

Burnout Level of Special Education Teachers Students with Learning Disabilities in Special Integrated Education Program

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Abstract

Special education needs (SEN) teachers often encounter various challenges and demands, particularly when dealing with disruptive behavior from their students. Among these challenges is the issue of Special Education teachers' burnout, which can have negative impacts on their well-being and the quality of education provided to students with learning disabilities. To address this issue, this study examines the burnout levels of SEN teachers who taught students with learning disabilities under the Special Integrated Education Program (SIEP) in Petaling Utama District of Selangor. Additionally, this study aims to evaluate the burnout levels of SEN teachers based on their gender and teaching experiences using a quantitative methodology and cross-sectional survey design. The Job Demand-Resources model was employed, and a set of questionnaires adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory was distributed to 140 SEN teachers teaches students with learning difficulties under the Special Integrated Education Programme (SEIP) using a simple random sampling method. The findings demonstrate that SEN teachers in the study location exhibited low levels of burnout, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, with a moderate level of personal

achievement. Furthermore, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis H Test indicate that there was no significant difference in burnout scores between gender and teaching experience. Consequently, it can be concluded that neither gender nor teaching experience did not contribute to teachers' burnout. Stakeholders are advised to develop quality programs to support and empower SEN teachers, meanwhile establishing a collaborative culture through school support systems and providing sufficient resources are vital to maintain teachers' well-being.

Keywords: Special Education Needs Teachers, Burnout, Learning Disabilities, Special Integrated Education Program, Teachers Well-Being

Introduction

The evolution of education in the 21st century has resulted in changes to the learning styles of typical students, as well as the education of students with special needs. As key players in the preservation of the education system, special education teachers must prepare themselves for the technological and digital revolution in the field of education (Schleicher 2020). In addition to encountering challenges in teaching students with special education needs who may face developmental issues across physical, social, emotional, and intellectual domains, teachers are also required to address the demands of parents who seek immediate results (Lestari & Sawitri, 2017). The increasing well-being concerns among teachers impact the role of special education teachers as service providers. To maintain a positive image and uphold the dignity of educators, teachers are compelled to conceal feelings of stress. This situation worsens when special education teachers are tasked with serving Individuals with disabilities across physical or mental domains and require individualized support on a daily basis. Unawareness of chronic stress can result in burnout and negatively affect career well-being in the long run (Cnico, 2018).

The concept of burnout was initially introduced by Freudenberger (1974) to refer to a state of psychological stress that affects an individual's emotional attitude and work motivation. Maslach and Jackson (1981, 1986) subsequently identified three dimensions of burnout, namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. The World Health Organization (WHO) also defined burnout as a syndrome that results from chronic workplace stress that is inadequately managed in the International Classification of Diseases 11th revision (ICD-11) in 2019. Burnout is a prevalent issue in the teaching profession, as indicated by previous research that has demonstrated its negative effects on the welfare and health of educators (Azahari et al., 2020).

Not only does burnout pose a threat to the psychological well-being of teachers, but it also has a detrimental impact on their professionalism and efficiency. Burnout symptoms can manifest in the form of both psychological and somatic symptoms, such as irritability, anxiety, insomnia, forgetfulness, concentration problems, depression, arrhythmia, hypertension, gastrointestinal problems, and persistent headaches (García-Arroyo et al., 2019; Hozo et al., 2015; Piperac et al., 2021). Several systematic survey studies have shown that burnout syndrome is linked to both physical and mental disorders in the workplace, including low morale, job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, intention to quit, poor performance, and work-family conflict (Garcia-Arroyo et al., 2020). According to the results of the 2022 Teacher Wellbeing Index, a significant proportion of school staff (approximately 78%) reported a deterioration in their health that is closely associated with their professional responsibilities.

This study aims to examine the level of burnout among SEN teachers under the Special Integrated Education Programme (SEIP) who teach students with learning disabilities in primary and secondary schools in Petaling Utama District, Selangor. Specifically, this study will investigate the three dimensions of burnout: depersonalization, personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion, and seeks to address the existing research gap in this area.

The objectives of this study include the following

- i. To determine the level of burnout experienced by Special Education Needs (SEN) teachers under the Special Integrated Education Programme (SEIP) in primary and secondary schools from Petaling Utama district.
- ii. To identify any differences in burnout level among SEN teachers under SEIP based on gender.
- iii. To investigate whether there is a variation in burnout level among SEN teachers under SEIP in Petaling Utama based on their teaching experiences.

