Understanding and Overcoming Burnout: Insights into EFL Teacher Engagement and Reengagement in Hungarian Secondary Schools

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Abstract

Research on teacher burnout is expanding, but its effects on second language acquisition and its relationship with teacher engagement remain underexplored. This thesis examines the impact of burnout among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers on various aspects of teacher engagement, including cognitive-physical, emotional, and social interactions with colleagues and students, based on Klassen et al.'s framework (2013). Following an exploratory study, 31 secondary school English language teachers in Hungary were interviewed. These discussions revealed significant insights into how teacher burnout can affect their engagement, showing that engagement can be negatively, positively, or unaffected. The cognitive-physical aspect was found to be most adversely affected. Interestingly, burnout and engagement were found to coexist, with some teachers experiencing both positive and negative impacts on their engagement.

The study also emphasises the critical role of emotional engagement in language teaching (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017). It highlights the emotional consequences of burnout and its effects on teachers' daily interactions and over time. Teachers' narratives illuminate their efforts to manage the consequences of burnout, detailing their broader emotional experiences, coping mechanisms, and techniques for reengaging with their teaching roles. This qualitative study provides important insights from the experiences of EFL teachers in Hungarian secondary education, addressing a significant gap in the existing literature.

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1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the thesis, including its background and an exploration of the personal motivation behind this research, followed by an examination of its context within Hungary. After that, the purpose of the study and the justification for its undertaking will be outlined. The chapter will conclude with a detailed structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background of the Study

While the phenomenon of teacher burnout has increasingly become a significant point of educational research due to its implications on teacher engagement, the quality of education, the wellbeing of teachers, it has still not gained the same level of attention as student motivation within the field of SLA.

Burnout, characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1984; Maslach et al., 1997), can significantly impact teachers. Daily challenges, excessive workload, and emotional labour can contribute to burnout, leading to decreased classroom effectiveness. As burnout progresses, it can affect teachers' engagement and commitment, negatively affecting the learning environment and student achievement (Johnson et al., 2012). Moreover, the consequences of teacher burnout extend beyond the classroom, impacting teachers' mental and physical health (Melamed et al., 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020), behaviour (Jacobson, 2016), and their relationships with colleagues and students. Understanding teachers' perceptions and management of stress and burnout is crucial for developing interventions to prevent burnout and promote a supportive teaching environment.

However, the existing research on EFL teacher burnout, particularly in terms of its impact on different aspects of teacher engagement, remains limited. Timms et al. (2012) suggests that the relationship between teacher burnout and engagement is complex, indicating that they might

not always be opposed concepts but could coexist. Additionally, there is also limited research on teachers' self-awareness of burnout symptoms manifesting in the classroom, an aspect crucial to understanding the dynamics between these two phenomena.

Acknowledging the gap in research, this study investigates the critical links between teacher burnout and engagement, focusing on secondary school EFL teachers in Hungarian public schools. It examines how burnout can affect various dimensions of engagement, identifying which tasks teachers continue to stay engaged with and which they tend to abandon during burnout while examining the broader emotional experiences of teachers, Additionally, the study highlights strategies for managing burnout and the importance of reengagement post-burnout. The next section will discuss personal motivation and provide an overview of the Hungarian educational context.

1.3   Personal Motivation

The previous section provided the background of the study, identifying a gap in the literature and the need for further research on teacher burnout and engagement. In this section, I will discuss my personal motivation for conducting this study.

My path to exploring EFL teacher burnout in Hungary, alongside its influence on teacher engagement, is rooted in both my personal and professional life. Having grown up in a family of teachers in Hungary, with both parents and grandparents in the teaching profession, I was constantly interested in the teaching world, witnessing first-hand the highs and lows of this profession. Yet, at that time the significance of their experiences did not draw my attention to a potential area of study. Later I began my own teaching career, gaining nearly a decade of experience, mostly within private institutions and language schools.

My perspective shifted when my father transitioned from English teaching to a leadership role within the county educational administration (known as 'járás'). Although he never explicitly acknowledged experiencing burnout, the signs were there—decreased energy, enthusiasm, and a sense of personal achievement, leading to withdrawal from teaching. Years later, however, he eventually returned to the profession, which sparked my curiosity about how teachers can

manage burnout and its consequences, and what motivates them to reengage with teaching after such challenges.

Thus, it is not surprising that the topic of motivation and its exploration has always been part of my life. During my master's studies, I investigated motivational factors affecting secondary school students studying English in Hungary, which motivated me to further explore motivation, in particular, teacher motivation, demotivation, and later, burnout. Reviewing literature from various countries, educational settings, and levels, it became clear that despite the growing in researching burnout in education (e.g., Kyriacou, 2001; Chang, 2009b; Sharplin et al., 2011)—and second language acquisition (e.g., MacIntyre et al., 2020)— this area still remains underexplored, particularly in Hungarian secondary schools. This inspiration led me to choose teacher burnout and engagement as the focus for my PhD journey and thesis, aiming to contribute to the literature on these phenomena and to enhance the quality of English language education in Hungarian secondary schools. The specific context of Hungary will be discussed in the next section.

1.4   Hungarian Context

Exploring English as a Foreign Language teacher burnout in Hungary requires understanding the country's unique educational, cultural, and policy contexts. Hungary's rigorous academic standards, influenced by European Union integration, highlight the importance of English in education. EFL teachers play a critical role, facing high expectations for language proficiency and job market demands. These pressures, along with recent reforms in curriculum, assessment, and teacher evaluations, may increase teachers' workloads and stress levels, similar to findings in other countries (e.g., Hernández & Izquierdo, 2023; Ao et al., 2023). This section will provide a concise overview of these factors of the context of this thesis, Hungary.

1.4.1   Overview of Secondary School Language Learning in Hungary

The Hungarian educational system is structured to provide language education in its curriculum among other subjects, similar to other European Union countries, starting from primary education and continuing through to secondary and higher education. Secondary education in

Hungary is usually divided into two main types of institutions: general secondary education, known as 'gimnázium', which typically prepares students for higher education, and vocational secondary education, known as 'szakközépiskola', which combines general education with vocational training (Teaching and Learning in General Secondary Education, n.d.):

- *General Secondary Education/Grammar School (Gimnázium)* is a type of school where learning typically lasts for 4-8 years, depending on the programme (4-year/6-year/8-year programmes). Students usually begin at age 12 or 14, and language learning is a core part of the curriculum during these years.
- *Vocational Secondary Education (Szakközépiskola)*: is a type of school which offers a mix of general education subjects along with vocational training, lasting 4-5 years. Language learning also plays an important role, particularly as these schools prepare students for the labour market.

The Hungarian National Core Curriculum (NCC) (Teaching and Learning in General Secondary Education, n.d.) emphasise the importance of foreign language proficiency, meaning that most schools require students to study at least one foreign language during their secondary education. The NCC underwent revisions in 2020. With these changes, a phased implementation strategy was applied in Upper Secondary General Schools, starting from the 9th grade (or from the 7th grade in the case of six-year Upper Secondary General Schools). According to the NCC guidelines (Teaching and Learning in General Secondary Education, n.d.), secondary school students are expected to study two foreign languages. They typically begin learning their first foreign language at an earlier stage, either in primary or lower secondary school, and then continue studying both languages concurrently throughout their secondary education. Many students choose English for their first or second foreign language, however, German, French, and other languages are also popular choices. English, however, is the most popular foreign language (either first or second) taught in Hungarian secondary-level schools (KSH, 2023). Under the revised NCC system in 2020, the curriculum for foreign languages is structured as follows: in 9th grade, students receive three lessons per week for both the first and second foreign languages. This pattern continues into 10th grade. In 11th grade, the number of lessons increases to four weekly lessons for the first foreign language, while the second remains at three lessons. By 12th grade, which is typically the final year of secondary education, students continue with four weekly lessons for the first foreign language

and three for the second. Therefore, based on the high number of lessons students receive in foreign languages, secondary school students are often encouraged to take language proficiency exams, 'nyelvvizsga', during studying at school or after final exams which can contribute to applying into higher education institutions/universities, 'egyetem'. In Hungary, although final exams are not mandatory after completing compulsory education, they are essential for the university admission process, which includes one chosen foreign language as a required subject of these exams. Consequently, students often take final exams in English or their chosen foreign language to meet the requirements for applying to universities.

The increased number of language lessons within the educational system, coupled with the requirements set by higher education institutions, highlights the significant emphasis placed on languages, particularly English, across educational levels, most notably at the secondary level. Therefore, the growing emphasis on language proficiency would require increased attention towards language teaching education and professional development. However, such opportunities might be limited due to location issues, indicating that teachers may not always access the necessary support throughout their careers. This limited support, however, can present several challenges for secondary school language teachers, potentially resulting in demotivation, disengagement, and burnout, which phenomena in Hungary will be discussed in the next section.

1.4.2   Exploring the Landscape of EFL Teacher Burnout in Hungary: The Context of Research

The previous section has introduced the secondary school system in Hungary, which is the broader context of the current thesis. This section will discuss the rationale for choosing Hungary as the context of this current thesis.

The Hungarian context offers an underexplored setting for investigating EFL teacher burnout and its impact on various aspects of the teaching profession, including teacher engagement, coping mechanisms, and reengagement post-burnout. The choice of Hungary as the context for this thesis is rooted in the challenges faced by EFL teachers within the secondary school system, as well as the gaps in the existing literature regarding teacher burnout in this specific context.

The challenges for EFL teachers in Hungary, such as managing set syllabi, lack of autonomy, insufficient resources, and facilities (Menyhart, 2008) are significant. These challenges can lead to demotivation and an increased risk of burnout, a condition that has been recognised but insufficiently studied within the Hungarian educational context. The limited amount of recent, in-depth research specifically addressing EFL teacher burnout in Hungary suggests a critical gap in the literature.

An earlier study (Nikolov, 1999) highlighted issues of demotivation among English teachers in Hungary due to factors such as excessive workloads and low salaries. Such demotivation can lead to burnout, which has been linked to numerous negative outcomes, including higher attrition rates (Ryan et al., 2017). Despite this, research into the phenomenon of EFL teacher burnout, particularly within Hungary, remains limited. Existing studies, such as those by Paksi and Schmidt (2004) and Gáspár et al. (2008), have recognised the need for more methodologically consistent research to better understand and address pedagogical burnout.

Furthermore, the dynamics of burnout and engagement among EFL teachers in Hungary reveal important area of research. For instance, Thékes (2019) found that English language teachers in Hungary may be generally less prone to burnout due to their engagement with innovative teaching methods. Yet, he also found that the risk of burnout can vary significantly across different types of educational institutions, with vocational secondary school teachers facing the highest risk due to student demotivation. Thus, this differentiation emphasises the complexity of the issue of burnout and the need for further research.

The vulnerability of younger teachers to burnout, as suggested by Gáspár et al. (2008), along with the profession's high attrition rates, underscores the urgency of addressing teacher burnout. While intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes towards the English language have been identified as key factors in sustaining teacher motivation in Hungary (Smid, 2018), broader systemic issues, such as insufficient social support, lack of recognition, and weak workplace networks, contribute to burnout (Horváth, 2014). Szabó and Jagodics (2019) emphasised the crucial role of professional social support in preventing burnout, advocating for training programs to strengthen social support among colleagues and exploring the potential of school psychologists in fostering more supportive communities. Despite these insights,

research on how teachers cope with burnout at both individual and institutional levels remains limited, particularly in the Hungarian context.

Institutional support plays a vital role in mitigating burnout and complements individual coping mechanisms (see Section 3.5.4.5). Comprehensive stress management training programs can help prevent burnout from diminishing teacher engagement while promoting motivation, engagement, and work-life balance (see Section 10.5.1). Although the role of school psychologists has been underexplored in Hungary, evidence suggests that they can significantly enhance teacher wellbeing through psychoeducation and by facilitating individual and group consultations to help teachers manage their challenges more effectively (Szabó & Jagodics, 2019) (see Section 3.5.4.2). This highlights the need for further investigation into coping mechanisms and reengagement strategies among EFL teachers in Hungarian secondary schools.

Given these concerns, the current thesis aims to explore the impact of teacher burnout among EFL teachers in Hungarian secondary schools. This research will not only seek to fill a significant gap in the literature but also aligns with my personal motivations to understand and contribute to the improvement of teacher wellbeing and the quality of education in Hungary. The findings from this study could inform policy and practice, aiming at improving teacher support systems, teacher education, and thus, the educational experience for both teachers and students.

1.5   Purpose of the Study

This section has highlighted a gap in existing research on teacher burnout, in particular, the lack of in-depth study into teacher burnout among secondary school language teachers in Hungary. Thus, this qualitative study, through interviews, aims to delve into EFL teacher burnout, focusing particularly on the impact of burnout on teacher engagement and its various dimensions (i.e., cognitive-physical, emotional, social-colleagues, social-students). The investigation also explores teachers' broader emotional experiences during burnout. It will also examine the coping strategies teachers apply to cope with the effects of burnout, as well as the techniques to reengage themselves after burnout. This approach aims to provide a better understanding of the current state of teacher burnout in the English language classrooms in

Hungary, potentially offering findings and implications that could benefit teachers not only in Hungary but globally.

