, the main findings of the systematic review will be interpreted, discussed, and contrasted to the sources that were covered in the literature review chapter. The research purpose of the systematic review was to provide a comprehensive overview of the current data on the influence of burnout among EFL teachers working at different levels of school education on their professional well-being and report the review process in a systematic way. The discussion is based on Chong's (2025) criteria and elaborates on the meaning and importance of the findings, the connection with primary sources and the relevance of the findings to EFL teachers. To meet these criteria, I will provide a detailed analysis and specific examples from relevant studies. The following questions guided this systematic review:

1. How are various aspects of EFL teachers' professional well-being are related to burnout in the context of school education?
2. What contextual factors contribute to EFL teachers' burnout in different countries?
3. What kind of coping strategies, or internal resources do EFL teachers use to handle burnout and maintain their professional well-being?

### **English-as-a-Foreign-Language Teachers' Well-being and Burnout**

The first research question of the systematic review was related to diverse aspects of language teachers' professional well-being and their connection with burnout in the school context. According to the findings, burnout affects the following themes of professional well-being of school EFL teachers: job satisfaction and commitment, emotional and psychological well-being, work engagement and professional competence, and social interrelationships. These findings align with both theoretical and empirical studies covered in the literature review (Gkonou & Mercer, 2018; Herrera et al., 2023;

Huberman & Vandenberghe, 1999; Mercer, 2023; Ryff, 2014; Sak & Gyrbuz, 2024; Wang et al., 2022), each of which contributes to one or more of these themes. Subsequent to outlining the general definition of well-being, the following paragraphs systematically examine each of the themes.

As was discussed previously in the literature chapter, well-being is a state of balance where individuals experience health, happiness, and growth that lead to the development of life satisfaction, self-fulfilment, and the capability to engage in socially responsible actions, all of which have a long-lasting positive impact (Herrera et al., 2023). The findings demonstrate that some variables directly affect EFL teachers' professional well-being. According to Atashpanjeh et al. (2020), Iranian EFL teachers with a high level of burnout had a low level of job satisfaction, but those who had a higher salary were more satisfied with their job. More specifically, this link between a salary and well-being aligns with Mercer's study (2023) that found a negative impact of low pay, poor job security, or extra working hours on the well-being of Maltese English language teachers. Both studies suggest that work-related issues can affect teachers' well-being and cause burnout.

In accordance with the first theme, job satisfaction mediates burnout and turnover intention, meaning that those school EFL teachers who feel burned out can be dissatisfied with various job conditions which in turn increases turnover intention. This theme is reflected in the findings of Zhang et al. (2023) which indicate that burnout can increase turnover intention amongst EFL teachers, whereas job satisfaction is a partial mediator between burnout and turnover intention. However, these results differ considerably from the findings of Wang et al. (2022), who suggest that teacher immunity encompassing both language teachers' well-being and engagement provides English language teachers with a powerful emotional state that enables them to flourish in challenging working circumstances, though the second study did not examine the relationship between three

variables and burnout. Zhang et al. (2023) note that burned out teachers feel dissatisfied with diverse aspects of their job, while Wang et al. (2022) highlight the important role of teacher immunity in thriving professionally. Therefore, it is reasonable to state that those EFL teachers, who have a low teacher immunity against stressors, are more susceptible to burnout. On the contrary, those teachers whose mental “immunity” is strong enough are less likely to experience burnout. Despite focusing on diverse variables, both of these studies are important for understanding the positive as well as negative mechanisms impacting English language teachers’ professional well-being.

The first theme also focuses on job commitment. In general, burnout has an effect on school EFL teachers’ level of commitment whose improvement depends on certain factors. This theme was most reflected in the findings of Bagheri et al. (2024) who examined the impact of teacher burnout and school climate on teacher job commitment in Iran. The study revealed that teacher collaboration, involvement in the decision-making process, and student behaviors are the important aspects that play a critical role in predicting and strengthening school EFL teachers’ commitment to the profession. These findings align with Ryff’s six-factor model of well-being, according to which, a language teacher with a high level of psychological well-being is a self-directed and autonomous individual who displays strong environmental management skills, a commitment to a constant professional growth, meaningful and trusting relationships with others, a clear sense of purpose, and a positive self-perception. These results also reflect Gkonou and Mercer’s (2018) theoretical analysis who defined socio-emotional competence as an aggregate of crucial life skills that allow individuals to identify and regulate their emotions, show care for others, make informed decisions, promote healthy and positive relationships, and effectively navigate the challenges and difficulties of everyday life. In accordance with the theoretical viewpoint of Huberman and Vandenberghe (2010), the

relationships between teachers and students are one of the key aspects of the teaching profession that can be rewarding and at the same time lead teachers to becoming emotionally drained and discouraged, meaning that teachers should possess both emotional and social competences to manage students' behavior.