Literature Review

Burnout among Special Education Teacher (SEN) Teachers

Burnout is a common phenomenon in service sectors such as healthcare, social services, mental health, and education, mainly due to the high emotional demands of human interaction (Manja et al., 2020). If unaddressed, burnout can lead to chronic health issues and depression, which can further result in suicidal tendencies (Méndez et al., 2020; Velásquez, 2017). Given the crucial role of the teaching profession in the mental and emotional development of children, it is imperative to address burnout among teachers to ensure positive academic and student well-being outcomes (Hermen, Hickmon-Rosa & Reinke, 2017; Harding et al., 2019; Maric et al., 2020).

The Job Demands-Resources theory posits that burnout is closely associated with job demands that deplete an individual's work resources, leading to a decrease in attachment and sense of belonging to their organization. Special education teachers often experience exhaustion and reduced motivation due to inadequate handling of job demands and an overwhelming workload, which may lead to chronic burnout and a decrease in work productivity. On the other hand, work resources such as social support, autonomy, performance feedback, job opportunities, job security, wages, and the individual's role within an organization can enhance an individual's readiness to cope with work demands and reduce burnout (Collie & Martin, 2017; Collie et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018; Tims et al. 2013; Alonso et al. 2019; Granziera, Collie & Martin, 2020; Mansfield, 2020). Previous research has shown that positive autonomy support, adaptability, organizational involvement, and commitment are positively correlated with burnout and alienation among teachers, while excellent performance in teaching is associated with lower levels of burnout (Capone & Peptrillo, 2020; Collie & Martin, 2017; Collie et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Longitudinal studies have also indicated that burnout and depression are inter-related, emphasizing the need for effective interventions to address burnout among teachers and mitigate its negative consequences (Méndez et al., 2020; Szigeti et al., 2016).

According to Skaalvik's (2018) study, which surveyed 760 teachers in Norway, colleague support is the primary predictor of teacher well-being, as indicated by emotional exhaustion, feelings of depression, and psychometric responses. Similarly, Herman, Rosa, and Reinke's

(2018) study found that effective coping strategies among teachers corresponded with high self-efficacy, while poor coping skills were associated with low self-efficacy. Lee and Surat's (2021) study supports the idea that coping strategies can mitigate burnout and have implications for teacher work pressure, health, and self-efficacy. While the studies conducted in Israel, the United States, Taiwan, and Hong Kong suggest that special education teachers in both primary and secondary schools may experience high levels of burnout, with sample sizes ranging from 122 to 303 (Maslach et al., 2017; Chiu, Lee, & Chang, 2017; Eilam & Aharoni, 2018; Lai & Lo, 2018), interventions are needed to address burnout among special education teachers in both primary and secondary schools, regardless of location.

Numerous studies have examined burnout among special education teachers in primary and secondary schools. Several studies conducted in different countries such as China, the United States, Turkiye, and South Korea reported that special education teachers in secondary schools experience higher levels of burnout compared to those in primary schools (Park, Lee, & Kim, 2019; Ragozzino et al., 2018; Shi & Liu, 2021; Yavuz et al., 2019;). Conversely, studies conducted in Canada and Saudi Arabia found no significant difference in burnout levels between primary and secondary special education teachers (Alquwez et al., 2019; Dettmer & Gagne, 2016).

These findings provide further evidence that burnout is a prevalent issue among special education teachers in both primary and secondary schools. Although secondary school teachers may be slightly more susceptible to burnout, this is not always the case. For instance, a study conducted in West Gojjam and Awi Zone revealed high prevalence of burnout among secondary and preparatory school teachers, with emotional exhaustion being the most prevalent dimension of burnout (Wulolign et al., 2020). Squillaci (2020) found that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization levels were high among special education teachers in Switzerland, while personal accomplishment levels were low. Moreover, a study conducted in Serbia demonstrated a high prevalence of burnout syndrome among special education teachers working with children with developmental disorders (Jovanović et al., 2019).