1.6   Significance of the Study

This study was designed with the objective of uncovering the dynamics that play important role in the relationship between teacher burnout and engagement, which connection has seen limited exploration by scholars to date. Therefore, the study explores teacher engagement and how its various aspects can be impacted by burnout—both positively and negatively—and whether any aspects of engagement might remain unaffected during burnout. This investigation is critically important, as some of the previous studies (e.g., Schaufeli et al., 2006) proposed that burnout and engagement might be opposed concepts, whereas later research (e.g., Salmela-Aro et al., 2019; Timms et al., 2012) suggested that engagement could be undergoing despite burnout. Given the limited amount of research on this link, examining the interplay between teacher engagement and burnout further, particularly among language teachers, could make a significant contribution to the field.

Moreover, while existing literature has addressed coping strategies within broader education (Sharplin et al., 2011; Mansfield et al., 2012) and specifically within SLA (MacIntyre et al., 2020), there has been little focus on language teacher coping mechanisms during burnout and techniques for reengagement post-burnout. Additionally, the study highlights the crucial role of emotional engagement in language teaching, a topic previously explored in SLA (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017). It calls for increased attention to the emotional consequences of burnout and its impact on teachers.

Thus, investigating these aspects outlined could enrich the limited body of knowledge on EFL teacher burnout, offering insights that could encourage future research directions, interventions, or further studies.

1.7 Thesis Outline

This chapter has discussed the background of this study, personal motivation, the Hungarian context, and the purpose and significance of the research. The next chapter, Chapter 2, will review literature on job burnout, setting the stage for further discussions. It will address the conceptualisation of burnout in general and examine significant research contributions to measuring burnout, concluding with a particular focus on human service professions.

Following this, Chapter 3 will discuss teacher burnout, exploring the literature on its causes and consequences, the importance of emotions in teaching, both generally and within language education, with an emphasis on findings relevant to SLA. This chapter will conclude by examining the coping mechanisms for teacher burnout, highlighting the limited research available for both general and EFL teaching contexts.

Chapter 4 will explore teacher engagement, starting with its conceptualisation in psychology and education, and review measures and methodologies developed to assess and research teacher engagement, highlighting those studies available in SLA.

Chapter 5 will detail the research methodology, including the rationale for choosing a qualitative approach for this study and an overview of the exploratory study. This chapter will then present the details of the main study, including participants, research instruments, procedures, and data analysis methods.

Chapter 6 will discuss the findings from this qualitative research, beginning with an analysis of how burnout can impact teacher engagement and its different aspects (i.e., cognitive-physical, emotional, social-colleagues, social-students), and identifying aspects that are most affected, unaffected, or positively affected during experiencing burnout.

Chapter 7 will delve deeper into the analysis, particularly examining the broader emotional experiences of teachers. It will explore both the immediate and long-term emotional impacts of teacher burnout.

Following that, Chapter 8 will explore how teachers address the consequences of burnout. This includes their coping mechanisms and the methods they apply to attempt to reengage with their roles after experiencing burnout.

Chapter 9 will present the discussion drawn from the findings in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Following that, Chapter 10 will conclude the study by presenting implications, discussing its limitations, and offering personal reflections.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has covered several key aspects of the research, detailing the background of this study, outlining personal motivation for undertaking this study, presenting the Hungarian educational landscape, offering details about secondary school language education in Hungary, identifying the critical gaps in the literature in the Hungarian EFL context, the purpose of this study, and its significance in SLA, before providing an overview of the thesis structure. The following chapter will delve into the literature on job burnout, laying the groundwork for a deeper exploration of EFL teacher burnout.

2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW—JOB BURNOUT ACROSS VARIOUS PROFESSIONS

2.1 Introduction- Why a full chapter outside of education?

This chapter will set the stage for examining burnout and engagement among EFL teachers by first exploring the broader issue of job burnout, emphasising its prevalence and significance across various professions. The rise in workplace stress, resulting in burnout characterised by exhaustion, reduced performance, and loss of enthusiasm, highlights the urgent need to address this issue. This syndrome was first identified in high-stress professions, such as social work (Lloyd et al., 2011) and healthcare and has been acknowledged across various professions due to the universal challenges of increased workload and pressure (Maslach & Schaufeli, 2018; Hansung et al., 2011; Maslach, 2006; Maslach & Jackson, 1985). Teaching, in general, as well as in the EFL context, is considered as a particularly stressful profession. Factors such as excessive workload, emotional demands, classroom management challenges, and a lack of resources and support can contribute to this stress (Jennett et al., 2003), emphasising the need to navigate cultural differences and manage emotional boundaries (Penington & Ho, 1992), highlighting the significance of support, interventions, and the need for further research in this field.

Thus, the exploration of the literature will begin with an overview of burnout in psychology and its research methodologies—contributing to a better understanding of this phenomenon, transitioning to a focus on human services to understand the unique factors influencing burnout in these professions. This approach aims to provide a thorough examination of job burnout, setting a foundation to address the unique challenges EFL teachers face while experiencing burnout. Thus, this chapter will highlight the importance of examining job burnout, leading to the examination of EFL teachers in Chapter 3, which is the topic of this thesis, focusing on how it impacts teacher engagement, examining coping mechanisms, and the techniques teachers use to reengage with their roles after experiencing burnout.

2.2   Understanding of the Concept of Burnout

In psychology, the concept of burnout was first formulated by Herbert Freudenberger (1974) as the symptoms of fatigue at work. In his work, he linked the decrease in energy of volunteer workers to a decrease in motivation to work, which also resulted in physical symptoms drawn from his observations of staff working with chronic drug abusers and other clinical groups (Freudenberger, 1975). Building on this early study, later numerous researchers expanded on the concept of burnout, exploring its definition, dimensions, symptoms, and methods of measurement. Among these, Christina Maslach stands out as a pivotal researcher for her work in applying the fundamentals of burnout to the workplace and developing a perspective that has become foundational in later burnout studies (Maslach, 1978, 1993). This section will outline the progression of burnout research and definition of burnout before focusing on a more detailed examination of job burnout specifically in Section 2.3.

2.2.1   A Brief Overview of The Evolving Concept of Burnout

The concept of burnout, first emerged in psychology, gaining significant relevance later in workplace studies. Freudenberger's early autobiographical and qualitative approach in psychology (1974)— focusing on only identifying, treating, and preventing burnout—was followed by Christina Maslach's research on burnout symptoms in healthcare workers, highlighting the importance of emotional exhaustion and demotivation (Maslach, 1982). Early research looked at the three dimensions of burnout—emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment—as separate (Maslach, 1979, 1982), while the study of Cherniss (1980) focusing on how organisational structures, policies, and work cultures can contribute to burnout, advocated for viewing them as three possible responses to organisational stress and monotonous work.

Sarason et al. (1983) introduced a social-historical perspective—at almost the same time as Maslach's view—emphasising the influence of societal and historical contexts on burnout, particularly in education and human services. Later, Schaufeli (1998) likened burnout to the metaphorical exhaustion of a burning candle, and Sparks et al. (2001) described it as a state of mind with a negative effect that tends to grow along with the stress of work. Maslach et al. (1997) conceptualised burnout as a state of crisis in the life of a working person as it was

provided in the Maslach Burnout Inventory. This research, which examined burnout generated during human services work, also pointed out that engaging work also uses cognitive, emotional, and physical reserves. That is, job engagement (involvement and efficacy in work) is a 'positive antipode of burnout', as Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) defined it. They also characterised three dimensions of work-related engagement, which are *vigour* (energy, willingness to invest effort in work, and determination to face difficulties), *dedication* (enthusiasm and strive for challenges) and *absorption* (fully concentration and dedication to work) (Schaufeli et al., 2002). "Fully absorbed engagement" has also been connected to Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) flow experience of engagement which is characterised by not only intrinsic enjoyment and focused attention but also complete control of work. Therefore, burnout and engagement were considered opposites, which can affect one another (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Maslach and Leiter (2000) also found that the phenomenon of burnout can be a consequence of a change in the dimensions of engagement, that is, "energy turns into exhaustion, involvement turns into cynicism, and efficacy turns into ineffectiveness" (p.24). This connection will be discussed further in Section 4.3, which explores teacher engagement.

Most recent research, including that by Zis et al. (2021), suggested the effects burnout can be detrimental on mental, physical, and emotional health, while the rise of digitalisation has emerged the concept of digital burnout (Erten & Özdemir, 2020), characterised by digital aging, digital deprivation, and emotional exhaustion. The prevalence of burnout, particularly in customer-caring roles (e.g., Dall'Ora et al., 2020; Lizano, 2015; Thomas & Kohli Vandana, 2014), highlighted the need for a deeper understanding of burnout and its impacts across various professions.

Over the past several decades, the multidimensional perspective introduced by Christina Maslach has become the dominant framework for understanding of burnout, which will be discussed in the following.

2.2.2   A Multidimensional Perspective on Burnout

Drawn from literature discussed above, burnout can be defined as a mental health condition that develops over time in response to persistent stress from interpersonal interactions in the workplace (Maslach & Leiter, 2016b). The *social-psychological perspective* of Maslach (1978,

1979) emphasises that burnout originates from a complex interaction of personal psychological elements and factors within the social and work environment. That is, it highlights the crucial roles played by both the workplace setting and interpersonal relationships in the development of burnout. Later, burnout was also defined by three qualitative dimensions, which are *exhaustion*, *cynicism*, and *lack of professional efficacy* (Maslach et al., 1997; Taris et al., 1999):

- **Exhaustion (emotional exhaustion)**: a core aspect of burnout, described as tiredness developing from continuing depletive work, when the individual is unable to cope and fatigued, not necessarily due to physical work but due to the emotional demands placed on them. It has also been linked to anxiety, physical exhaustion, even insomnia, therefore to physical and psychological strain (Maslach & Jackson, 1984; Perlman & Hartman, 1982).

- **Cynicism (depersonalisation)***:* involves adopting a cold and detached attitude towards others and a reduced commitment to nurturing relationships. Leiter and Schaufeli (1996) highlighted that cynicism (depersonalisation) has not only a negative effect but also a loss of energy which affects the performance of work. It might be because depersonalisation is psychological strain, which is a consequence of coping with stress, resulting in treating other people as objects, rather than as people (Maslach, 1982).

- **Professional efficacy (personal accomplishment)**: is described as a collection of feelings related to competence and achievement in work, which begin to decrease when burnout is evolving. Its reduction was also stated as a result of stress, strain and coping with them (Leiter, 1989).

It shows that while distinct, the three dimensions—emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment—are interrelated (Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996). It was also supported by Janssen et al.'s (1999) investigation among nurses in the Netherlands examining interrelationships between the burnout dimensions. The existence of relationships between each dimension is supported by their finding that emotional exhaustion is primarily related to depersonalisation and depersonalisation is primarily related to personal accomplishment, and a weaker connection was observed between emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. While this result contradicts the results of Lee and Ashforth (1996) that emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment as each develops independently, Maslach and Leiter indicated in their later study (2016b), although emotional exhaustion is closely

related to work overload, cynicism and efficacy can also be related to other areas of work life—as were previously defined by them, that is, there is a connection between the dimensions, albeit to different degrees. Although the presence of the three dimensions in the development of burnout has been undeniable ever since, researchers almost unanimously designate exhaustion and cynicism as core dimensions (Bakker & Sanz-Vergel, 2020).

In 2019, acknowledging the significant impact of burnout on employees, the World Health Organization categorised it as an "occupational phenomenon" (Cavanaugh et al., 2022; World Health Organization, 2019). This implies an increasing prevalence of burnout among workers, stressing the growing relevance of this issue, emphasising the urgency of addressing this concern. Yet current studies raised a few concerns while defining and measuring burnout. Demerouti et al. (2021) pointed out the importance of this syndrome and the difficulty in differentiating between mild symptoms of burnout and its clinical manifestation. The existing tools for assessing burnout (see Section 2.3.1), as Bakker et al. (2023) noted, were not designed for analytical use. They also highlighted that identifying burnout can be also difficult as there is a significant overlap between burnout and depression (Bianchi et al., 2021), meaning that both burnout and depression have similar biological foundation, specifically DNA methylation, and both are associated with symptoms, such as energy depletion and fatigue (Bakusic et al., 2017).

This section has examined burnout within psychology, tracing its evolution from early studies to its current understanding as a workplace phenomenon. Viewing burnout through psychological, organisational, and social lenses reveals its complexity and multifaceted nature, highlighting that individual stress and exhaustion are influenced by organisational structures and societal norms. The interplay between personal and external stressors is crucial for understanding the causes and consequences of burnout. By considering psychological, organisational, and social factors, we can better understand and address burnout, thereby enhancing wellbeing. Building on the conceptualisation of burnout with its three core dimensions—exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of professional efficacy (Maslach et al., 1997)—this thesis aims to contribute to the broader discourse on teacher burnout, particularly in the field of EFL teacher burnout and engagement.

Having discussed a foundational framework that situates burnout within a complex interplay of psychological, organisational, and societal influences, the discussion will now shift to

explore specifically job burnout. The next section will provide an in-depth discussion on job-related burnout research, paving the way for an exploration of burnout within human service professions.