The emotional and psychological factors are essential dimensions of EFL teachers' professional well-being. Those EFL teachers, who are emotionally more mature, suffer less from burnout. This is reflected in the findings of Amirian et al. (2020) which demonstrated that emotional intelligence and self-efficacy had a negative correlation with burnout, while the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy was found to be strong. The moderate negative correlation between EI and SE indicated that those EFL teachers with a high level of emotional intelligence and confidence in their skills are less prone to burnout. The strong correlation between EI and SE means that those who had a high level of EI tended to possess a better self-efficacy. These findings are also related to teachers' socio-emotional competences. Particularly, emotional intelligence was defined as the ability to understand one's own emotions and those of others, effectively regulate emotions, and have a positive attitude towards life. For example, Wang and Wang (2022) also found a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and burnout. The strong relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in turn is in line with the Delawele and Mercer's (2018) theoretical perspective, which posits that emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and linguistic security of language teachers collectively define their professional well-being and their relationships with students. In contrast, those teachers, who have less developed socio-emotional skills, not only may experience burnout, but also affect the learners' academic performance and their relationships with them. The findings of İlyá (2023) demonstrated that most EFL teachers working in primary schools had a diminished personal accomplishment and suggested that they

experienced a lack of belief in their contributions to the profession, which aligns with the previous theoretical perspective.

Self-efficacy is another crucial element of the psychological well-being that impacts school EFL teachers' burnout. For example, the results of the study by Zeng et al. (2024) indicated that supervisory support from the school administration improves teachers' sense of personal effectiveness. More specifically, teacher self-efficacy was found to be a significant mediator between school and both emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment, but not between school and depersonalization. These findings align with Delawele and Mercer's analysis and confirm a significant role of self-efficacy in teaching.

The role of time pressure was also found to have a significant indirect effect on Chinese EFL teachers' personal accomplishment, suggesting that those of them, who experienced time pressures, demonstrated a higher level of self-confidence in their abilities. The findings also go in line with the results of Bagheri et al. (2024) who underlined an important role of teachers' self-image and belief. Researchers suggest that Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs about their teaching practices, their approaches to engaging students in classroom activities and their strategies for enhancing learning effectiveness impact their job satisfaction, self-perception and level of burnout.

In accordance with the third theme, burnout is negatively related to school EFL teachers' work engagement. Specifically, those EFL teachers who are highly engaged in their job are less prone to burnout. This theme is reflected in the findings of Ayalew et al. (2024) and also in those of Wang et al. (2022) which characterize work engagement as an essential component of teacher immunity providing language teachers with sufficient emotional resources necessary for a professional development. If teachers' affective state

is not strong enough, they may not be duly engaged in teaching, which was demonstrated in the study.

An important component of teacher competence is the behaviors that they exhibit in classroom settings. Behaviors like cyberloafing, which is a non-work related usage of Internet, was found to contribute to burnout. This can be observed in the the findings by Iravani et al. (2024), which indicated that those Iranian EFL teachers, who were engaged in cyberloafing behaviours at a moderate level during classes, mainly shared the content with others. Depersonalization was found to predict all the dimensions of cyberloafing behavior. This means that those EFL teachers who exhibit symptoms of DP may be more prone to getting involved in cyberloafing behaviours, such as sharing and accessing online content. These results can also be supported by Sak and Gyrbuz's (2024) findings, according to which, well-being in the classroom setting differs from individual to individual and evolves over time, often in a non-linear way. The authors highlight that well-being can change not only within an individual lesson, but also between lessons, shaped by a dynamic interaction of different personal and contextual factors. In this context, cyberloafing behaviours can be interpreted as a negative indicator of EFL teachers' professional engagement that do not reflect a meaningful interaction between them and learners in the fullest sense of the word.

Another essential dimension of school EFL teachers' professional well-being is their knowledge and skills. This is evident in the findings of Rezai et al. (2024) which indicate that those EFL teachers, who possessed Teacher Assessment Literacy, were less exposed to teacher job stress and were less inclined to leave the profession. TAL was found to have a positive relationship with teacher job stress and a substantial influence on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, self-assessment purposes and principles as well. On the other hand, the qualitative findings highlight the impact of TAL on EFL teachers'

professional well-being. More specifically, it improves teachers' work productivity, social reputation, and makes it possible for them to control the classroom, and brings useful feedback effect. TAL can be understood as one of the essential professional factors that dynamically interacts with other aspects of EFL teachers' well-being. These findings also align with Sak and Gyrbuz's (2024) theoretical perspective. Those EFL teachers who possess sufficient skills in assessing learners' knowledge and make informed decisions can better cope with stress and be less prone to burnout.

Consistent with the fourth theme, social and interpersonal relationships are associated with school EFL teachers' burnout and impact their well-being. This theme is most evident in the the findings of Zeng et al. (2024) which demonstrated that relationships with colleagues directly impacts on all three dimensions of burnout, concluding that collective support can soften these symptoms and enhance a sense of personal achievement. This was also reflected in the findings of Lucena and Ojeda (2024) which highlighted negative relationships with counterparts and school administration as one of the negative factors affecting EFL teachers' well-being. Particularly, the Spanish participants mentioned the benefits of a sense of community and the support of school management. The theme aligns with Gkonou and Mercer's (2018) definition of socio-emotional competence one of the hallmarks of which is fostering healthy and positive relationships with others.