Special education teachers experience higher levels of burnout compared to their mainstream counterparts. Brunsting et al (2014) suggested that burnout levels among special education teachers in secondary schools are affected by the age of students they teach. Despite the issue receiving more attention from various stakeholders globally, only a few studies have focused specifically on interventions to reduce burnout among special education teachers (Breeman et al., 2016; Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996; Iancu et al., 2018). Resilience skills play a crucial role in preventing burnout among teachers and enhancing these skills may be an effective strategy to reduce burnout among teachers, especially those working in high-stress environments like secondary schools (Rico et al., 2016; Sanchez et al., 2017). Research studies have explored various factors related to teacher burnout. Lu et al (2019) investigated the relationship between job satisfaction, professional identity, and teacher burnout among 267 primary and secondary school teachers in China. The results showed that job satisfaction and professional identity were significant predictors of burnout among teachers. Similarly, Anastasiou and Belious (2021) conducted a study on emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction among primary school teachers in the Epirus district of Greece and found that these teachers exhibited high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, as well as low levels of self-esteem.

Burnout According to Demographic Factors

Gender differences in the sources of teacher stress and burnout have been reported, with female teachers more likely to experience burnout than men (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Gray & Plath, 2019; Lai & Lo 2018; Lu et al., 2017). Female teachers may be more affected by student misbehaviour and workload demands, while male teachers may be more affected by administrative and organizational issues (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Guo & Feng, 2020). Further research is needed to understand the unique challenges faced by special education teachers (Aloe et al., 2014). Some studies have reported no significant association between gender and burnout, such as Ratanasiripong et al.'s (2020) study and the study conducted by Bianchi et al (2021) among teachers in France, Spain, and Switzerland.

Similarly, Akin's (2019) qualitative study among 460 special education teachers in the central Yenışehir district of Diyarbakır province and Pavlidou and Alevriadou's (2020) quantitative study with a sample size of 427 participants, including general education teachers, special education teachers, and students from Greek elementary schools, found no statistically significant association between gender and burnout. These findings suggest that the teaching profession, which involves intense human relationships, can exhaust practitioners of this profession regardless of gender. These results are consistent with studies conducted by Brunsting et al (2021); Pyhältö et al (2021); Mehmet (2021); Wulolign et al (2020); Nuri et al (2017), which found that the difference between the perceptions of males and females regarding burnout was not statistically significant.

Various studies have investigated the association between burnout and factors such as gender, number of years teaching, grade of teaching, and school type. Agyapong et al (2022) anticipated that these factors would influence the occurrence of burnout and other psychological disorders among teachers. Gender has been found to be a significant factor in some studies, with female teachers reporting higher levels of burnout overall. However, this gender difference may be moderated by other factors such as age and teaching experience. For instance, Chang et al (2019) found that the gender difference was more pronounced among younger and less experienced teachers. The relationship between teaching experience and burnout is not straightforward and may be influenced by other factors. While some studies indicate a negative association between teaching experience and burnout, others report no association or even a positive one. Interventions aimed at reducing burnout should consider the impact of teaching experience on burnout and customize interventions to meet the unique needs of teachers at different stages of their careers.

Research has suggested that novice teachers may experience higher levels of stress due to various factors, such as inadequate preparation, a lack of experience, and challenges related to classroom management and student behaviour (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). However, as teachers gain more experience and become more proficient in their teaching practices, burnout levels may decrease (Wang & Guo, 2015). Burnout risk has also been found to be related to background variables, such as teaching experience and teacher domain, with teachers who have more years of teaching experience having a lower risk of burnout (Pyhältö et al., 2021; Teyfur 2021). Studies have found significant differences in burnout levels among teachers according to their professional seniority, with those with fewer years of experience experiencing higher levels of burnout (Vesna Jovanović et al., 2019). Gender and years of teaching have also been found to influence turnover intention, with female teachers and

those with more years of teaching reporting lower turnover intention (Wang et al., 2020). Additionally, assertiveness has been found to be negatively related to burnout levels (Vesna Jovanović et al., 2019).

Research Methodology

The present study employs a quantitative methodology and employs a cross-sectional survey design to examine the extent of burnout among SEN teachers who are involved in the Special Education Integration Programme (SEIP) in Petaling Utama district of Selangor state. Additionally, this study seeks to investigate the association between burnout and demographic variables such as gender and years of teaching experience.

Population and Sampling

In this study, a sample of 140 special education needs teachers (SEN) teachers who were part of the Special Education Integration Programme (SEIP) in Petaling Utama district, located in Selangor state, was recruited from a population of 180 SEN teachers under SEIP using the simple random sampling method. The use of a sufficient sample size is essential for obtaining accurate estimates and increasing the precision of the study (Agresti, 2018).