2.3   Researching Job Burnout

Burnout, as defined by Maslach et al. (2001), has been a critical concept in psychology and workplace studies since the early 1980s (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Maslach and Leiter (2000) identified six contributing factors: *workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values*. They argue that excessive work and unrealistic demands lead to exhaustion (Maslach & Leiter, 2008), while lack of autonomy, insufficient rewards, poor social interactions, perceived injustice, and misaligned values contribute to job dissatisfaction and burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

Research on burnout primarily focuses on emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment. These dimensions correlate with personality traits based on the Big Five Model (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Numerous studies have examined the impact of burnout on job attitudes and performance (e.g., Moore, 2000; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Zhou et al., 2014), as well as on physical and mental health (e.g., Bakker et al., 2005; Maslach & Leiter, 2016b; Salvagioni et al., 2017). Chapter 3 on EFL teacher burnout will explore the specific factors and consequences of teacher burnout.

Various tools have been developed to measure burnout. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Leiter, 2008) is a prominent instrument for understanding burnout, especially in human service professions, and has significantly influenced studies on workplace stress and burnout. Additionally, frameworks like The Big Five Model (Barrick & Mount, 1991) and various methodological approaches, including qualitative examinations, have been applied to predict and examine burnout.

Despite extensive research in healthcare and human services, burnout in other fields, such as education, remains underexplored. This thesis aims to bridge this gap by focusing on EFL teacher burnout, providing insights into the unique challenges faced by teachers and broadening the understanding of burnout across different professions. To better understand

burnout within education, it is crucial to explore job burnout and its assessment methods in a wider context, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This section will present some of the research approaches for investigating job burnout across various professional fields.

2.3.1   Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

The social-psychological perspective of Maslach (1993)—as discussed in Section 2.2.2— considers burnout to be emerging from the dynamic interaction between individuals and their workplace environment. Thus, this approach emphasises the influence of work-related factors, including job demands, the level of social support available, and the organisational culture. The development of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was based on this perspective, assessing burnout through its dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and a sense of reduced personal accomplishment.

The inventory, used in research and clinical settings in psychology, measures burnout through three scales in a self-report questionnaire: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment. The scale of emotional exhaustion assesses feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by the individual's work (E.g., "I feel emotionally drained from my work"). Within the scale of depersonalisation, it measures an unfeeling and impersonal response towards others (e.g., "I feel I treat some patients/clients as if they were impersonal objects"), while in personal accomplishment it evaluates feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people (e.g., I deal very effectively with the problems of my recipients") (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). This survey-based measure can thus be crucial in identifying the signs of burnout, which can be important for addressing its consequences and, therefore, for effective interventions and coping strategies. Since its development, numerous studies have used this tool to research job burnout across a diverse range of professions and contexts.

Numerous studies have used MBI as it has become the most widely used tool for measuring job burnout and to explore its dimensions across different professions. Maslach and Leiter's study (2008) on job burnout among American business workers highlighted its evolving nature and linked fairness incongruity to the increased burnout risk. That is, they found that employees

without such incongruities tended towards greater work engagement. Xanthopoulou and Meier (2014) noted that work exhaustion and cynicism vary daily, influenced by task demands and work relationships. They also found that repeated confrontational situations can lead to not only short-term, but long-term, even chronic fatigue, and later burnout.

Kitaoka-Higashiguchi et al. (2004) found in their study on Japanese managers a moderate link between exhaustion and cynicism/depersonalisation, but no correlation with professional efficacy, using the MBI instrument. This also aligns with the evolution of Leiter and Maslach's models: initially suggesting a link between cynicism and reduced efficacy (1988), they later removed this connection in their revised models (Maslach et al., 1997; Maslach et al., 2001), supporting Kitaoka-Higashiguchi et al.'s observations.

Using MBI, Taris et al. (2005) compared job burnout across professions, specifically among Dutch oncology care providers and primary and secondary teachers. They found a common pattern where higher depersonalisation correlated with increased emotional exhaustion and lowered personal accomplishment in both groups. Additionally, for teachers, depersonalisation was linked to both increased exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment, indicating a negative impact of depersonalisation on efficacy across different working environments.

Reviewing some of the studies showing diverse applications and findings related to MBI, it becomes evident that this model has been instrumental in researching job burnout. While this social-psychological framework has provided foundation for defining burnout as a multifaceted phenomenon, this perspective also emphasised the significance of job demands, social support, and organisational culture in influencing burnout, providing a comprehensive picture of its stressors.

Despite the widespread recognition and validation of MBI as a tool for assessing burnout across various professions, it has some limitations due to its reliance on self-reporting, which can introduce subjectivity and bias, potentially affecting the accuracy of the results. For decades, the MBI has remained the most recognised and widely used method for measuring job burnout in research (e.g., Schaufeli, 2021; Wheeler et al., 2011; Schaufeli et al., 2009). However, the phrasing of its questions has been criticised. Specifically, items related to exhaustion and depersonalisation (or cynicism) are negatively worded, while those related to professional efficacy are positively worded (Nadon et al., 2022). This format can lead to artificial factor

solutions, as items with negative and positive wordings tend to group together (Demerouti & Bakker, 2008). Some studies have suggested that measuring professional inefficacy with negative wording might be more effective than the original approach (Bresó et al., 2007).

Given these critiques, it is essential to explore alternative frameworks for examining EFL burnout and engagement qualitatively. A qualitative approach allows for a more in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences, capturing the nuances and complexities that quantitative measures might overlook (as it will be discussed in Section 2.3.3). This framework can serve as a robust base for examining the interplay between EFL burnout and engagement and related concepts.

The next section will introduce The Big Five personality traits as an alternative framework for exploring job burnout. This comprehensive lens has been utilised for examining burnout in various contexts.

2.3.2 Predicting Burnout based on The Big Five Model

Research has increasingly shifted from measuring burnout to understanding how personality traits might predict it, identifying potential risk factors early, suggesting that both measuring and predicting job burnout are crucial for understanding its risks and consequences.

A study focused on hospitality job stress (Kim et al., 2007), incorporating The Big Five Model of personality (Barrick & Mount, 1991)—neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience—to predict burnout. Their findings highlighted that personality traits can significantly influence burnout levels, with agreeableness affecting cynicism and professional efficacy, and conscientiousness linked to efficacy due to organisational skills and responsibility. Neuroticism and extraversion were also noted for their impact on emotional exhaustion, suggesting that lower neuroticism and higher extraversion could enhance leadership coping skills.

Another study (Zellars et al., 2000) further supported the applicability of The Big Five Model in examining job burnout in healthcare, which found similar trends among nurses, supporting that workers higher in extraversion are more likely to enjoy and value their work, while

agreeableness showed to be a reducing effect on depersonalisation. The trait of openness to experience can be also associated with lower depersonalisation, however, the results did not show that it would affect perceiving greater personal accomplishment. A study among Iranian factory workers also suggested similar findings (Dargah & Estalkhbijari, 2012), finding connection between extroversion, agreeableness, and openness of experience with job burnout. A meta-analysis by Liu et al. (2022) on teachers also confirmed the negative correlation between certain personality traits and burnout components, indicating that traits like conscientiousness and agreeableness might protect against emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation.

A recent systematic review (Angelini, 2023) applying the PRISMA method (Moher et al., 2009)— Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, including 27 items and a flow-chart for a structured approach, reviewed 83 studies, and concluded with high neuroticism and low levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness to be associated with increased burnout. These findings on The Big Five Model highlights the significant role of personality in burnout, suggesting that specific traits may either predict resilience or vulnerability to burnout. That is, integrating personality into job burnout research might contribute to advancements in both psychology and occupational health.

Reviewing the literature, exploring job burnout through Maslach Burnout Inventory along with predictive methods based on personality traits, offers a thorough understanding of job burnout. These approaches allow researchers to measure the impact of various factors on burnout across different professions. However, solely assessing burnout might not fully capture the depth of individual experiences, especially in complex professions like teaching. Qualitative research methods might provide a different perspective, offering a deeper exploration of the syndrome based on quantitative measures. The following section will explore qualitative approaches for examining job burnout, aiming to understand the diverse experiences and unique challenges faced by EFL teachers.

2.3.3 Qualitative Approaches to Examining Job Burnout

The previous section on burnout measurement tools introduced the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Nonetheless, critiques by Schaufeli (2003) and Bianchi et al. (2015) argued that complexity of

burnout is inadequately captured by this instrument, as it focuses on a limited set of dimensions. Thus, this critique highlights the importance of incorporating diverse methodologies—both quantitative and qualitative—when researching burnout, as they combined can offer insights into the personal experiences of burnout that a single measure might overlook.

Qualitative research, through methods such as interviews and focus groups, might explore subjective aspects of burnout, as presented in studies by Tavella and Parker (2020a, 2020b). These studies revealed the significant differences between burnout and related conditions, i.e., depression—which issue has been discussed in Section 2.2.2—and highlighted the various symptoms and experiences of those suffering from burnout, beyond what is typically measured by solely quantitative tools such as MBI.

Furthermore, qualitative studies by Warren et al. (2012)—examining job burnout among professional eating disorder treatment providers—and Judd et al. (2017)—researching experiences of disability support workers in Australia—emphasised the significance of individual and work-related factors contributing to burnout and stress, while emphasising the value of self-care and institutional support as strategies for managing and preventing burnout. Other research studies also highlighted the complexity of burnout, in specific contexts, such as among professional athletes (Gustafsson et al., 2008), where personal ambitions and external pressures might intertwine to strengthen burnout symptoms.

This section highlighted the crucial role of qualitative research in understanding job burnout, emphasising that it can capture the complexities of burnout that quantitative methods might overlook. Thus, it emphasises the need for qualitative studies to examine the nuances of burnout, including its differentiation from similar conditions, i.e., depression and the individual factors influencing its impact on work engagement. This approach is particularly relevant for this thesis for investigating the burnout experiences of individuals, such as EFL teachers, and their unique coping mechanisms. Therefore, the next section will examine job burnout among human service professions, setting stage for a deeper understanding of teacher burnout in the following chapter.

2.4 Burnout in Human Service Professions

Job burnout research began primarily in caregiving professions (Maslach, 1982) due to the inherent relational interactions between service workers and clients/patients. Burnout is thus associated with these emotional workplace interactions, leading to higher stress levels in human service work (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 1997). Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) identified teachers, nurses, and social workers as the most studied human service professions. Factors contributing to burnout include work-related and client-related variables. Early research found a connection between client-centred work and emotional exhaustion, along with pressure, role conflict, and lack of social support (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Shirom, 2003).

In this chapter, the definition, causes, consequences, and measurement of job burnout have been explored, which could be applicable broadly across various professions, including human service jobs. Thus, this section will focus specifically solely examining the unique factors that influence job burnout in human service professions and exploring the ways in which burnout is addressed in literature.

2.4.1 Unique Challenges of Burnout in Human Service Professions

While Section 2.3 introduced some of the factors contributing to job burnout, when examining human service profession burnout, it becomes clear that both work-related and client-related variables are equally crucial in influencing the development of burnout. Thus, this section will examine how these variables uniquely influence burnout in these roles. Unlike other professions, human service jobs inherently involve a high degree of emotional labour due to the direct and often intense interactions with clients. This interaction is a 'double-edged sword'; it is both a fundamental part of the job and a potential source of stress (Hochschild, 1983), which can eventually lead to burnout.

Research has shown a link between work-related factors—such as low salaries and stressful shifts—and increased burnout among American professional psychologists (Rupert & Morgan, 2005). Although burnout cannot be solely predicted by these variables, they are significant factors. Rupert and Morgan found that psychologists with less control over their work, higher

workloads, and clients with more negative behaviours were more prone to burnout. Jenaro et al. (2007) also concluded that job and pay satisfaction could promote personal accomplishment and prevent burnout. Similarly, Snarr and Beasley (2022) found that personal factors, client variables, and work conditions significantly contribute to burnout among personal trainers and coaches.

A Danish study (Borritz et al., 2006) highlighted that different jobs have different influential burnout variables. Midwives and homecare workers experienced high levels of work and client-related burnout, whereas supervisors and office assistants experienced low levels. Human service professions often involve direct work with people, making emotional aspects integral to the work environment. Nurses were also found to be subjected to high-stress work environments and constant demands for personal involvement while being exposed to patients' suffering (Peters, 2018).

Wilson (2016) highlighted the importance of vicarious trauma, a term frequently used among social workers. Professionals assisting trauma victims often face personal and professional challenges, manifested through decreased professional efficacy, increased emotional distress, and physical issues. Regular interaction with these clients can contribute to burnout. Additionally, emotional contagion, described by Hatfield et al. (1994), refers to a phenomenon where emotions spread contagiously among individuals, affecting each other's emotional states. This supports how vicarious trauma may occur among social workers and other professionals assisting trauma victims.

Exploring job burnout in various human service professions reveals that client relationships and emotional labour are crucial elements of burnout. Hochschild (1983) introduced the concept of emotional labour, highlighting how employees regulate their emotions in interactions with customers, which can be demanding. This focus on managing emotions and its consequences is especially significant in human service professions, emphasising the critical impact of emotional labour on job burnout. Chapter 3 will extend this concept, focusing specifically on the impact of emotional labour on teachers.