Thus, the reviewed studies indicate the link between burnout and professional well-being of school EFL teachers. According to the analysis of the findings, job satisfaction, work engagement, and self-efficacy are the most distinctive well-being-related variables that have a different degree of relationship with burnout, whereas some of the studies focus on less common factors, such as TAL, or cyberloafing behaviours. In the next section, the interpretation of contextual factors that may cause school EFL teachers' burnout will be

provided. In the next subsection, specific contextual factors leading to burnout are analysed and discussed.

### **Contextual Factors**

The second research question of the systematic review aimed to reveal a variety of contextual factors contributing to EFL teachers' burnout in diverse countries. The following five themes were identified based on the thematic analysis of the contextual variables: school environment and workplace conditions, job demands and stressors, interpersonal and institutional factors, personal and socio-emotional causes, and financial and social recognition. A number of studies demonstrate the importance of examining contextual factors contributing to burnout, each of which contribute to these five themes (Alomoudi, 2023; Bing et al., 2022; Blay et al., 2024; Kenebayeva et al., 2022; Macintyre et al., 2019; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Mearn & Cains, 2016; Zhunusbekova & Askarkyzy, 2023).

Burnout is conceptualized as an occupational syndrome marked by one's reduced ability to cope with social stressors progressively leading to a physical and emotional exhaustion and negative attitudes toward others, and diminished personal accomplishment. The factors underlying burnout vary depending on the context in which it was studied.

In alignment with the first theme, burnout is the result of specific environmental and working factors. For instance, the findings of Atashpanjeh et al. (2020) indicate the inappropriate education system, long working hours, low salary, non-standard evaluation criteria, type of school, a lack of equipment as main predictors of burnout among Iranian EFL teachers. highlight that these factors can significantly influence the overall quality of teaching and learning processes. This theme is clearly reflected in Maslach and Leiter's model, in which burnout is represented as a phenomenon that is influenced by multiple factors ranging from political and economic conditions and ecology of school to the nature

of teaching. However, these results do not specify which of the mentioned factors contribute to each dimension of burnout separately.

In addition to the first theme, Emir et al. (2023) revealed that the technical issues, inadequate student learning environments, and unexpected policy amendments were important internal political factors that caused burnout among Turkish EFL teachers during emergency remote teaching. These findings can be contrasted to the study of Kenebayeva et al. (2022) who indicated an inadequate access to digital technologies, a lack of support in using them and unclear objectives as potential factors that contributed to the perceived stress of Kazakhstani female teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In accordance with the second theme, job demands and various stressors lead to burnout. In particular, those school EFL teachers who are overloaded and spend long hours at work are more prone to burnout. This is evident in the findings of Karanfil and Yeşilbursa (2021) which indicate that heavy workload, work overload, long working hours, a lack of time and job descriptions, time pressures can predict private school EFL teachers' burnout. Additionally, Ayalew et al. (2024) revealed a significant relationship between work overload, perceived stress and emotional exhaustion. The first two factors also predicted depersonalization. In the Turkish context, the main stressors that led to EFL teacher's job dissatisfaction during the COVID were extra workload, extensive communication demands, the responsibility of keeping parents updated on learners' progress, longer preparation times, reduced use of the second language, challenges in tracking students' engagement, and irregular class schedules. As can be seen from these findings, workload is the most common predictor of burnout in these studies which goes in line with Maslach and Leiter's model of burnout. According to this model, workload along with other school-related factors can be a predictor of all three dimensions of burnout.

Furthermore, these findings reflect the model suggested by Oranje (2021), which defines workload as an environmental source of stress that may cause burnout.

Conforming to the third theme, interpersonal and institutional factors contribute to school EFL teachers' burnout. More specifically, the school EFL teachers who have negative relationships with colleagues, students, or parents, experience a lack of resources, or face unpredictable changes suffer from burnout. This theme is observed in the findings of Karanfil and Yeşilbursa (2021) which demonstrated that mobbing, student behavior, geographical area, poorly equipped classrooms, the teaching materials, and unstable policies were the main factors that contributed to state school EFL teachers' burnout, whereas their colleagues working in private schools highlighted the impact of competitiveness among teachers, job demands, and parental expectations. The results of this study partially go in line with the study that indicated job demands and student demotivation as potential predictors of burnout among Ethiopian secondary school teachers (Blay et al., 2024, p. 8). Atashpanejeh et al. (2020) also indicated that some teachers do not feel relaxed at work because of the influence of the community and parents. The findings regarding parental expectations and impact of community align with the fact that burnout is primarily a response to an acute stress resulting from frequent interpersonal interactions (Mearn & Cains, 2016, p. 27).