Research Instrument

The present study employed a survey questionnaire as the research instrument, which was divided into two sections. The first section collected socio-demographic data of the participants in the sample, whereas the second section consisted of a set of survey questions adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educator Survey (MBI-ES) developed by (Maslach et al., 1986, 2019). The MBI-ES is a well-established questionnaire utilized for measuring burnout and includes 22 items distributed across three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. For example, the emotional exhaustion scale consists of nine items, the depersonalization scale comprises five items, and the personal accomplishment scale involves eight items. The questionnaire items were designed to be answered on a Likert scale ranging from 0 (Never) to 6 (Every day), with various intervals in between (e.g., several times a year, once a month, once a week, several times a week). The MBI-ES has a high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha value ranging from 0.84 to 0.88 (Chang, 2013; Pellerone et al., 2020). A pilot study was conducted on 30 SEN teachers under SEIP from the state of Melaka, which reported the cronbach alpha of the burnout construct as follows: emotional exhaustion ($\alpha = 0.90$), depersonalization ($\alpha = 0.75$), and personal accomplishment ($\alpha = 0.81$).

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher has sought permission from the Information Management Division and Education Policy Planning and Research Division of the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE), as well as the District Education Office of Selangor, to conduct the study. Following approval from these authorities, the researcher applied to conduct research in 22 schools with Special Education Integration Program (SEIP) in Petaling Utama district, Selangor. The survey questionnaire was designed using the Google Form application and distributed to each school via email, with a follow-up message containing a link to the survey sent through the SEN teachers' school communication WhatsApp group.

Data Analysis Procedures

The raw data collected from the sample of 140 Special Education Teachers (SEN teachers) under the Special Education Integration Programme (SEIP) was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 26. Descriptive analysis was employed to examine the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The level of burnout experienced by the participants was determined by categorizing the six-point Likert scale scores into low (0.00 - 2.99), medium (3.00 – 4.99), and high (5.00 – 6.99) based on the interpretation of the mean score, following the approach of (Ajang and Bakar, 2019). Specifically, a high score in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization indicated a high level of burnout, while a high score in personal accomplishment indicated a low level of burnout. Due to non-normal data distribution, the Mann Whitney U Test was used to investigate the burnout level of SEN teachers based on gender demographic factors, while the Kruskal Wallis H Test was utilized to examine the relationship between the burnout level of SEN teachers and their years of teaching experience.

Findings

After data collection, the dataset was screened to verify data entry accuracy, detect any missing data, and check the data distribution for multivariate analysis, as suggested by (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2019). Following the screening process, a total of 140 participants were deemed suitable for data analysis. Table 1 displays the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1

Demographic details

Content	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	26	28.6
	Female	114	81.4
Type of school	Primary	78	55.7
	Secondary	62	44.7
Marital Status	Single	35	25
	Married	105	75
Age	20 – 30	40	28.6
	31 – 40	56	40.0
	41 – 50	37	26.4
	51 – 60	7	5.0
Education Level	Certificate / Diploma	9	6.4
	Degree	112	80.0
	Master	19	13.6
	PHD	0	0
Teaching experiences (year)	1 – 5	35	14.0
	6 – 10	48	19.2
	11 – 15	99	39.6
	16 – 20	41	16.4
	21 year and above	27	10.8
	Total	140	100

The study's participants were primarily female teachers, comprising 114 individuals (81.4%), whereas male teachers were significantly less represented, totalling only 26 (28.6%). In addition, the study collected responses from 78 (55.7%) primary school teachers and 62 (44.7%) secondary school teachers. The sample consisted of 140 respondents, of whom 99 (39.6%) had been working in the field of Special Education for between 10 and 15 years. Additionally, 48 (19.2%) of the respondents had served as teachers for 6 to 10 years, while 41 (16.4%) had served for 16 to 20 years. The remaining 35 (14%) and 27 (10.8%) respondents had served for 1 to 5 years and 21 years or more in the teaching profession, respectively. Further information on the demographics of the study participants is provided in Table 1.

According to the results presented in Table 2, the research findings suggest that SEN teachers under the SEIP from the study location had a relatively low level of burnout. Specifically, the mean scores for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were ($M=1.80$, $SD=0.841$) and ($M= 1.56$, $SD=0.816$), respectively, indicating a low level of burnout. Furthermore, the mean score for personal accomplishment was ($M= 2.26$, $SD=0.826$), suggesting a moderate level of burnout in this domain. In terms of the respondents' scores on the Likert scale, 47.1% of teachers reported low levels of emotional exhaustion, while 25.7% and 27.1% of respondents experienced moderate and high levels of emotional exhaustion, respectively. In relation to depersonalization, 65% of the respondents reported low levels, while 20% and 20.7% reported moderate and high levels, respectively. Finally, regarding personal accomplishment, 50% of the respondents reported high levels, while 36% and 24.3% of respondents reported moderate and low levels, respectively. Based on these results, the study concludes that the SEN teachers recruited from the study location demonstrated a low level of burnout.