The studies discussed in this section indicate that alongside personal factors, regular interaction with clients means that both client-related and work-related variables are influential in the development of burnout in human service professions. The emotional demands placed on

workers in these roles, coupled with work-related factors such as low salaries and stressful work conditions, create a distinct set of challenges that can contribute to burnout. Furthermore, the phenomenon of vicarious trauma and emotional contagion is also unique to human service professions, highlighting the impact of client-related variables on professionals' wellbeing. This suggests that burnout in these roles is influenced somewhat differently compared to professions outside of human services. After exploring the distinct variables impacting burnout in human service professions, the discussion shifts to examining the ways in which job burnout is addressed within workplace environments.

2.4.2 Addressing Human Service Job Burnout

While much research has focused on the causes and effects of job burnout, especially in human service professions, there is growing interest in addressing burnout across various contexts. Recent studies emphasised the importance of social support and boosting worker motivation and self-efficacy to enhance resilience (Wang et al., 2018). Resilience can reduce emotional exhaustion, boost work engagement, and improve performance in the workplace (Yu et al., 2019). Increased self-efficacy can effectively manage workplace stress (Evers et al., 2004) and can handle negative emotions (Alessandri et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2019). Despite different stressors, burnout studies highlighted workplace stress, emotional challenges, and social dynamics as significant contributors. Therefore, promoting resilience and self-efficacy is crucial in preventing and addressing burnout.

Research by Dreison et al. (2018) highlights both individual-focused and organisational strategies to address burnout, such as coping skills, social support, and relaxation techniques. Organisational approaches like professional training also reduce burnout by enhancing personal accomplishment. A systematic review by Maresca et al. (2022) confirms that both individual and organisational strategies are crucial for managing stress and burnout among healthcare professionals. These include social and emotional support, physical activities, and maintaining emotional and physical distance from work.

A study by Ben-Zur and Michael (2007) on social workers, nurses, and psychologists found that social support increased the perception of challenge and control at work, acting as a mediator in reducing burnout. Another review by Friganović et al. (2019) emphasised the lack

of systematic approaches to preventing burnout among nurses. While various strategies can benefit human service workers, Jenaro et al. (2007) found that solely relying on coping strategies is inadequate for preventing burnout but significantly reduces employee turnover. High job satisfaction, competitive salary, and active coping strategies increase personal accomplishment among child protection workers and in-home caregivers. Demerouti et al. (2021) noted that despite the recognition of burnout as a critical issue, research on effective prevention and coping strategies is still evolving. The next chapter will explore how teachers, as a specific group of human service workers, cope with burnout.

This section highlighted the impact of emotional labour and work-related stress on human service professionals, providing a foundation for exploring teacher burnout. Teachers, like other human service workers, face emotional investments, demanding work conditions, and constant engagement with students, making their experiences both challenging and rewarding. This dynamic interplay in teaching highlights the need for further research into how burnout and engagement interact and manifest in the classroom, particularly in the field of SLA.

2.5   Conclusion- Significance for Education and EFL

This chapter has laid a foundational understanding of job burnout, with a particular focus on its significance within human service professions. The exploration of burnout from a multidimensional perspective, including its psychological, organisational, and societal influences, highlights the complexity and the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon. This conceptualisation emphasises the various factors contributing to burnout across professions while it stresses the significance of burnout in a special area of human service—the education—particularly among EFL teachers, given the high emotional and workload demands of the profession.

Furthermore, the chapter supported the value of qualitative research in the field of burnout, thus among EFL teachers. That is, qualitative approach is crucial for uncovering the nuanced dynamics of burnout and engagement, providing a deeper understanding that quantitative measures alone may not capture. Thus, qualitative research can contribute to an exploration of the lived experiences of EFL teachers, their resilience, and the ways in which they navigate the challenges of their profession. As burnout can significantly impact teacher engagement,

exploring their interplay and coping mechanisms that might be effective in mitigating stress and consequences of burnout is essential for fostering a positive teaching and learning environment.

Recognising the critical nature of this issue, this thesis research aims to shed light on the issue of EFL teacher burnout, a concern that can affect teacher engagement. Thus, in line with the research focus of this thesis, the next chapters will specifically explore teacher burnout and engagement with a discussion on the field of foreign language teaching and examine coping with stress and burnout.

3. CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW—TEACHER BURNOUT AND COPING

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the phenomenon of job burnout was explored. Building on this foundation, this chapter will focus on the specificities of burnout among secondary school teachers in the context of English as a Foreign Language, where emotional investment and its consequences are known, yet under researched (White, 2018). Although research on teacher burnout is growing across educational settings, secondary-level EFL teachers' experiences remain underexplored. The present chapter aims to shed light on this gap by reviewing the existing literature on EFL secondary school teacher burnout, emotional labour, and teachers' reported coping mechanisms. In this chapter, I will start with a presentation of teacher burnout in education, with special emphasis on findings on EFL education, thereafter, I will continue exploring the special area of emotional labour in EFL context, followed by reviewing coping and interventions in both general and language education.

3.2 Teacher Burnout

Before exploring burnout among EFL and secondary school language teachers—the main focus of this thesis—it is essential to first explore the broader context of teacher burnout. This will provide a foundation for understanding the unique challenges faced by language teachers and enhance the relevance and depth of the analysis.

In recent years, international interest in studying teacher burnout has grown, driven by increased occupational stress in human services, including education (Jennett et al., 2003; Arvidsson et al., 2019). Despite many teachers' ability to cope with the constant stress in teaching, burnout continues to sideline many committed teachers (Jennett et al., 2003).

Maslach's framework, discussed in the previous chapter, is a highly recognised model for understanding burnout (Maslach et al., 1997). It highlights emotional exhaustion,

depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment—issues prevalent in teaching due to its interpersonal nature and emotional demands. These factors make teachers especially vulnerable to burnout, characterised by feelings of exhaustion and ineffectiveness. Emotional exhaustion indicates that teachers can no longer function as effectively as at the beginning of their careers. Depersonalisation leads to negative feelings about their work and relationships. Reduced personal accomplishment causes teachers to feel their work is less important or valuable, diminishing their commitment (Farber & Miller, 1981; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) further explained that younger or novice teachers might experience high stress early in their careers due to reality shock or less successful occupational socialisation.

This section will explore the factors contributing to teacher burnout across various educational settings, including EFL teaching, its consequences on classroom learning, burnout contagion in education, and intervention strategies at different educational levels.

3.2.1   Factors Affecting Teacher Burnout

Similar to other professions, the factors that contribute to burnout in teaching may vary based on the environment of the individual and their experiences. In education these factors can be external factors, personality factors and other, such as contextual factors, age and gender.

This section aims to review the factors influencing teacher burnout as identified in the broader field of general education, while emphasising those specifically explored within EFL across various contexts and school levels, organising them into three categories: external stressors, personality variables and other factors affecting teacher burnout.

3.2.1.1   External Stressors in Teacher Burnout

Research on teacher burnout has identified key stressors affecting teachers' professional lives, including excessive workload, classroom climate, and social support. Therefore, this section will explore how these factors serve as significant contributors to teacher stress, including EFL education.

Excessive Workload

Excessive workload as a stressor tends to be interpreted in mainly a quantitative way, although it can also have qualitative components (Cooper & Marshall, 1978; French & Caplan, 1973). While the quantitative nature refers to the excessive amount of work, the qualitative nature refers to the complexity of the work, i.e., what additional tasks—such as administration, paperwork, and oversized classes—are expected of teachers in addition to teaching itself (e.g., Cedoline, 1982; Farber & Miller, 1981; Farber, 2000). This research has also supported the negative effects of excessive work and overload on teachers and the long-term contribution to work-related stress and thus burnout (Yong & Yue, 2007). Similarly, a study by Khani and Mirzaee (2015) involving Iranian EFL teachers revealed that workload can be associated with the emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation dimensions of burnout, with the most significant link observed between time pressure and burnout.

Classroom Climate

Classroom climate can also significantly influence teacher motivation, with consistent negative experiences contributing to burnout development (Holdaway, 1978; Bakker et al., 2000). Factors such as student behavioural issues, apathy, low achievement, and even abuse towards teachers can impact stress levels (Cedoline, 1982; Farber & Miller, 1981). Discipline problems and abuse were found particularly strong stressors in earlier studies (Kuzsman & Schnall, 1987; Holdaway, 1978). Additionally, the classroom relational climate— the dynamic between teachers and students—plays a crucial role in burnout, with relational conflicts increasing emotional exhaustion (Alamos et al., 2022; Corbin et al., 2019). Within EFL education, difficult student behaviour was also recognised as a contributing factor to teacher burnout in both Iran and Turkey (Khezerlou, 2013).

Social Support

Research has shown the impact of administrative and supervisory support, or the lack of, on teacher burnout, influencing motivation and stress levels (e.g., Blase & Matthews, 1984; Farber, 1991; Farber & Miller, 1981; Brouwers et al., 2011). In the 1980s, studies also highlighted the significant role of peer support in mitigating burnout by reducing stress and

negative emotional effects among teachers (Cunningham, 1982; Farber & Miller, 1981; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Brouwers et al., 2011; Ho, 2016). In the context of EFL education, factors such as insufficient leadership support—among challenging student behaviour, and low salaries—was identified as a main contributor to burnout (Khezerlou, 2013). Furthermore, research by Khani and Mirzaee (2015) among Iranian EFL teachers linked working relationships with burnout, especially noting a strong correlation between time pressure and burnout, a similar finding presented by Mukundan and Khandehroo (2010) in their study of language teachers in Malaysia. These studies underline the significant yet under-researched influence of social support on burnout across various international settings.

3.2.1.2   Personality Variables

In addition to external factors, various personality traits can influence teacher stress and the development of burnout, affecting individuals differently even in similar environments (Farber, 1991). The previous chapter discussed the Big Five Model (Section 2.3.2), which describes personality through five distinct traits—extroversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Studies on these traits and job burnout aim to identify predictive traits, linking personality characteristics to burnout in teachers (Ruggieri et al., 2018). Neuroticism, in particular, has been identified as a critical risk factor for increased stress levels in teachers (Bardach et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2023). Teachers high in neuroticism are more likely to perceive situations negatively, making them more vulnerable to stress (Bardach et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2023). Another study found that the Big Five traits—except for agreeableness—positively correlate with teaching effectiveness and that emotional stability, extraversion, and conscientiousness inversely correlate with burnout (Kim et al., 2019). These findings highlight the role of personality in burnout, emphasising the need to understand individual differences in vulnerability within the teaching profession.

Building on the understanding of how the Big Five personality traits impact teacher burnout, it is important to discuss other critical personality factors such as negative feelings, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and emotional intelligence, which can further shape teachers' experiences with stress and burnout.

Negative Feelings and Anxiety

Anxiety was linked to demotivation and burnout in both teachers and students, with its negative effects including nervousness and panic, yet it is not always negative; in some cases, it can motivate solutions to problems (Myers, 2004). However, excessive anxiety can hinder daily life and negatively impact both teaching effectiveness and student motivation (Sinclair & Ryan, 1987). Research by Khajavy et al. (2017) in the Persian context found that EFL teachers with predominantly positive emotions are less prone to burnout compared to those experiencing frequent negative emotions. That is, the negative feelings presented in the research of Khajavy et al. (2017) (which can be attributed mainly to what was experienced in the classroom) were predictors of all dimensions of burnout, i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, personal accomplishment. Their study highlighted that positive emotion, intrinsic motivation, and altruistic motivation— the drive teachers have to make a positive social impact, such as helping children and adolescents achieve success and promoting social equity (Watt et al., 2012)—can inversely predict emotional exhaustion, whereas negative emotion can directly predict it. Negative emotion and extrinsic motivation were linked with depersonalisation, emerging as negative emotion to be the strongest predictor of overall burnout. Thus, this research among EFL teachers has shown that those negative emotions have a huge impact on the development of burnout.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy can also significantly influence teacher burnout, including EFL context. It was defined as the belief in one's capabilities to achieve in specific situations (Bandura, 2011), teacher self-efficacy relates to teachers' confidence in enhancing student learning and achievements (Mok & Moore, 2019). It includes classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies, reflecting teachers' confidence in handling challenges, engaging students, and employing effective teaching methods (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). High self-efficacy in teachers was found to correlate with better classroom management, higher levels of commitment, and increased enthusiasm (Klassen & Chiu, 2011). It can also contribute to teaching effectiveness, job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014), and wellbeing (Zee & Koomen, 2016), while reducing stress and burnout, as found in studies across Turkey, Iran, and China among English language teachers (Mede, 2009; Motallebzadeh et al., 2014; Ozkara, 2019; Fathi & Saeedian, 2020; Bing et al., 2022).

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation in this sense is a social-cognitive skill acquired by teachers that allows them to do their jobs successfully with the help of their beliefs, i.e., to increase their professional accomplishment (Randi, 2004). This skill, essential for teachers, enables critical thinking and effective teaching work (Delfino et al., 2010). Self-regulation has been found to be related to effective language teaching (Toussi et al., 2011) and language teacher efficacy in Iran (Ghonsooly & Ghanizadeh, 2013). A study conducted in Iran found that teachers experiencing burnout (i.e., they feel emotionally exhausted, ineffective and experience cynicism) tend to be disengaged in their work, i.e., they are less enthusiastic about their achievements and goals. It means in turn, that those teachers, who acquire the skill of self-regulation might be less likely to experience burnout. The positive relationship between self-regulation and effective teaching has also been confirmed by Ghonsooly and Ghanizadeh (2013) examining Iranian EFL teachers, although further research might be necessary for a deeper understanding of this relationship.