In accordance with the fourth theme, personal and psychosocial factors can also result in burnout. Specifically, age serves as a predictor of school EFL teachers' burnout in some countries. For instance, the findings of İlyá (2023) demonstrated that age was the strongest predictor of all three symptoms of burnout among Turkish EFL teachers, although it showed a statistically significant interaction only with depersonalization. The study suggests that as teachers grow older, they tend to feel more isolated, view students more as objects, and carry out their professional tasks mechanically. Moreover, Morska et

al. (2022) found that English teachers with 10 to 15 years of teaching experience aged 38 years old were more exposed to burnout due to the application of digital technologies in their classes. These results contradict the findings of Zhunusbekova and Askarkyzy (2023) who revealed that burnout can occur at any phase of teachers' professional development regardless of the teaching experience. However, these findings bear a strictly contextual nature and cannot be replicated due to certain limitations.

In addition to the fourth theme, the personal factors leading to burnout include motivation, pedagogical competence, and autonomy level. For example, Ayalew et al. (2024) found that a lack of motivation and pedagogical content knowledge had a significant effect on Ethiopian EFL teachers' emotional exhaustion which can be explained by the fact that these teachers might have been less motivated to deeply explore their profession. This explanation can be supported by Zhunusbekova and Askarkyzy's (2023) findings that highlight a direct effect of burnout on teacher motivation. According to their conclusions, intrinsically motivated teachers who constantly improve their skills and search for new teaching approaches are more likely to succeed in their job. Besides, Karanfil and Yeşilbursa (2021) found that burned out state school EFL teachers had a low level of autonomy. These findings can be contrasted to the results of Alomoudi (2023) who revealed that a high level of professional autonomy among Saudi Arabian English teachers is related to a low risk of burnout. These contrasting results indicate that EFL teachers with a low autonomy level may be more susceptible to burnout regardless of the context.

The socio-emotional factors were also found to play an important role in burnout. For example, in another Turkish study, it was found that EFL teachers had burnout mainly because of the lack of social support and the feeling of incompetence (Emir et al., 2023). Besides, Lucena and Ojeda (2024) revealed that teachers' perceived capacity to manage emotions and personal limitations had a detrimental effect on the well-being of Spanish

secondary school EFL teachers. These findings are closely connected with the results by Bing et al. (2022) who concluded that emotional self-regulation can predict Chinese English teachers' burnout.

Compliant with the fifth theme, burnout is positively associated with social and financial variables. For example, a lack of social value and low salary were found to have a significant association with emotional exhaustion, whereas a lack of social value best predicted the depersonalization of Ethiopian EFL teachers (Ayalew et al., 2024). Furthermore, dissatisfaction, a lack of social value and motivation were the best predictors of reduced personal accomplishment. The low salary was also found to contribute to Iranian EFL teachers' burnout (Atashpanjeh et al., 2020). These results partially align with the findings by Macintyre et al. (2019) who indicated a demanding workload, financial challenges, and inconsistent work hours as potential stressors that can contribute to international EFL teachers' burnout. The changes in living conditions and employment problems were reported to be additional sources of stress for these teachers.

Thus, a number of contextual factors were found to contribute to school EFL teachers' burnout in the international context that range from individual and social to the institutional and political factors. All of them have a different degree of association with burnout and interact with other contextual factors. In the next part, the findings related to the coping strategies and internal resources are interpreted and discussed.

### **Coping Strategies and Psychological Resources Against Burnout**

The third research question addresses the problem of coping strategies among school EFL teachers working in different countries. The thematic analysis is based on the following three themes: personal coping strategies, support system and professional development, and extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. A number of contextual studies closely examined coping mechanisms against burnout, each of which contributes to

these three themes (Chunyan & Ying, 2024; Erdağ & Tavid, 2021; Lucena and Ojena, 2024; Morska et al., 2022; Rezai et al., 2024; Sato et al., 2022; Zeng et al., 2024).

Coping strategies are vital for overcoming burnout. In accordance with the first theme, various personal coping mechanisms, proactive personality traits, and use of digital tools can reduce burnout. For example, the Turkish EFL teachers with a low burnout level used more coping strategies compared to those who had minor, significant, or higher level (Erdağ & Tavid, 2021). Teachers, who experienced various levels of burnout, benefitted from both problem-oriented and emotion-oriented strategies, although the teachers with a low level of burnout mainly preferred problem-oriented approaches. These results in turn are reflected in the findings that highlight an essential role of emotional regulation skills (Bing et al., 2022). More particularly, those English teachers, who have better emotional regulation and management skills, better deal with stress and are less prone to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Bing et al., 2022). In the Turkish context, those teachers who had a low burnout level chose problem-based coping strategies probably because of a less manifested emotional exhaustion, whereas their colleagues with a high level of burnout additionally opted for emotion-oriented techniques because they could have experienced more affective problems and therefore needed emotion-oriented approaches to ease emotional fatigue. Bing et al. (2022) also highlighted that those teachers who are more confident and capable of using diverse teaching, classroom management and engagement approaches can better resist the potential factors that may lead to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization compared with those who lack these traits.