Table 2

Burnout level of SEN teacher from Petaling Utama District

Construct	n (%)			Mean	SD	(Burnout level)
	Low	Medium	High			
Emotional Exhaustion	66 (47.1)	36 (25.7)	38 (27.1)	1.80	0.841	Low
Depersonalization	91 (65.0)	20 (14.3)	29 (20.7)	1.56	0.816	Low
Personal Accomplishment	34 (24.3)	36 (25.7)	70 (50.0)	2.26	0.826	Low

Research Question i: What is the burnout level of primary and secondary schools SEN teachers in Petaling Utama district, Selangor.

The level of burnout experienced by SEN teachers in primary and secondary schools from Petaling Utama district, Selangor was assessed using non-parametric statistical analysis due to the non-normal distribution of the data. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3, which provides a detailed analysis of the findings.

Table 3

SEN teacher burnout level based on types of school

Construct	Types Of School	Median	IQR	Mann Whitney U	Mean Rank	Statistic*	P value
Emotional	Primary	11.00	9.00 – 16.00	2305.50	71.94	-0.72	0.47
Exhaustion	Secondary	10.00	6.00 – 14.00		68.69		
Depersonalization	Primary	7.00	5.00 - 10.00	2346.50	71.42	-0.32	0.78
	Secondary	7.00	4.00 – 11.00		69.35		
Personal	Primary	22.00	20.00 – 24.00	2138.00	74.94	-1.72	0.09
	Secondary	21.00	17.00 – 25.00		68.69		

**Mann Whitney U Test

A Mann-Whitney U test was employed to investigate whether there were any differences in burnout levels among SEN teachers based on the type of school in the Petaling Utama district, Selangor. The significance level was set at $p > 0.05$. The results revealed no significant differences in emotional exhaustion sub-dimension between primary school teachers (Median = 11, N = 78) and secondary school teachers (Median = 10, N = 62), with $U = 2311.50$, $z = -0.72$, and $p = 0.47$. Similarly, there were no significant differences in depersonalization dimension between primary school teachers (Median = 7, N = 78) and secondary school teachers (Median = 7, N = 62), with $U = 2346.50$, $z = -0.32$, and $p = 0.78$. Moreover, no significant differences were found in personal accomplishment dimension between primary school teachers (Median = 22, N = 78) and secondary school teachers (Median = 21, N = 62), with $U = 2138.00$, $z = -1.72$, and $p = 0.09$. Thus, the null hypothesis was failed to be rejected, indicating that there were no differences in burnout levels between primary and secondary school teachers.

Multiple studies have shown that the interaction between high job demands and low self-resources can have negative effects on teachers' well-being and self-efficacy, leading to burnout and exhaustion (Galbán, 2018; Garcia & Gambarte, 2019; López & Extremera, 2017; Rodríguez et al., 2017; *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II)*, 2020). Burnout is often defined as a response to work-related stress that results in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. A review of prior research suggests that European teachers generally report lower levels of burnout compared to their counterparts in the United States and Canada, which could be explained by cultural, societal, and organizational differences (*TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II)*, 2020). This study examined burnout levels of SEN teachers in Petaling Utama district and found that they reported low levels of burnout, with moderate personal accomplishment and low levels of exhaustion and depersonalization. Furthermore, there was no significant difference in burnout levels between primary and secondary SEN teachers, which aligns with Li et al.'s (2020) research on preschool teachers and with a study of early childhood education teachers in Samarahan and Kuching, Sarawak,