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotional intelligence (EI) has gained importance in both psychology (Zeidner et al., 2011) and education (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) for its positive impact on learning and teaching. Defined by Salovey and Mayer (1997) as a form of social intelligence, EI involves perceiving, differentiating, and channelling emotions to navigate decisions and behaviour. The EI framework includes four competencies: accurately perceiving emotions, using emotions to improve decision-making, understanding emotional dynamics, and managing emotions (Schutte et al., 2009). EI positively influences health and wellbeing (Côté, 2014; Matthews et al., 2017). Its significance for teachers has been confirmed in general and EFL education, where higher EI is negatively correlated with teacher burnout in Iran (Amirian et al., 2021; Heiran & Navidinia, 2015; Mahmoodi & Ghaslani, 2014) and Azerbaijan (Alavinia & Ahmadzadeh, 2012), suggesting higher EI reduces stress and burnout (Mahmoodi & Ghaslani, 2014).

This section discussed how internal personality factors like negative feelings, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and emotional intelligence can influence teacher burnout, highlighting the need for comprehensive interventions addressing these internal dynamics alongside external factors,

to be discussed in Section . Next, other factors—demographic and contextual variables such as age, gender, and teaching environments— will be explored, adding another layer of complexity to burnout, emphasising the diverse challenges teachers face throughout their careers and locations.

3.2.1.3 Other Factors Affecting Teacher Burnout

Research on teacher burnout has revealed mixed findings with regard to age, gender, and contextual variables. Some studies suggested older teachers experience higher burnout rates (Brewer & Shapard, 2004; Klusmann et al., 2008), while others indicated that younger teachers face burnout sooner, particularly due to emotional exhaustion and stress (Claxton & Catalan, 1998; Antoniou et al., 2006; Brunsting et al., 2014; Lau et al., 2005). Gavish and Friedman (2010) highlighted that novice teachers might experience burnout symptoms within their first year, often due to a lack of recognition and support. Gender differences in burnout were also observed, with female teachers experiencing higher stress levels linked to emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment, and male teachers were found to be more prone to depersonalisation (Antoniou et al., 2006; Fernet et al., 2012; Lau et al., 2005). Contextual factors such as low pay, inadequate administrative support, and poor working conditions can also significantly impact teacher burnout, presenting unique challenges in urban and rural settings. Urban teachers may face issues, such as overcrowded classrooms and poor working conditions, while rural teachers might have to deal with inadequate facilities and student misbehaviour (Kersaint et al., 2007; Scheopner, 2010; Abel & Sewell, 1999). Nevertheless, the evidence does not conclusively link the contextual environment (i.e., urban vs. rural settings) to the development of burnout, indicating the complexity and individuality of factors contributing to burnout in the teaching profession. This complexity is further strengthened by the intersectionality of teacher identity and the simultaneous impact of contextual factors, suggesting that these variables cannot be examined in isolation. The interplay of these factors is crucial for understanding the causes of teacher burnout and its consequences but also for designing interventions that address the unique needs of teachers across different stages of their careers, genders, and teaching environments.

This section discussed various influences on teacher burnout, including age, gender, and contextual factors. Despite the significance of these variables, the limited amount of research

on these can be attributed to several challenges, for instance, the intersectionality of factors like age, gender, and context, and the practical challenges of conducting in-depth educational research. Additionally, gaps in research and evolving definitions of burnout may contribute to the shift in researching teacher burnout.

Having discussed various factors contributing to teacher burnout, including external, personality and other factors including demographic and contextual influences, the next section will present the consequences of this phenomenon.

3.2.2 Consequences of Teacher Burnout

Reviewing factors that influence teacher burnout in general and EFL education reveals numerous contributors to stress, leading to burnout and its negative consequences on teachers' lives. Research indicates that burnout can result in decreased motivation, reduced job performance, and higher illness rates (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). Burnt-out teachers may become less engaging and passionate, which impacts both themselves and their students (Mancini et al., 1982; 1984). This decreased performance can negatively affect student motivation and achievement (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Klusmann et al., 2016, 2022; Shen et al., 2015).

Teacher burnout can impact teachers physically, psychologically, and behaviourally. This section will further explore these consequences, examining burnout's physical, psychological, and behavioural aspects, the risk of attrition, and its influence on the classroom learning environment.

3.2.2.1 Physical Consequences

The physical consequences are similar to the symptoms of general job burnout, meaning that excessive stress can lead to fatigue (in many cases, chronic exhaustion), sleep disturbances/insomnia, cardiovascular disease, muscle aches, asthma or even weight loss (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980; Kahn, 1978; Leung et al., 2000; Melamed et al., 2006). Physical consequences are reported in teacher burnout research, as they were in the study of

Burke et al. (1996) examining burnout among teachers and administrators in elementary and secondary schools, finding heart symptoms to be the most commonly experienced by teachers experiencing burnout.

3.2.2.2 Psychological Consequences

Restlessness, irritability, feelings of isolation, and a sense of incompetence are considered psychological consequences experienced by teacher mainly in public education (Burke & Greenglass, 1993; Cedoline, 1982). It might be due to teachers in public education face unique challenges that contribute to psychological distress, such as excessive workload, diverse student needs, high stakes testing pressure, administrative burdens, and a lack of support and recognition. Burke et al. (1996) also reported depressive mood as a frequent psychological consequence of teacher burnout among elementary, junior high school and secondary school teachers. Feeling depressed and isolated can have an impact on teaching and its quality too (Sandilos et al., 2005; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020).

3.2.2.3 Behavioural Consequences

Behaviourally, stress and burnout can lead to lethargy, hyperactivity, strained relationships, substance abuse, loss of professional enthusiasm, and absenteeism—frequent absence from work. This absenteeism, often a response to overwhelming work and negative environmental conditions, has been found as a significant issue among teachers (Chan, 1998; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Lee et al., 2015), impacting teaching quality (Jacobson, 2016). That is, teacher absenteeism can affect students in two ways: firstly, physical absence requires a substitute teacher, who might not possess the same level of content expertise as the regular teacher (Marzano & Pickering, 2010). Secondly, teachers who are mentally disengaged, find it challenging to engage fully throughout the day, negatively impacting their students due to their decreased preparation and engagement (Jacobson, 2016). This issue can contribute to causing stress and later even burnout for others (Zeichner, 2013).

3.2.2.4   Attrition/ Leaving the Teaching Career

One consequence of burnout is a frequent change of job for teachers or, in more severe cases, even the abandonment of a teaching career. Goddard and Goddard's research (2006) among beginning teachers in Australia suggests that burnout serves as an explanation for young teachers intending to leave their jobs or their chosen career. It also confirms Tye and O'Brien's (2002) earlier study in America finding large number of exhausted and disheartened teachers in both primary and secondary schools, as well as career leavers due to high levels of stress and burnout. Many sources of teacher stress can lead to changing workplace or even teachers leaving the career, which Ryan et al. (2017) also shed light on in their research in public schools of the USA. That is, for example, stress in teachers due to insufficient experience tends to force them to leave the teaching profession.

After discussing various significant impact of burnout on teachers' career, including physical, psychological, and behavioural changes, desire for job changes and the potential abandonment of the teaching profession, it is crucial to examine how these consequences extend beyond individual teachers to influence the heart of education—the classroom learning. Thus, the following section will explore the effects of teacher burnout on classroom learning, shedding light on how burnout can affect teaching quality, student engagement, and overall learning outcomes.

3.2.2.5   Effects of Teacher Burnout on Classroom Dynamics and Student Learning

By examining the consequences of teacher burnout, it becomes evident that all three dimensions of burnout can impact not only a teacher's physical and psychological well-being but also their teaching effectiveness, including classroom management. While teaching environment as an influential factor in developing teacher burnout has already been discussed, it is important to mention the relationship between teacher burnout and high-quality classroom. High-quality teaching requires a lot of emotional energy (Woolfolk Hoy & Davis, 2005; Chang, 2009a), which is reasonably difficult to accomplish when the teacher is emotionally exhausted.

Teachers who already started to experience the development of burnout, can shift towards cynicism or depersonalisation, and might experience disengagement towards teaching. Even those who stay in the profession may lose their interests in teaching, causing students difficulties to enjoy learning (Johnson et al., 2012). While personal efficacy can drive teacher engagement in a positive direction, its lack, i.e., reduced personal accomplishment, makes it difficult for a teacher to create a supportive environment for students or to practice effectively (Pas et al., 2012).

Teacher misbehaviour, defined as actions detrimental to instructional quality (Kearney et al., 1991), is linked to effective learning. Banfield et al. (2006) found that offensive teacher behaviour negatively impacts students. According to Kearney et al. (1991), such behaviour includes verbal abuse, humiliation, and insults, often resulting from teacher burnout, and significantly harms the learning experience. Zhang (2007) confirmed that teacher misbehaviour in the U.S., China, Germany, and Japan negatively affects learning by decreasing student motivation. Aloe et al. (2014) noted that teacher burnout impacts learner behaviour, effectiveness, and motivation. Zhang and Sapp (2008) further supported this, showing that teacher burnout reduces nonverbal immediacy and student motivation, impairing affective learning.

This also means that this burnout can lead to a more negative classroom atmosphere, characterised by decreased engagement and collaboration among students. Eventually, these factors can result in lower academic performance. It has been also found that teachers experiencing emotional exhaustion and cynicism/depersonalisation tend to become more critical and less encouraging towards students' achievements (Madigan & Kim, 2021). That is, students might feel less capable and less motivated for learning, resulting in worse student academic achievement as it was found in a systematic review study of Madigan and Kim (2021) across primary, secondary, or tertiary levels of teaching.

This section has discussed the diverse factors contributing to teacher burnout in various contexts, revealing that classroom dynamics and student interactions are crucial in influencing teacher burnout, and vice versa. Thus, the examination of emotions within educational settings, and their impact on the classroom environment, is vital. Specifically, the concept of emotional labour emerges as particularly significant, affecting teachers' professional and personal lives, which will be discussed in the next section.

3.3 Navigating the Emotional Currents

Previous sections have explored factors contributing to teacher burnout and its various consequences. Despite growing interest in teacher burnout in the literature, it still remains somewhat underexplored in the EFL context. Recent research has begun to explore the negative effects of the teaching profession, with a particular focus on the role of emotions. This includes investigations into the impact of emotions, their contagious nature, and the concept of emotional labour within the EFL teaching environment. Consequently, this section will examine these interconnections related to burnout in, particularly, EFL teaching.

3.3.1 The Concept of Emotional Labour

Teaching involves significant emotional labour, a concept introduced by Hochschild (1983), highlighting the need for workers in certain professions to manage their emotions in interactions with customers (as discussed in Section 2.4.1). This concept is particularly relevant in teaching, where there is often a gap between a teacher's authentic feelings and the emotions they are expected to display according to societal norms. Hochschild referred to this gap as arising from "feeling rules" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 50). Research has further explored the impact of emotional labour on teachers, noting its integral role in the profession (Hargreaves, 1998; Schutz et al., 2006; Frenzel et al., 2009; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014).

However, emotional labour within teaching does not occur in a vacuum; it is shaped by the power dynamics and hierarchical structures within educational institutions (Benesch, 2017). Teachers are often required to manage not just their emotions for the benefit of students but also to comply with institutional expectations and external pressures from administrators, parents, and colleagues (Gkonou & Miller, 2019). This adds another layer of complexity to emotional labour in the educational setting, highlighting its hierarchical nature.

Teachers frequently resort to surface acting, where they mask their true feelings, and deep acting, where they attempt to genuinely embody the required emotions (King & Ng, 2018). The extent to which teachers engage in surface or deep acting is often dictated by the institutional power dynamics within which they operate. For instance, hierarchical pressures from school leadership or educational policies can compel teachers to display emotions that

conform to expected norms, even when these norms conflict with their authentic feelings (Miller & Gkonou, 2021). This dynamic illustrates how emotional labour in schools is intertwined with the broader institutional power structures that shape teacher-student and teacher-administrator relationships.

However, this discrepancy between felt and displayed emotions can lead to emotional dissonance, resulting in stress, depersonalisation, and ultimately burnout (Hochschild, 1983; Acheson et al., 2016; Näring et al., 2006, 2011). This institutional pressure creates a unique context for emotional labour, where teachers' ability to align their genuine emotions with institutional expectations often determines the level of emotional dissonance they experience (Benesch, 2017). Unlike emotional dissonance, which primarily arises from the internal conflict between felt and displayed emotions, emotional labour in teaching also involves the negotiation of external pressures and the power dynamics embedded in hierarchical structures (Benesch, 2017).

Emotional consonance, on the other hand, occurs when an individual's genuine emotions align with those expected in a situation, indicating no need for emotional labour (Näring et al., 2006). Research has further explored the impact of emotional labour on teachers, noting its integral role in the profession (Hargreaves, 1998; Schutz et al., 2006; Frenzel et al., 2009; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014).