In addition to the first theme, proactive personality traits contribute to preventing burnout symptoms. Particularly, Chunyan and Ying (2024) found that proactive personality traits have a positive relationship with teaching enjoyment, whereas teaching

enjoyment serves as a mediator between proactive personality and burnout. The negative relationship between proactive personality and burnout indicates that a proactive individual can seek coping resources more actively to handle teaching-related difficulties. These findings mean that proactive qualities may improve teaching enjoyment potentially safeguarding against burnout. In this regard, one's ability to regulate emotions through emotional labour strategies, which reinforces resilience, can be considered one of the important characteristics of proactive personality. This interpretation can be supported by Hu's (2023) argument, which posits that those language teachers, who manage their emotions more effectively, tend to be more resilient and are more likely to engage in their job on emotional, cognitive, and psychological levels. The findings of Chunyan and Ying (2024) can also be supplemented by the findings of Greenier et al. (2021) which indicate that individuals who effectively use both intrinsic and extrinsic strategies to regulate, evaluate, or adjust their emotions for concrete goals, may exhibit more energy, invest more in their teaching, and experience feelings of encouragement, pride, significance, and inspiration, which allows them to become deeply engaged in their professional roles. All of these findings are important for teachers to understand burnout and the way they can cope with it in challenging times of professional life.

In the Polish context, Morska et al. (2022) found that Polish EFL teachers, who reported making use of digital technologies actively in their classes, exhibited a low burnout level. In contrast, the Spanish secondary school EFL teachers indicated personal hobbies (running, playing a musical instrument, and hiking), constant professional development (CPD), and setting boundaries as main coping strategies that they used after work with CPD being the most prevalent strategy among all the participants (Lucena & Ojeda, 2024). These findings can be explained by the results of Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2016) who revealed that the Iranian English teachers with a more student-

centred teaching style and a higher level of creativity tend to experience less burnout. This allows to assume that the intensive use of Internet, art hobbies, and a constant professional growth require critical thinking skills and enable teachers to think more creatively and develop innovative teaching approaches. Therefore, these can be acknowledged as effective strategies for preventing, or coping with burnout.

In line with the second theme, support plays an important role in reducing burnout. In general, teachers who receive support from their colleagues can better cope with burnout. This theme aligns with the findings of Zeng et al. (2022) which indicate that cooperative colleagues can help reduce the burnout symptoms and improve a feeling of accomplishment (Zeng et al., 2024). These findings can also be compared to the study of Puzikova et al. (2022) who highlighted the impact of the organizational culture on teachers' burnout. The organizational culture here refers to the quality of management culture and, particularly, the communication quality between a school leader and educators. Specifically, authors concluded that a lack of support along with heavy workload may contribute to burnout which should be interpreted as a negative indicator of organizational culture.

Professional development can contribute to preventing burnout as well. For example, Rezai et al. (2024) found that those Iranian EFL teachers, who possessed teacher assessment literacy, experienced less burnout. Authors underlined the significant role of professional development in its prevention. These findings can be supported by the study of Zarrinabadi et al. (2023) who revealed that both a growth teaching mindset and self-efficacy are significant predictors of personal accomplishment and teacher's professional identity. These findings can be interpreted in a sense that teachers with a growth mindset believe in their capacity to improve their professional knowledge and skills and feel more competent. In this case, teachers who possess specific knowledge, or literacy skills like

TAL seem to have a growth-oriented mindset and be more ready to enhance their skills to cope with professional challenges that may potentially cause burnout. The findings of Rezai et al. (2024) can also be compared to those of Nayernia and Babayan (2019) who reported that teachers with higher language proficiency tend to feel less fatigued and demonstrate greater teaching effectiveness than their less proficient colleagues who feel more exhausted, exhibit more negative emotions toward their students and perceive themselves less competent in their roles. These findings also reflect the significance of a sense of competence which serves as a hallmark of growth mindset.

The third theme highlights a particular impact of intrinsic motivation on preventing burnout. For example, Sato et al. (2022) found that internally motivated EFL teachers experienced less burnout highlighting the role of intrinsic motivation in preventing teacher attrition. The qualitative results indicated that the teachers with an extended professional experience were mainly motivated internally, and transformed the effect of demotivating factors into a positive driving force. The teacher motivation was found to have a deterring effect on burnout, whereas the teaching experience was highlighted as a way to ameliorate the intrinsic motivation. These findings can be contrasted to the study by Zhunusbekova and Askarkzy (2020) who found that burnout can have a direct effect on teacher motivation and develop their coping mechanisms in challenging circumstances. Particularly, it is noted that intrinsically motivated teachers who constantly improve their skills and search for new teaching techniques and approaches are more likely to succeed in teaching. Both of these studies underline the intrinsic motivation as an important internal psychological resource that can help overcome burnout provided it is improved in the teaching process.