that reported low levels of burnout among preschool teachers (Ajang & Bakar, 2018). However, an empirical study conducted in China indicated that special education teachers experience higher levels of psychological problems and burnout compared to mainstream primary and secondary school teachers (Fu et al., 2021; Tien et al., 2019;). Another local study of 776 secondary school teachers found high levels of burnout across all three dimensions (Pau et al., 2022). Furthermore, primary school teachers typically experience lower levels of personal accomplishment compared to their secondary school counterparts (Chalghaf et al., 2019; Maslach & Jackson, 1985), which is consistent with the present study's finding that primary school SEN teachers had slightly higher median scores than high school teachers. In contrast to the present study's finding that special education teachers in Petaling Utama district reported low levels of burnout, previous research conducted in different countries and contexts has reported varied results regarding the prevalence and factors contributing to burnout among teachers. For example, a study in Saudi Arabia found that secondary school teachers experienced higher burnout rates, while primary school teachers tended to be affected by emotional exhaustion (Chalghaf et al., 2019). Similarly, secondary school teachers in Spain (Martinez-Ramon et al., 2021) and primary school teachers in Greece experienced burnout due to different factors such as low personal accomplishment, rapid curriculum changes, and the need to develop ICT literacy skills (Anatasiou & Belious, 2020). In Sweden, primary school teachers had the highest percentage of work-related illnesses in the country, with excessive workload and daily stress being major contributing factors (Karjalainen et al., 2019). Moreover, studies on burnout during the Covid-19 pandemic have reported conflicting results, with some finding high levels of burnout among teachers (Abdeslam Amri et al. 2020), while others reporting low levels, likely related to instability of work scope and workload (Goncalves & Assis, 2021; Pereira, Puertas-Molero et al., 2018; Vazquez et al. 2019). Overall, research suggests that burnout among teachers is a complex phenomenon influenced by various internal and external factors, including job demands, personal resources, organizational and cultural factors, and life events (Wang et al., 2015; Teles et al., 2020; Pau et al., 2022),

Burnout Level Based on Gender

Research Question ii: Does the burnout level vary between male and female special education needs teachers

Null hypothesis : There is no significant difference in burnout level among SEN teacher based on gender.

Table 4

Burnout level based on gender

Construct	Gender	Median	IQR	Mann-Whitney U	Mean Rank	Statistic*	P Value
Emotional	Male	10.00	7.00 – 13.00	1245.50	61.40	-1.93	0.05
Exhaustion	Female	11.00	8.00 – 16.25		72.57		
Depersonalization	Male	6.00	4.00 – 8.25	1135.50	57.17	-1.99	0.05
	Female	7.00	5.00 – 11.00		73.54		
Personal	Male	21.00	17.75 – 23.00	1447.00	69.15	-0.27	0.78
Accomplishment	Female	22.00	19.00 – 24.00		70.81		

**Mann-Whitney U Test

In this study, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to examine whether there were any significant differences in burnout levels between male and female Special Education Teachers (SEN) teachers in Petaling Utama district of Selangor. The test was carried out with a significance level of $p > 0.05$. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference in emotional exhaustion dimension between male (Median = 10, N = 26) and female (Median = 11, N = 114) $U = 1245.50$, $z = -1.933$, $p = 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was failed to be rejected as gender was not a significant factor in emotional exhaustion sub-dimension. Meanwhile, no significant difference was found in depersonalization between male (Median = 6, N = 26) and female (Median = 7, N = 114) $U = 1245.50$, $z = -1.933$, $p = 0.05$ whereas the null hypothesis was failed to be rejected. Finally, no significant difference was observed in personal accomplishment between male (Median = 21, N = 26) and female (Median = 22, N = 114) $U = 1447.00$, $z = -0.274$, $p = 0.78$. Hence, the null hypothesis was failed to be rejected, indicating that gender was not a significant factor in personal accomplishment.

The objective of this study was to investigate the association between burnout levels, specifically emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement, with gender among SEN teachers in Petaling Utama district, Selangor. The results showed that there was no significant correlation between burnout and gender. These findings align with prior research conducted by Arvidsson et al (2016); Othman and Sivasubramaniam (2019), Ratanasiripong et al (2020); Bianchi et al (2021); Szigeti et al (2022), which stated that gender does not affect teacher burnout levels. However, Al-Asadi et al (2018) found that male teachers are more likely to experience burnout in Iraq, where the teaching profession is male dominated. In contrast, Mamo (2022); Soob (2019) suggested that male teachers who have served for more than 11 years are more likely to develop negative emotions towards students and school administrators. These results are comparable to those of previous research conducted in government primary schools in Greece by (Anastasiou and Papakonstantinou, 2014; Panagopoulos et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, these findings are inconsistent with previous studies conducted by Ptacek et al (2019); Iqbal et al (2020); Kasalak and Dagyar (2022), which reported a significant correlation

between teacher burnout and demographic factors. Several studies have also shown that female teachers tend to experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion and are more susceptible to burnout than male teachers (Anatasiou & Belious, 2020; Chalghaf et al., 2019; Wu, 2020; Yang, 2020; Zotova et al., 2019;). Additionally, earlier research has suggested that married female teachers face challenges balancing their responsibilities as mothers and their work commitments, leading to exhaustion (Al-Asadi et al., 2018; Jovanović et al., 2019; O'Brennan & Wu, 2020; Pas & Bradshaw, 2017; Yang, 2020).