The field of positive psychology, particularly in linguistics, has significantly impacted the study of teacher wellbeing (Blake & Dewaele, 2023) particularly through emotion regulation (Greenier et al., 2021; Morris & King, 2020; Talbot & Mercer, 2018) and Trait Emotional Intelligence (Dewaele & Wu, 2021; Oxford, 2020). These studies have focused on the various internal and external challenges to teachers' emotional health, emphasising the importance of social relationships in supporting their emotional wellbeing (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Gkonou et al., 2020).

This section will examine the emotional labour in the context of EFL including the effects of emotional contagion and burnout contagion on both teachers and their students.

3.3.1.1 The Impact of Emotion Labour on EFL Teachers

Emotions can significantly influence EFL teachers, given that language teaching involves extensive interpersonal and social interactions (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017). Research on emotional labour in SLA has historically been limited but has gained attention in recent years (e.g., Benesch, 2013; King, 2016; Loh & Liew, 2016; Mercer & Koustoulas, 2018; Gkonou & Miller, 2019), highlighting its importance in language teaching contexts worldwide.

Research across various countries have explored the implications of emotional labour and practice in EFL settings. While general education research highlights the significance of emotions, especially positive ones, in the education (Pekrun et al., 2002; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003), specific studies within SLA confirmed the link between teacher emotions and effective teaching practices. For instance, Dewaele et al. (2018) discovered that teachers' Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI) can influence their attitudes towards learners and their teaching methods. Similarly, research in Iran by Ghanizadeh and Royaei (2015) emphasised the emotional demands on language teachers, particularly those applying communicative teaching methods, requiring emotional investment and consistent interaction with students.

Furthermore, a study by King and Ng (2018) in Japan highlighted the critical examination of emotions in EFL teaching, illustrating teachers as cultural and emotional mediators who can influence classroom dynamics through their caring attitudes towards students. Supporting this, Loh and Liew (2016) and Miller and Gkonou (2018) identified the complexity of emotional labour among English language teachers, revealing the challenges they face in balancing professional demands with their emotional wellbeing, while also nurturing positive student-teacher relationships through caring pedagogical practices.

Despite the positive aspects of caring, King and Ng (2018) noted that *emotional dissonance—* where displayed emotions differ from genuine feelings—can lead to burnout. This condition is worsened when teachers suppress negative emotions (i.e., anger or frustration), potentially affecting both teacher wellbeing and the quality of student-teacher interactions. Previous research in general education has shown that such surface acting can lead to psychological issues and emotional exhaustion (Näring et al., 2006, 2011; Philipp & Schüpbach, 2010), with negative emotional labour being reinforced by the suppression of negative feelings, which may contribute to burnout (Acheson et al., 2016).

To mitigate the adverse effects of emotional labour, some teachers adopt strategies for emotional regulation, aiding in handling difficulties and enhancing self-efficacy and resilience (Yin et al., 2013; Liu & Chu, 2022) (further discussed in Section 4.3.2). Studies across various contexts, including China (Xie, 2021; Li & Lv, 2022), Iraq (Khammat, 2022), and Iran (Namaziandost et al., 2023), have confirmed the positive link between emotional regulation and resilience among teachers.

A longitudinal case study by Kocabaş-Gedik and Ortaçtepe Hart (2021) on native English-speaking EFL teachers in Turkey revealed the impact of ELT training, local language proficiency, and mentor support on their emotional labour and identity construction, with significant variations in outcomes based on these factors. Additionally, the study by Xie (2021) in China linked emotional regulation and resilience to work engagement among Chinese EFL teachers, suggesting that resilience can mitigate burnout and play a crucial role in coping, as supported by various studies and will be discussed in Section 3.5 (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987; Aldao et al., 2010; Bonanno & Burton, 2013).

This section highlighted the crucial role of emotions and emotional labour in teaching and their potential effects on both teachers and students. The research on emotional labour in EFL teaching environments emphasises the need for emotional support for teachers. Recognising and addressing the emotional demands placed on EFL teachers can lead to more positive educational experiences for both teachers and students, thus enhancing the learning environment and more effective language acquisition. This discussion set the stage for further discussion on emotional contagion and its implications in the context of English language teaching, highlighting the interconnectedness of teacher emotions, teaching practices, and student outcomes.

3.3.1.2 Emotional Contagion

Emotional contagion, in psychology, is defined as a phenomenon where people's emotions are linked in a contagious way and can affect each other's (Hatfield et al., 1994). Because of this phenomenon, teachers tend to "act emotionally" in order to create a positive atmosphere for students (King, 2016). On the other hand, these emotions are also affected by students'

emotional states (Frenzel & Stephens, 2013), as emotional contagion between the teacher and students is reciprocal. That is, emotions expressed in the classroom affects not only the teacher but students also (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2015). On one hand, teachers' negative feelings might cause behavioural problems for students, as their answer can be rudeness and impoliteness towards the teacher (Dresel & Hall, 2013). On the other hand, positive feelings from the teacher, such as enthusiasm, enjoyment can positively change learners' behaviour, and can also improve their performance (Frenzel & Stephens, 2013). A later study, Moskowitz and Dewaele (2021) focused on happiness contagion between L2 teachers and students. The findings of their study involving English language learners globally indicated a positive correlation between perceived teacher happiness and student motivation and attitudes, showcasing positive emotional contagion. In exploring and tracing non-verbal signals in foreign language enjoyment, Talebzadeh et al. (2020) found that automatic mimicry, including gestures and facial expressions can operate as a key driver of enjoyment contagion in university setting in Iran. In other words, due to the contagious emotions, positive feelings can create a positive atmosphere, which can have a positive effect on the attitude and motivation of both the teacher and the students. However, it has been discussed in psychology earlier that negative emotions tend to be more contagious than positive emotions (McIntosh et al., 1994). That is, while teachers have the potential to influence students' emotions and enjoyment of the lessons, this impact can also take a negative turn, meaning that due to the contagious nature of emotions, teacher burnout can negatively impact learners.

While the concept of emotional contagion gains prominence in both general education and EFL teaching, emphasised by the frequent interactions between teachers and students as well as among students themselves (Kong, 2022), its specific implications within the EFL context remain relatively underexplored. This gap underscores the need for more detailed investigation into how emotional contagion can manifest and influences the EFL learning environment. Recognising the significant influence of emotions in EFL teaching highlights the importance of investigating mechanisms EFL teachers use to maintain their wellbeing amidst the emotional demands of their profession, while simultaneously nurturing a positive learning atmosphere for their students. Alongside the recognition of emotional contagion, the related concept of burnout contagion has also emerged within educational discourse, highlighting a further area to examine in the following.

3.3.2 Burnout Contagion in Education

Exploring the concept of emotional contagion revealed its potential to influence both the learning environment and interpersonal relationships in education and school environment. Similarly, burnout and the negative emotions it might create can spread from teachers to students and among colleagues, primarily through emotional contagion—a process where individuals unconsciously imitate and align with others' emotions (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000; Hatfield et al., 1994), a phenomenon that has been discussed in this section. This phenomenon suggests that the emotional state of a teacher experiencing burnout can affect students, potentially leading to reduced achievement, changes in motivation, and increased stress levels (Madigan & Curran, 2021; Zhang et al., 2013; Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). Furthermore, burnout contagion among colleagues can occur both unconsciously, through mimicry and emotional alignment, and consciously, through direct interaction and emotional tuning (Bakker et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2010). A recent study (Meredith et al., 2020) investigated burnout contagion among secondary school teachers by using a social network approach (i.e., a method that considers how relationship characteristics, i.e., multiplexity, frequency, and embeddedness can impact the spread of burnout). Their research involved secondary school teachers from schools in Flanders and confirmed that interpersonal interactions are a significant factor in burnout contagion, with stronger relationships strengthening the effect (Meredith et al., 2020). Thus, this research suggests that the stronger the relationships among colleagues, the greater the impact of burnout contagion. Thus, the literature highlighted that the implications of burnout contagion can extend beyond individual wellbeing to impact the broader educational environment, suggesting the need for further interventions to address teacher burnout and its spread.

Having discussed emotional labour, emotional and burnout contagion, it becomes evident that further research on emotions and its effects in EFL teaching is not only important but necessary for understanding the complex dynamics of teaching and learning foreign languages, in particularly burnout in order to contribute to improving teacher wellbeing, student engagement, and overall educational quality.

Although these findings in the previous sections are drawn from various teaching levels, their relevance could be similar in secondary school settings. However, while there is still limited

research specifically focusing on secondary school EFL teaching, the following section will explore the literature that is available on secondary school language teacher burnout.

3.4   EFL Teacher Burnout in Secondary Schools

Burnout has been defined earlier by its three dimensions; emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1986), of which emotional exhaustion were found to be one of the most influential, in both general (e.g., Hu et al., 2013) and EFL contexts (e.g., Khajavy et al., 2017). It is also supported by the findings of Mukundan and Khandehroo (2010) investigating primary and secondary EFL teachers in Malaysia. They found that while younger teachers (under 25) might suffer from both emotional exhaustion and lack of personal accomplishment, older teachers (aged 26-45) are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion and also depersonalisation. The oldest age group (over 45), however, are prone to be affected by depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment but not by emotional exhaustion. It also supports the earlier discussed age differences in burnout (see Section 3.2.1.3). That is, it might be because teachers in the younger age group do not yet have sufficient experience and stress resistance, in contrast to their older colleagues, who, although more easily cope with emotional adversity, may find it more difficult to bear reduced teacher efficacy. Mukundan and Khandehroo (2010) also reported that excessive workload affects all three dimensions; emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment in Malaysia, which finding is in line with the findings discussed earlier.

In recent research in another context, in Iran Akbari and Eghtesadi (2020) examined EFL teachers with high levels of burnout in a secondary school and found that the main perceived factors in developing burnout reported by teachers are students' low language proficiency for the expected level, lack of support from administrators and colleagues, student discipline issues, students' lack of interest in learning the language, time limitation, and oversized class.

The nuanced understanding of burnout among EFL teachers presented by the studies in this section highlights the necessity for targeted interventions that are sensitive to the age and experiences of teachers, as well as the specific challenges posed by their work environment. Addressing burnout effectively might require a multifaceted approach including support for emotional wellbeing, mechanisms to enhance personal accomplishment, and measures to mitigate the impacts of depersonalisation. This, however, means not only individual

mechanisms for stress management and professional development but also institutional efforts to create supportive environments that recognise the unique challenges EFL teachers face. Therefore, the following section will explore the various coping mechanisms that teachers can employ to mitigate the effects of burnout, along with the interventions and institutional support highlighted in the literature.

3.5 Coping with Teacher Burnout

After reviewing the literature on the effects and consequences of teacher burnout with the implications for EFL context within secondary school, it is important to explore coping styles and mechanisms in literature which can contribute to reducing the effects of burnout. Thus, this section will focus on the various psychological coping mechanisms that teachers might apply to manage the stress and challenges they encounter in the teaching profession. First, I will present the concept of coping in psychology. Then I will aim to shed light on both theoretical and practical aspects of coping mechanisms teachers might apply to effectively navigate the demands of their profession on individual level, thus trying to improve their wellbeing and effectiveness in the classroom. Following an examination of the methods teachers adopt to cope with burnout, the discussion will shift to exploring teacher burnout interventions and institutional support measures as outlined in the literature.

3.5.1 Coping in Psychology

Coping in psychology started to gain significance during the 1980's when Lazarus and Folkman (1984) developed the transactional model of stress and behavioural self-regulation and divided coping strategies as emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies. Later, based on this model, Folkman et al. (1986) developed a 66-item scale, "The Ways of Coping Scale", including eight constructs in coping strategies: confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape- avoidance, planful problem-solving and positive reappraisal. Later, Carver et al. (1989) advanced the problem-focused and emotion-focused coping concept by developing a multidimensional model and inventory of coping, called COPE (Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced) with 60 items (Carver et al., 1989). It evaluates multiple coping strategies, which are:

- *active coping*, involving proactive measures to either eliminate or bypass a stressor, or to mitigate its impact;

- *planning*, a problem-focused process strategizing on ways to address a stressor, including planning action plans, considering the necessary steps, and determining the most effective approach to solve the issue;

- *suppression of competing activities*, involving setting aside other tasks, avoiding distractions from unrelated events, and if needed, allowing other matters to be temporarily neglected to focus on addressing solely the stressor

- *restraint coping,* referring to pausing and waiting for the right moment to take action, exercising self-control, and avoiding hasty decisions or action;

- *seeking social support for instrumental reasons* which is a problem-focused process involving looking for guidance, help, or information;

- *seeking social support for emotional reasons*: involving obtaining moral support, empathy, or understanding, characterising it as a type of emotion-focused coping;

- *focusing on and venting of emotions*: involves concentrating on one's feelings of distress or upset and expressing those emotions

- *behavioural disengagement*: involves diminishing one's effort to address a stressor, or even stopping efforts to achieve goals that the stressor holds, often described as helplessness;

- *mental disengagement strategies*, including activities that distract from a problem, such as engaging in alternative tasks contrary to suppressing competing activities, daydreaming, seeking help in sleep, or immersing oneself in television to escape;

- *positive reinterpretation and growth*, a positive reappraisal, is seen as a form of emotion-focused coping, concentrating on regulating distressing emotions instead of directly addressing the stressor itself;

- *denial*, a controversial strategy as some argued it is beneficial, reducing distress and aiding coping efforts (e.g., Lazarus & Breznitz, 1983; Cohen & Lazarus, 1973; Wilson, 1981), while according to others, it can contribute to ignoring the reality of a situation, making it to worsen, complicating the coping process that should ultimately take place (Matthews et al., 1983);

- *acceptance*, that is recognising the reality of a stressor takes place during primary appraisal;

- *turning to religion*, seeking for religion for emotional support, as a means for positive reinterpretation and growth, and

- *alcohol-drug disengagement.*

The modernised version of the original model, the Brief-COPE with fewer, 28 items made the use of the framework simpler across research and clinical settings in psychology (Carver, 1997) assessing how people manage stress and life difficulties which has become basis for several coping research later.