Thus, the reviewed studies examined a number of coping strategies and internal psychological resources that international EFL teachers use to cope with, or prevent

burnout in their lives. The interpretation of these findings indicate that coping strategies and internal resources that can help overcome burnout are individual and depend on the cultural context. These resources (knowledge, skills, and psychosocial variables) can serve as a safeguard against professional challenges of school EFL teachers. In the next chapter, the summary of these major findings and important implications and recommendations are presented.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, main findings of the systematic review were discussed and interpreted. Four themes of the first research question demonstrated that burnout affects school EFL teachers' overall well-being. Five themes of the second research question indicated that a complex interplay of contextual variables contributes to teacher burnout. These factors range from individual and social to the institutional and political ones. Three themes of the third research question revealed a variety of coping strategies and psychological resources that can help teachers overcome burnout. These findings can suggest implications for researchers, policy makers, and teacher practitioners, which will be elaborated in the final chapter.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to comprehensively study the data on EFL teachers' burnout and professional well-being. The conclusion includes three aspects: EFL teachers' burnout and professional well-being, contextual factors, and coping strategies.

This chapter comprises five sections. The first two sections are the summary of major findings and their significance. The third section elaborates on the limitations of the review and provide directions for potential research in the area of educational psychology and language education. In the fourth section, specific implications and recommendations for potential researchers, policymakers, school leaders, and school teachers are provided. The chapter concludes with my personal reflection and lessons learned from the challenges that I faced while I was doing the systematic review.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

This thesis focused on three questions concerning burnout and professional well-being of EFL teachers in the international context. The first question relates to school EFL teachers' professional well-being and burnout. The reviewed studies reflect the complex relationship between burnout and various dimensions of professional well-being of school EFL teachers across different countries focusing mainly on teachers from China, Turkey, Spain, and Ethiopia. Key findings demonstrated that burnout is related to job satisfaction, turnover intention, school climate, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and engagement. Job satisfaction and salary were associated with a lower burnout level, whereas burnout increased the probability of turnover intention mainly because of a low job satisfaction. Studies also indicate the mediating role of self-efficacy, school-related support, and teacher assessment literacy in alleviating the symptoms of burnout. Emotional intelligence and self-efficacy were reported to be inversely connected with burnout, thus highlighting

the significance of a socio-emotional competence. Other studies revealed that cyberloafing behavior, teacher beliefs, and interpersonal relationships with colleagues and administrators can also impact EFL teachers' burnout levels. More specifically, negative school environments and poor administrative support predicted emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, while positive peer relationships and supportive school climates facilitated commitment and personal accomplishment. Teacher Assessment Literacy (TAL) as a unique predictor was identified as protective factor against stress and burnout.

The second research question aimed to reveal contextual factors concerning international school EFL teachers' burnout. The reviewed studies focused on EFL teachers from both public and private schools in Iran, Ethiopia, Turkey, and Poland. The findings demonstrate a complex interaction of diverse internal and external factors depending on the educational context in which EFL teachers work. The thematic analysis revealed five key themes: school environment and workplace conditions, job demands and stressors, interpersonal and institutional factors, personal and psychosocial factors, and financial and social recognition.

According to the first theme, inappropriate educational system, insufficient equipment, non-standard evaluation criteria, school type, and inadequate technical infrastructure were the main causes that affected Iranian school EFL teachers' job satisfaction and burnout level, whereas the Turkish EFL teachers indicated technical issues, inadequate student learning environments, and unexpected policy changes as contributors to their burnout during the pandemic period (Atashpanjeh et al., 2020; Emir et al., 2023).

Job demands and stressors included the following factors: heavy workloads, long hours, undefined job roles, time pressure, increased communication demands, and perceived stress. These emerged as dominant stressors among Turkish and Ethiopian

school EFL teachers (Ayalew et al., 2024; Karanfil & Yeşilbursa, 2021). These demands particularly contributed to private school EFL teachers' burnout in Turkey, while work overload and perceived stress had a significant relationship with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization among their Ethiopian colleagues.

Interpersonal and institutional factors included poor classroom conditions, unstable educational policies, student misbehavior, parental pressure, and competitiveness among Turkish and Iranian school EFL teachers. The Turkish state school EFL teachers also reported workplace mobbing and lack of autonomy as significant concerns (Atashpanjeh et al., 2020; Karanfil & Yeşilbursa, 2021).

Age, years of experience, emotional self-regulation, and perceived competence were found to be critical personal contributors of burnout among Turkish and Polish EFL teachers. Older Polish female teachers and those with mid-level experience reported higher burnout during the shift to digital platforms (İlyay, 2023; Morska et al., 2022). Meanwhile, a lack of pedagogical knowledge, low autonomy, emotional regulation difficulties, and limited social support exacerbated burnout in Turkey and affected Spanish EFL teachers' well-being (Emir et al., 2023; Lucena & Ojeda, 2024).

Low salaries, lack of motivation, and perceived social devaluation were in turn classified into financial and social recognition theme. These predictors were significantly related with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment in the Ethiopian and Iranian school contexts (Atashpanjeh et al., 2020; Ayalew et al., 2024).