The current study aimed to investigate the association between burnout levels (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement) and gender among SEN teachers in Petaling Utama district, Selangor. The results indicated no significant relationship between burnout scores and gender, which is consistent with previous studies by (Arvidsson et al., 2016; Othman and Sivasubramaniam, 2019; Ratanasiripong et al., 2020; Bianchi et al., 2021; Szigeti et al., 2022). These studies also reported that gender did not affect the level of burnout among teachers. However, some studies, including Al-Asadi et al (2018); Mamo (2022); Soob (2019), found conflicting results. Moreover, Anastasiou and Papakonstantinou (2014); Panagopoulos et al (2014) found that male teachers who served for more than 11 years exhibited negative emotions towards students and school administrators. These findings suggest that the relationship between gender and burnout is complex, and further research is required to understand the underlying factors contributing to this phenomenon. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that teachers in Malaysia generally have good job satisfaction and perceive their profession as valued, as evidenced by the low levels of depersonalization reported by both genders in the current study.

SEN Teachers burnout level according to teaching experience

Research Question iii : What is the burnout level of SEN teacher according to teaching experience?

Null hypothesis : There is no significant difference in SEN teacher burnout level according to teaching experience.

Table 5
Burnout Score Regarding of teaching Experiences

Construct	Teaching Experience (Year)	Media n	IQR	Mea n Rank	Statistics *	P-Value	Effect Size
Emotional Exhaustion	1 - 5	11.00	8.00 – 14.75	69.22	1.830	0.767	0.12
	6 - 10	10.50	9.00 – 16.75	71.51			
	11 - 15	11.00	7.50 – 15.00	69.26			
	16 - 20	7.50	3.75 – 13.25	66.05			
	21 years and above	14.00	10.00 -18.50	78.96			
Depersonalization	1 - 5	7.00	5.00 – 11.00	74.86	3.053	0.549	0.15
	6 - 10	8.00	5.00 – 10.75	74.43			
	11 - 15	6.00	4.00 – 8.00	64.73			
	16 - 20	6.00	3.00 – 8.50	58.20			
	21 years and above	8.00	4.50 – 12.50	73.85			
Personal Accomplishment	1 - 5	21.50	19.00 – 24.00	70.84	4.347	0.361	0.18
	6 - 10	21.00	17.00 – 23.00	63.69			
	11 - 15	23.00	20.00 – 25.00	75.91			
	16 - 20	20.50	19.00 – 23.25	76.05			
	21 years and above	21.00	18.00 – 23.00	66.96			

** *Kruskal Wallis H Test*

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test indicate that there is no significant relationship between the level of emotional exhaustion and the length of experience teaching among SEN teachers $H(4) = 1.830$, $N = 140$, $p = 0.767$. The mean ranks for the five categories of teaching experience period groups ranged from 66.05 to 78.96, with the highest mean rank observed for teachers serving 6 to 10 years (Mean Rank = 71.51). Similarly, the test shows no significant relationship between the level of depersonalization and the length of experience teaching among SEN teachers, $H(4) = 3.053$, $N = 140$, $p = 0.549$, with the highest mean rank observed for teachers serving 1 to 5 years (Mean Rank = 74.43). Additionally, the Kruskal-Wallis test reveals no significant relationship between the level of personal accomplishment and the length of teaching experience among SEN teachers, $H(4) = 4.347$, $N = 140$, $p = 0.361$, with the

highest mean rank observed for teachers serving 16 to 20 years (Mean Rank = 76.05). These findings suggest that the length of teaching experience is not a factor that affects the well-being of SEN teachers. Therefore, the null hypothesis was failed to be rejected.