3.5.2 Coping with Teacher Burnout

In the field of teaching, as in psychology, the concept of coping has become increasingly important in the light of the rising concern of burnout. Teacher burnout, as previously outlined above can influence not only teaching practices but students directly also, as the classroom has been observed to be subject to stress contagion (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). Therefore, to prevent such negative consequences, coping styles or strategies have been developed, becoming an integral part of job and teacher burnout. However, although there has been considerable research on coping in psychology and job burnout in general, the specific area of coping in relation to teacher burnout and language teacher burnout, remains relatively an under researched area.

Seidman and Zager (1991) categorised coping strategies for teachers as adaptive and maladaptive coping strategy types. *Adaptive strategies* were named as pursuing hobbies, physical exercise, maintaining good relationship with colleagues, whereas *maladaptive strategies* were listed as, for example, alcohol consumption, smoking, and overeating. Their research also suggests that support from colleagues and leaders can be more effective than family support, as family members may not fully understand the stressful situations, therefore they might lack empathy. According to Lerias and Byrne (2003), coping styles in job burnout can be seen as the ways an individual utilises their cognitive and behavioural capacities in order to cope with stress. Roohafza et al. (2014) grouped coping styles as positive coping styles and negative coping styles. According to their study, positive coping styles can be defined as confronting problems directly and rationally, while negative coping styles comprises avoidance, withdrawal and denial.

Various coping styles, however, can have distinct effects on burnout, as it has been found it previous job burnout literature (Tsaur & Tang, 2012). That is, while positive coping styles can positively affect job burnout (Wallace et al., 2011), negative coping styles can play a significant role in predicting job and teacher burnout (Foley & Murphy, 2015). Teacher burnout studies also have explored that while positive coping styles (rational coping behaviour) can help teachers in managing work-related stress (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008; Antoniou et al., 2013), and can contribute to achieving positive outcomes with students, negative coping styles (avoidance coping behaviour) can be linked with higher levels of stress and burnout (Antoniou et al., 2013).

3.5.2.1 Direct-Action and Palliative Strategies

Similarly to job burnout coping styles, coping strategies for teachers include recognising and naming the individual's emotions, along with choosing methods to reduce emotional exhaustion (Chang, 2009b), which can boost teacher resilience. Teacher stress and burnout stem from a complex interaction of multiple elements, including external factors, personality traits, and contextual factors, as detailed in Section 3.2.1. Therefore, research on teacher burnout also highlighted the effective ways for teachers to cope with stress, for which the first step is suggested to be confronting and assessing the stressors associated with work (Chang, 2009b; Sharplin et al., 2011). Ways of coping for teachers can involve *direct-action* coping strategies (i.e., eliminating the sources of stress directly), *palliative* coping strategies (i.e., modifying the teachers' emotional reactions to stressors) and *avoidance and distancing coping* strategies (i.e., distancing oneself from stressors) (Kyriacou, 2001; Sharplin et al., 2011). While direct-action strategies are used to reduce burnout causes for teachers, palliative strategies focus on reducing stress feelings without addressing the root issues (Kyriacou, 2001).

Direct-Action Strategies

Direct-action coping strategies possess a proactive approach to reducing stress and fostering teacher resilience (Kyriacou, 2001) which can manifest in, for instance, seeking help from colleagues, professional development, setting work limits and reflecting practice (Chang 2009; Sharplin et al., 2011). While building supportive social networks can be effective in eliminating stress and promoting teacher resilience, it might also play an important role in motivating

teachers for professional development (Mohr et al., 2003; Tait, 2008; Beltman et al., 2011). In a study of teacher resilience in rural areas, Castro et al. (2010) concluded with direct-action strategies being effective for teachers in managing stress. Thus, teachers in the study typically sought help from colleagues, reflective problem solving, managing challenging relationships and pursuing rejuvenation and renewal. Although literature listed show that direct-action coping strategies can be effective in dealing with stress, it has also been highlighted that choosing the suitable strategy to apply can be dependent on teachers, that is, on their capacity, experiences, and environment (e.g., Chang, 2009b; Castro et al., 2010; Beltman et al., 2011; Sharplin et al., 2011). However, it should be noted, too, that not all causes of stress are under teachers' control (as presented in Section 3.2.1.1) for example workload, classroom climate and social support that suggests the complex nature of coping and teacher resilience. It, however, also serves as a reminder of the systemic and environmental factors that can significantly affect teacher stress levels and their capacity to apply direct-action coping strategies effectively.

Palliative Strategies

Palliative coping strategies have been defined as an approach to lower the levels of stress by applying internal/emotional reaction changing techniques (Kyriacou, 2001). It includes, for example, positive self-talk, depersonalisation, goal setting, creating psychological boundaries, humour, turning to spiritual or religious beliefs, emotional management, seeking social-emotional support or professional help, seeking professional development, and regular exercise (Sharplin et al., 2011; Beltman et al., 2011; Mansfield et al., 2012). These strategies can help teachers improve personal resilience; therefore, they can be effective in reducing stress and burnout while promoting professional development. However, applying both direct-action and palliative strategies, similar to the development of teacher burnout, can depend on various factors, such as, personal variables (e.g., emotional intelligence/literacy) (see Section 3.2.1.2), stressors and the environment (e.g., available support, school and community) (Beltman et al., 2011; Castro et al., 2010; Sharplin et al., 2011).

Reviewing the literature on coping within the psychology of teaching highlights the critical role of adaptive coping mechanisms in addressing teacher burnout and enhancing engagement. In EFL teaching, where the emotional and interpersonal demands are uniquely high due to, for example, cultural and linguistic barriers, the application of direct-action and palliative coping

strategies becomes even more essential. These techniques can not only help teachers manage the stress characteristic to the profession but also support the maintenance of a positive and engaging classroom environment. Thus, understanding the importance of coping in the EFL setting becomes crucial, which will be discussed in the following.

3.5.3 Coping with EFL Teacher Burnout

While coping in teacher burnout research has been gaining ground lately, there are still insufficient studies confirming effective coping strategies for English language teachers. One of the recent language teacher wellbeing studies, MacIntyre et al. (2020), involving language teachers, explored coping strategies and their link with psychological effects during Covid-19 pandemic. The survey, exploring the influence of approach-based and avoidance-oriented strategies, was based on the following nine scales:

1. **Brief-COPE**: Adapted from Carver's 28-item index (1997), it has 14 subscales (two items each) grouped into Avoidant Coping (e.g., denial, substance use) and Approach Coping (active coping, positive reframing, etc.).

2. **Stress Index:** A 15-item index covering stress related to travel, health, relationships, workload, and work-life balance, a scale created specifically for this study.

3. **PERMA Profiler**: A 15-item index measuring eudemonic happiness and wellbeing across five subscales including positive emotion, engagement, relationships, etc., adapted from Butler and Kern (2016).

4. **WHO-5 Wellbeing Index**: The World Health Organization's five-item index assessing wellbeing through feelings of cheerfulness, activeness, and interest, adapted from Topp et al. (2015).

5. **Resilience**: An eight-item index focusing on resilience traits including keeping calm, bouncing back, and doing important things, adapted from Amtmann et al. (2020).

6. **Growth Through Trauma (new)**: A 10-item scale adapted from a measure of post-traumatic growth, emphasising growth during trauma (Taku et al., 2008).

7. **State Anxiety**: A six-item short form assessing state anxiety based on feelings in the past 24 hours (Marteau & Bekker, 1992).

8. **Health Index**: A four-item index on perceived overall health, asking about general health, health compared to others, and satisfaction with health (Butler & Kern, 2016).

9. **Single-Item Indicators of Negative Emotions**: Measures angry, sad, and lonely feelings, taken from the PERMA Profiler.

The study indicated that approach-oriented coping strategies are more beneficial than avoidance-oriented ones for managing stress in EFL teaching contexts (MacIntyre et al., 2020). They found that acceptance, planning, reframing, and active coping can alleviate stress, whereas self-blame, venting, and disengagement may lead to negative emotions such as anxiety and sadness, emphasising the importance of 'avoiding avoidance'. Similarly, Erdag and Tavil (2021) discovered that both palliative strategies (e.g., relaxing and leisure activities) and direct-action strategies (e.g., problem-solving and seeking solutions) are effective among teachers with various levels of burnout. They also found that those with lower levels of burnout tended to apply more coping strategies than those with higher levels. This suggests that the intensity of burnout can influence coping strategy choice, a finding suggested by Seidmann and Zager (1991). Additionally, Akbari and Eghtesadi (2017) noted that professional development and fostering positive student-teacher relationships—which can be categorised as direct-action strategies—might be preferred by teachers facing high levels of stress, highlighting the complex relationship between burnout levels and coping mechanisms in the EFL teaching environment.

While this field of SLA is still insufficiently researched, reviewing the literature shed light to the importance of coping in the research of EFL teacher burnout. Although the literature shows that there can be different approaches to the research of coping strategies (i.e., direct-action/palliative strategies or approach oriented/avoidance oriented), it can be concluded that positive coping strategies can have a positive effect on teachers with high levels of stress who struggle with burnout. On the other hand, avoidance/negative strategies can bring negative consequences, such as negative emotions (Griffith et al., 2000; MacIntyre et al., 2020). At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the fact that these strategies can potentially result in positive outcomes when applied collectively, rather than applying one strategy by itself (Fortes-Ferreira et al., 2009).

In this section, I have introduced coping styles within the field of psychology, followed by an examination of how these are applied to teacher burnout. However, the exploration of coping mechanisms within EFL teacher burnout highlighted the lack in research confirming effective coping specifically for EFL teachers. Recent studies advocate for approach-oriented strategies,

emphasising the detrimental effects of avoidance methods, whereas both palliative and direct-action strategies were found to be beneficial, observing the variance in coping effectiveness depending on the levels of teacher burnout. Thus, this highlights the necessity of further research in coping within the EFL context, aiming to enhance teacher resilience, wellbeing, and effectiveness in the classroom. Although research has focused on individual coping mechanisms, it is equally important to examine the institutional support and intervention measures available to teachers, as these are crucial aspects of addressing this syndrome. Therefore, the following section will discuss the interventions and institutional responses documented in the literature.

3.5.4   Teacher Burnout Intervention

The previous section explored the mechanisms teachers may use to mitigate the effects of burnout. Recognising that numerous factors may lead to burnout (see Section 3.2.1), it is crucial to note that effective management involves both individual coping and institutional support and interventions. Thus, this section will cover various methods for intervening in teacher burnout across different contexts, including social-emotional skills, the psychoeducational approach, social support, professional development, and institutional responses to burnout.

3.5.4.1   Social-Emotional Skills

The importance of the student-teacher relationship was already known in the teacher wellbeing literature (Spilt et al., 2011). Developing socio-emotional relationships (with students, management and colleagues) and skills can also bring positive results in preventing burnout. In addition to everyday relationships, addressing student behavioural problems can also be an important step in achieving effective learning and teaching (Jennings et al., 2013). While Jennings et al. (2013) found this way of intervention to be effective for teachers in regular and special education to improve wellbeing, efficacy in classrooms and to reduce symptoms of burnout, Wolf et al. (2015) has found no significant positive effect of this intervention on teacher burnout in primary school teachers in Congo. The effectiveness of interventions targeting teacher burnout may vary due to cultural differences, intervention design aspects, and the initial levels of burnout among teachers. Cultural norms can influence the implementation

of strategies, making certain approaches more effective in some contexts than others. Similarly, the design of the intervention, including its structure and alignment with teachers' needs, can play an important role in its success. Also, the impact of an intervention may also depend on the participants' starting levels of burnout, with different strategies required for those at various stages of burnout. Thus, these considerations highlight the importance of context and individual differences in addressing teacher burnout effectively.

3.5.4.2 Psychoeducational Approach

The psychoeducational approach similarly to the psychological approach, aims to increase teachers' knowledge about stress and burnout in the field of education (Emery, 2011). Emery (2011) conducted a psychoeducational intervention called Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) among elementary and secondary school teachers in the USA. The results of the experimental study showed that the burnout scores of the experimental group was considerably lower than the scores of the control group, suggesting that the ACT might be a treatment for teacher burnout. This finding also complements previous research in a field other than education that has demonstrated the success of therapy (e.g., Hayes et al., 2004).