The third research question focused on coping strategies and psychological resources used by international EFL teachers to cope with burnout, or maintain their well-being. The reviewed studies explored a variety of coping strategies and psychological resources across different cultural contexts. These studies recruited the participants from

the Chinese, Iranian, Polish, Spanish, and Turkish schools. A common theme across the findings is the interplay between different burnout levels and the type and frequency of coping mechanisms. More specifically, the Turkish teachers with lower burnout levels tended to employ more coping strategies, particularly problem-oriented ones, whereas those with a higher level of burnout relied more on emotion-focused approaches (Erdağ & Tavil, 2021). Personal activities, rest, emotional regulation, and proactive engagement in problem-solving were characterized as recurrent strategies. Proactive personality traits had a positive association with teaching enjoyment and inversely with burnout (Chunyan & Ying, 2024), indicating that named qualities foster resilience and enhance emotional engagement with teaching. Similarly, emotional regulation (Bing et al., 2022; Hu, 2023) and the strategic use of intrinsic and extrinsic emotion management (Greenier et al., 2021) were found to be protective factors. Other coping mechanisms included the intensive use of digital technologies (Morska et al., 2022), engagement in personal hobbies and CPD (Lucena & Ojena, 2024), and supportive collegial environments (Zeng et al., 2024), all of which were associated to a lower burnout risk. Teacher assessment literacy (Rezai et al., 2024) and growth mindsets (Zarrinabadi et al., 2023) were found to contribute to a sense of competence and professional resilience. Intrinsic motivation in turn also contributed to mitigating burnout, especially among experienced EFL teachers (Sato et al., 2022). This evidence from Chile suggests that such motivation can transform negative experiences into sources of professional growth.

Thus, teacher burnout is a multifaceted phenomenon, influenced by both personal and contextual variables, and intricately related to teachers' professional well-being. All the reviewed studies demonstrate that EFL teacher's burnout results from a complex interaction of external and internal factors that range from institutional policies and working conditions to personal traits and socio-emotional competencies. The findings also

collectively emphasize that coping strategies are determined by individual differences and cultural contexts and that personal, emotional, and professional resources can serve as critical and effective safeguards against teacher burnout.

### **Significance of the Findings**

The findings of the present systematic review are significant in a sense that it is one of the first systematic reviews in Kazakhstan that comprehensively examined burnout and well-being of school EFL teachers. Another significant impact of this review is that it allows Kazakhstani scholars to better understand the role of different factors and existing approaches to studying teacher burnout in the future. For example, potential researchers will be able to use the findings of the present systematic review to define the concept, or improve the methodology of their future studies. Furthermore, it can be regarded as an important contribution to raising awareness about school EFL teachers' burnout among key stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, school leaders, and policymakers. In particular, it is important that policymakers and school leaders develop the concept of teacher well-being in policies and implement measures to prevent burnout in schools. .

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

This systematic review has three important limitations. Firstly, the possible biases in determining the target group and selecting the studies should be acknowledged. For example, school EFL teacher's burnout may be considered as a bias in relation to that of other subject teachers. This means that EFL teachers can experience burnout due to particular factors that may differ from those that general education teachers face. To minimize the bias concerning the selection process, the future research should focus on a broader population. Secondly, the selection process and analysis procedures were carried out manually which did not allow the identification or inclusion of more available sources from other existing databases in this review. The availability of special software would

have made the selection process more objective and less time-consuming. In this regard, the potential studies should employ the quality software to minimize the bias. Thirdly, the inter-coder reliability was not included as an important element of the data analysis process in this systematic review. Accordingly, potential researchers should consider enhancing the transparency of the review process by involving additional inter-coders. Additionally, teacher burnout needs to be researched complementarily, in a sense that researchers should employ both a quantitative and qualitative design to better understand the complex nature of burnout and the interplay of different factors within the given context.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

This systematic review also has two key implications. Firstly, the findings of this review suggest a significant negative effect of burnout on EFL teachers' professional well-being. Accordingly, it is recommended that future researchers develop structured interviews to better understand the phenomenological aspect of teachers' professional experience relying on the themes of this systematic review. Secondly, the results of this systematic review can also be used to create a special manual on teacher well-being to inform teachers about burnout symptoms and well-being strategies. As was demonstrated earlier, burnout is the result of various contextual factors that can affect both instructional quality and teachers' overall professional satisfaction and decision to continue their career which poses a threat to the quality of educational process in schools. For instance, some of the contextual factors, such as work overload and low salary, still remain persisting causes in Asian countries. In this regard, the policymakers are strongly recommended to reinforce and promote well-being in the educational policies, and school leaders can address the organizational and economic issues by making appropriate amendments to the organizational climate and policies.

## **Personal Reflection**

A few years ago, I suffered from burnout. After classes, I often felt tired, withdrawn, and apathetic. I remember teaching for long hours and I sometimes wanted to simply quit teaching. Once I was on the point of nervous breakdown, and I decided to leave my job. However, I continued to sense the consequences of burnout for a while. Only later did my life start changing.