According to the findings of this study, there is no significant correlation between the level of burnout and the teaching experience of special education teachers. This result is in line with a study conducted in Epirus, Greece, which also found no significant link between emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment, and teaching experience (Anatasiou & Belious, 2020). However, other studies have reported that longer teaching experience in special education is positively correlated with emotional exhaustion and negatively correlated with depersonalization William and Dikes (2015). Nonetheless, older, and more experienced teachers are less likely to experience burnout because they have lower expectations for their students and are more flexible in accommodating their abilities (O'Brennan et al., 2017; Wu, 2020; Yang, 2020; Zotova et al., 2019). On the other hand, novice teachers who teach high-level classes are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, leading to feelings of burnout (Duli, 2016; Jovanovic et al., 2019). Novice teachers who are overly committed to their careers may also experience burnout when they realize the challenges of the education system after graduating from teaching institutions (Brouwers & Tomic, 2016).

Contrary to recent research indicating that experienced teachers who teach at a lower level demonstrate higher personal accomplishment and lower burnout levels, novice teachers who teach high-level classes are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, leading to feelings of burnout (Sardella et al., 2022). Novice teachers who enter the field during the first five years of their service are reported to experience higher burnout and lower personal accomplishment compared to teachers with more than ten years of experience (Amstad & Muller, 2020; Brouwers & Tomic, 2016; Demirok & Direktör, 2017; Lauermaann & König, 2016; Li et al., 2020; Nuri,; Taylor, 2019; Pau et al., 2022; Posada-Quintero, 2020). In addition, novice teachers who are overly committed to their careers may experience burnout when they realize the challenges of the education system after graduating from teaching institutions (Brouwers & Tomic, 2016).

Effective teachers are those who can manage their emotions well in the classroom and implement appropriate strategies and approaches. Educators with a high level of psychological well-being are better equipped to handle their own emotions (Greenier et al., 2021), build close relationships with students, provide effective teaching, and reduce burnout (Mercer 2020). However, excessive stress and mediating coping mechanisms can persist undetected, leading to burnout (De Stasio et al., 2017; Benevene et al., 2018; Cappe et al., 2021). Burnout not only affects the mental well-being of teachers but also negatively impacts the teaching and learning process, ultimately reducing the quality of education (Li et al., 2020; Rey, Extremera & Pena 2016; Zhang, Zhang & Hua 2019). Burnout and perceived stress also affect the balance of work and daily life, leading to a deterioration of teachers' professional identity and the intention to resign (Akyurek and Can, 2022; Hamelin et al., 2022; Williamson et al., 2018;). Therefore, it is essential for teachers to prioritize their mental well-being and take measures to manage stress and prevent burnout, ultimately improving the quality of education. The fact that (*TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II)*, 2020) reports a significant need for training in this area among teachers could imply that their schools are lacking sufficient

resources in terms of infrastructure or educational materials to support the needs of students with special needs. Hence, a key incentive to encourage teacher participation in professional development is to establish a training program offered by either the schools or national education systems that can help address these resource gaps and ultimately contribute to their job satisfaction.

The study was conducted solely on SEN teachers in primary and secondary schools situated in Petaling Utama District of Selangor state. Consequently, the study results are limited to this particular group and cannot be generalized to the entire population of SEN teachers in Malaysia. However, the study also highlights the need for further research to identify the specific factors that contribute to burnout among SEN teachers in Malaysia and the long-term effects of burnout on their mental health and well-being. To obtain more profound data that better capture the emotions and feelings of educators, future studies could use qualitative research methods such as interviews. Additionally, future studies could investigate various sociodemographic predictors that could potentially influence and interact with other factors to impact teacher well-being. Overall, the findings of this study have important implications for the development of policies and interventions aimed at reducing burnout among teachers and improving their overall job satisfaction and well-being. By prioritizing the well-being of teachers, the quality of education can be enhanced, and ultimately benefit both teachers and students.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the burnout level among special education teachers (SEN teachers) in Malaysia. While the study suggests that SEN teachers have a low level of burnout, it is still crucial for stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, state and district education departments, and schools to prioritize teacher well-being and recognize its significant impact on the teaching and learning process. It is thus recommended that adequate moral and material support be extended to enhance the quality of education and promote the well-being of both teachers and students. By doing so, a conducive learning environment that fosters positive relationships can be established, enabling SEN teachers to better manage the challenges that arise in their profession. Ultimately, this can lead to more effective educational outcomes and a sustainable, fulfilling teaching profession for SEN teachers. In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the importance of addressing burnout among SEN teachers in Malaysia. Within the context of special education, it is critical to acknowledge the distinct demands that come with the profession and to provide the requisite support to safeguard the well-being of special education teachers. Doing so not only ensures the welfare of these educators but also contributes to the success and achievements of their students.

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