I chose to study burnout because I knew it would be a kind of me-research. This academic journey allowed me to deeply reinterpret my experience which was an insightful process. While I was doing this systematic review, I gained some valuable insights about my personal experience with burnout making this journey worthwhile. I realized that the cause of my burnout was mainly at an individual level, meaning that I was not aware of my fixed mindset before I had started teaching and also throughout my career until I got admitted into the Master's Program. What I read and wrote during this thesis research has significantly contributed to my understanding of a language teacher's professional identity. Doing the systematic review has allowed me not only to critically analyze multiple sources and at the same time reinterpret my teaching experience but also notice the gaps in my thinking and improve it. To remove these gaps, I strived to read more, write and ask various questions and find answers independently.

I believe that my personal and a two-year learning experience in an academically rigorous environment has served as a solid basis for my future doctoral studies. My well-being is my top priority and my responsibility, and it should be the priority of every EFL teacher in Kazakhstan who wants to thrive professionally.

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## Appendix A: AI Declaration Form



### **Burnout and Professional Well-being of School English-as-a-Foreign-Language Teachers: A Systematic Review**

#### **Declaration of the Use of Generative AI**

I hereby declare that I have read and understood NUGSE's policy concerning appropriate use of generative AI tools and composed this work independently (please check one):

- with the use of generative artificial intelligence tools, or
- without the use of generative artificial intelligence tools.

During the preparation of this proposal/thesis, I used *Chat GPT 4.0* and *Reverso Context* to choose the appropriate academic vocabulary and improve the overall grammatical structure of the paragraphs.

I also declare that I

- am aware of the capabilities and limitations of generative AI tool(s),
- have verified that the content generated by AI systems and adopted by me is factually correct,
- am aware that as the author of this thesis I bear full responsibility for the statements and assertions made in it,

have submitted complete and accurate information about my use of generative AI tools in this work, and

acknowledge that there may be disciplinary consequences if I have breached NU Student Code of Conduct or not followed NUGSE's guidelines regarding appropriate AI use.

Name: Mereinur Tabuldin

Signature:



Date: 25.05.2025

## Appendix B: Data Analysis – Thematic Analysis

1	Initial coding	27	Personal accomplishment
2		28	Supervisory support
3	Low salary	29	Expectations
4	Working environment	30	Turnover intention
5	Work and life balance	31	Teaching enjoyment
6	School climate	32	Teaching Assessment Literacy
7	Emotional intelligence	33	Personal limitations
8	Relationships with colleagues and admnstr	34	Time pressures
9	Cyberloafing behavior	35	Managing emotions
10	A lack of time	36	Mobbing
11	Demands	37	Geographical area
12	Proactive personality	38	Competitiveness
13	A feeling of incompetence	39	Teacher motivation
14	Coping strategies	40	Coping strategies
15	Age	41	Heavy workload
16	Job engagement	42	A lack of equipment
17	Job satisfaction	43	Community and parents
18	Job commitment	44	Long working hours and work pressure
19	Self-image and beliefs	45	Students' laziness
20	Struggling students	46	Work overload
21	Education system	47	Perceived stress
22	Type of School	48	A lack of pedagogical content knowledge
23	Self-efficacy	49	A lack of motivation
24	Autonomy	50	A lack of social value
25	A lack of autonomy	51	Dissatisfaction
26	Digital technologies		

1	<b>Broader Themes</b>
2	
3	<b>Poor working conditions and economic benefits</b>
4	<b>Job engagement, commitment and (dis)satisfaction</b>
5	<b>School Climate and Professional Relationships</b>
6	<b>Effect of Emotional self-regulation</b>
7	<b>A lack of resources</b>
8	<b>Demands and expectations</b>
9	<b>Personality as a Factor</b>
10	<b>Age and Teaching Career</b>
11	<b>Personal Coping Mechanisms</b>
12	<b>Professional Competence (TAL, pedagogical content knowledge)</b>
13	<b>Type of School as a Factor</b>
14	<b>Stress and Professional Support</b>

1	<b>RQ 1 Impact</b>	<b>RQ2 Causes</b>	<b>RQ 3 Coping Strategies</b>
2	<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Theme 1</b>
3	Job satisfaction and Commitment	School environment and Workload	Personal coping strategies
4	<b>Theme 2</b>	<b>Theme 2</b>	<b>Theme 2</b>
5	Emotional and Psychological Well-being	Job demand and stressors	Support System and Professional Development
6	<b>Theme 3</b>	<b>Theme 3</b>	<b>Theme 3</b>
7	Work Engagement and Professional Identity	Interpersonal and Institutional Factors	The Role of Intrinsic Motivation
8	<b>Theme 4</b>	<b>Theme 4</b>	
9	Social and Interpersonal Relationships	Personal and Psychological factors	
10		<b>Theme 5</b>	
11		Financial and Social Recognition	