Thus, by highlighting the complexity of burnout, directions for education researchers and administrators were proposed to enhance addressing the issue of teacher burnout more effectively (Bodenheimer & Shuster, 2020). Thus, in addition to psychological, social-emotional approaches and social support (mentioned above), institutional support is also crucial in addressing teacher burnout, as previously found (Caplan et al., 1994). School psychologists, for instance, can play a vital role in enhancing the level of professional support within an institution. By making psychoeducation and both individual and group consultations available for teachers, school psychologists can help teachers effectively meet the demands of their role (Szabo & Jagodics, 2019). Consultations can also contribute to a more positive and supportive school environment, which can aid in preventing burnout (Cohen, 2006; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

3.5.4.3 Social Support

This way of intervention is based on social connections and group work so that teachers can feel supported and encouraged by their colleagues and supervisors (Unterbrink et al., 2012). In the research of Cooley and Yovanoff (1996) the treatment group experienced positive changes in all three burnout dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment) with social support when examining special educators working in special education and related service areas. Mixing psychoeducational approach and social support Unterbrink et al. (2012) managed to find positive improvements in emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment in grammar school and secondary school teachers by combining group work to encourage support among teachers and practical methods for managing professional interpersonal difficulties.

3.5.4.4 Professional Development

The professional development intervention suggests the training of different skills to cope with stress, which include developing emotional awareness and communication, self-regulation, social problem solving, and relationship management skills (Berg et al., 2017). Results, however, are mixed. While Cheon et al. (2014) found this strategy useful to decrease emotional and also physical exhaustion in teachers of physical education in primary, middle and secondary schools, Breeman et al. (2016) found no changes in the emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment components of burnout in their study of primary school teachers in the Netherlands. These results show that this method can also work differently on different school levels and in different contexts.

Thus, the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing teacher burnout through professional development can vary across different educational levels and contexts, highlighting the challenge of a universal solution. Mixed results in these studies may partly stem from the need for long-term follow-up to assess the impact of such interventions, given the chronic nature of burnout. However, conducting extended research can pose practical difficulties, such as maintaining consistent participation and dealing with changes in school environments. This complexity highlights the importance of long-term strategies for effectively addressing teacher burnout.

3.5.4.5 Institutions in Addressing Teacher Burnout

This section has examined various interventions for teacher burnout across multiple contexts and levels. However, the causes and consequences of burnout extend beyond the individual, necessitating interventions beyond teachers' individual efforts. Placing the responsibility solely on teachers could lead educational institutions to neglect their critical role in mitigating burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Given that education functions within a social context, the interactions between teachers and students are vital (Carr, 2005). Teacher burnout can affect more than only the individuals involved; it has consequences for the wider societal framework (Cooper et al., 2001). Thus, addressing burnout is not solely an individual concern. Burnout can stem from various negative effects (see Section 3.2.1), and the interplay between structural and interactional expectations can significantly contribute to teacher burnout (Bodenheimer & Shuster, 2020). This forces teachers to manage or suppress their feelings of burnout to avoid the threat of unemployment (Szabo & Jagodics, 2019). Therefore, the multifaceted nature of teacher burnout highlights the necessity for systemic and institutional interventions alongside individual efforts.

A study by Naghieh et al. (2015) focused on assessing the effectiveness of organisational interventions in enhancing wellbeing and reducing occupational stress among teachers. It revealed that most strategies aimed at improving teacher wellbeing are targeted at individuals, neglecting the root workplace stressors. The potential of organisational-level interventions was explored through various approaches, including task-based organisational change, stress management training, comprehensive teacher training with overarching school support, and multi-faceted interventions involving performance bonuses, career advancement opportunities, and mentoring. The findings indicated that, although based on low-quality evidence, organisational interventions could potentially lead to better wellbeing and higher retention rates among teachers. Similarly, according to Salmela-Aro et al. (2019), it is essential to consider issues, such as increased workloads and growing class sizes which represent systemic issues that could significantly undermine teachers' autonomy, or their perception of it, over their professional responsibilities. These issues urge a critical need for policymakers and local governments to address and improve the working conditions within schools (Salmela-Aro et al., 2019). The examples presented in this section underline the critical need for a multidimensional approach in addressing teacher burnout, that can combine individual efforts with systemic and institutional support mechanisms.

Reviewing the literature, the number of research studies has not yet reached critical mass to confirm that these intervention strategies could be effectively applied to teacher burnout although some of them have proved to be successful. However, in connection with negative symptoms, which can later cause burnout, the results are encouraging, i.e., a positive result can be detected in anxiety, depressive symptoms (Roeser et al., 2013), self-efficacy (Jennings et al., 2013) and also job satisfaction (Wolf et al., 2015). This suggests that although existing research provides some insights into mitigating the negative symptoms of burnout, there is a crucial demand for more in-depth studies aimed at developing holistic solutions specifically in the EFL teaching profession. These studies should address the complex nature of burnout and its impact on other related aspects, such as teacher engagement. The next chapter will explore this interplay, following the discussions on work and teacher engagement.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed the literature on teacher burnout, focusing on its causes, dynamics in the EFL context, and coping mechanisms. The literature highlights the increasing significance of teacher burnout in English language teaching due to emotional challenges, heavy workloads, and high expectations. Various factors contribute to teacher burnout in both general and foreign language education, affecting not only teachers' wellbeing but also their students'. Recognising the impacts of stress and burnout, it is crucial to understand how teachers can manage these effects to maintain their own and their students' wellbeing.

While numerous studies have addressed job burnout (see Chapter 2), the specific area of EFL teacher burnout and coping mechanisms remains emerging. This reveals a significant gap, particularly in how teachers navigate burnout and its emotional consequences to reengage with their profession. Limited research on reengagement techniques post-burnout underscores the need for further investigation. This thesis aims to explore teacher burnout in the EFL context, examining its effects on teacher engagement, emotional experiences, coping styles, and reengagement with professional roles. By exploring the relationship between teacher engagement and burnout, including the broader emotional consequences of burnout, this research contributes to the SLA literature, offering insights into EFL teacher burnout, engagement, and coping.

Building upon this discussion, the following chapter will explore teacher engagement, examining its concept and the complex relationship between engagement and burnout, setting the stage for the methodology and findings of this thesis research.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: LITERATURE REVIEW— TEACHER ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Introduction

Earlier chapters discussed job burnout (Chapter 2) and its impact on human services workers, including teachers (Chapter 3), focusing on how EFL teachers experience burnout and the coping mechanisms they use. Addressing teacher engagement is crucial, as it significantly impacts education alongside burnout.

The increasing trend of teachers leaving the profession is a growing concern in many countries (Goddard & Goddard, 2006; Tye & O'Brien, 2002; Amitai & Van Houtte, 2022). Despite this, the issue has not received sufficient attention in education or SLA. Studies show that engaged teachers are less likely to leave the profession (Klassen et al., 2012). However, disengaged teachers may continue teaching, which can have serious consequences given the teacher's crucial role in education and students' lives (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). Engaged teachers can motivate learners, improve achievements and engagement (Roth et al., 2007), and are more committed to their organisations, participating in activities beyond teaching duties (Hakanen et al., 2006; Bakker & Bal, 2010). They may also handle stress and burnout better (Han, et al., 2016). While the precise relationship between work engagement and burnout is underexamined, positive relationships in a teacher's life can promote wellbeing and prevent burnout (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teacher disengagement and its link to burnout is under-researched in SLA despite its growing importance.

This chapter introduces the concept of teacher engagement, including a theoretical framework for understanding it. It explores the relationship between teacher engagement and burnout, discusses the importance of teacher disengagement, and reviews methods for measuring and researching teacher engagement. The following chapters will present the research conducted in this thesis, using a qualitative methodology to investigate burnout among EFL teachers and its impact on their engagement. Given the limited research on teacher engagement within SLA,

this chapter will focus on teacher engagement in the broader field of education, highlighting studies on EFL teachers in various contexts.

4.2   Teacher Engagement

The concept of teacher engagement and its significance was first highlighted by Rutter and Jacobson in 1986, who described it as a teacher's commitment and enthusiasm for teaching. Building on this, Maslach et al. (2001) defined engagement within the field of psychology as energy, involvement, and efficacy in work. This groundwork led Schaufeli et al. (2002) to articulate engagement as a positive and fulfilling work-related state of mind, characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption:

- **Vigour** refers to an individual's high levels of energy and also mental resilience which motivates them to invest even more in their work, and also characterised by persistence even in the face of difficulties. Individuals showing vigour feel dynamic and energetic as they do their work tasks. It represents a dynamic aspect of engagement, marking the individual's energy and proactive attitude towards their tasks and commitments.

- **Dedication** means the individual's enthusiasm and desire for challenge in their work, referring to both emotional and cognitive aspects of engagement, meaning that the individual can connect to their tasks and find them both meaningful and valuable.

- **Absorption** characterised by being fully concentrated on one's work, whereby time passes quickly, and one has difficulties detaching oneself from work. This dimension also shows that the individual is deeply absorbed in their tasks while experiencing the state of flow.

These three components together gave basis to work engagement as conceptualised by Schaufeli et al. (2002, 2006) and their measurement, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which will be discussed in Section 4.5.1. The introduction of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) for measuring these components, therefore, offers a valuable tool for empirical studies. However, it also necessitates a critical examination of its effectiveness in capturing the multifaceted nature of teacher engagement, particularly its social aspect. Thus, based on this work engagement concept, later, teacher engagement has been defined by a novel conceptualisation and framework (Klassen et al., 2013) which will be discussed in this section.

4.2.1 Theoretical Conceptualisation of Teacher Engagement

According to previous studies in education, work engagement, which is a motivational construct, involves two dimensions: energy and involvement (Bakker et al., 2011), both of which can be manifested in a physical, emotional, and cognitive way (Saks, 2008; Schaufeli et al., 2006). That is, this connection is not only about being physically present or devoting hours; it is also about the emotional passion one feels for their work and the cognitive focus that drives one's dedication and creativity. For teachers, however, work also involves social engagement, which means that a large amount of energy is required to maintain social relationships (Pianta et al., 2012). This means that while professional relationships with colleagues are fundamental across various jobs, teaching uniquely requires maintaining connections not commonly found in other professions, such as continuous and long-term engagements with students and colleagues. The importance of these relationships has been confirmed by previous studies, highlighting their impact on a positive student-teacher relationship, and learning effectiveness (Davis, 2003; Klassen, Perry & Frenzel, 2012; Pianta et al., 2012; Wang, 2009). This definition led scholars to form a multidimensional conceptualisation, first, including cognitive, physical, emotional, and social dimensions (Klassen et al., 2013). However, while Hakanen et al. (2006) distinguished vigour (indicative of physical engagement) and dedication (indicative of emotional engagement) as the main dimensions of engagement based on the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) with a focus on teachers, yet they did not extend their investigation to include a cognitive dimension. Subsequently, Klassen et al. (2013), in their study, found that physical and cognitive engagement did not manifest as separate domains within their teacher participants. Thus, their observation raised issues regarding keeping the physical engagement separated from the cognitive aspect of engagement. Due to the lack of definitive evidence to distinguish between the physical and cognitive dimensions of engagement, Klassen et al. (2013) proposed that, in the context of teaching, these dimensions may not be distinct but rather intertwined, suggesting a single dimension of engagement that blends physical and cognitive aspects (i.e., cognitive-physical).

Yet this conceptualisation is closely related Schaufeli et al.'s work engagement concept (2002), introduced in the previous section, with vigour and absorption being related to the cognitive-physical dimension and dedication to the emotional dimension. However, Klassen et al.'s model (2013) includes a social dimension too, which -with building connections with both

colleagues and students- plays a very significant role in conceptualising teacher engagement (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Therefore, the multidimensional framework proposed by Klassen et al. (2013) for understanding teacher engagement is structured around three key dimensions:

- **The cognitive-physical dimension** was defined as the extent to which teachers are willing to devote effort and energy into their work, including planning, reflection, and fostering strategies to enhance student learning. In other words, it includes the mental processes teachers engage in when preparing for classes, thinking critically about their teaching practices, seeking to improve student achievement and physical or proactive implementation of these strategies and plans.
- **The emotional dimension** of teacher engagement focuses on the emotional experiences teachers might have in their work environment. This can include feelings of enthusiasm, passion, and energy that teachers bring to their classroom and educational activities. It also characterises how emotionally invested teachers are in their work and how this investment can manifest in positive experiences such as joy, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment in their teaching tasks. These emotional experiences, however, are significant, as they can influence not only teachers' wellbeing and job satisfaction but also their efficacy in engaging students and creating a positive learning environment for them.
- **The social dimension** includes the teachers' view of their relationships with colleagues and students, highlighting the importance of relationships and interactions teachers have with their colleagues, students, as well as with the wider school community. It includes the support, collaboration, and communication that can happen among teachers and between teachers and students, contributing to a positive learning environment. Research often distinguishes this dimension into two separate categories: social interactions with colleagues (social-colleagues) and social interactions with students (social-students).

The incorporation of a social dimension into the conceptual framework of teacher engagement marks a significant advancement in understanding the complex nature of engagement, particularly within the teaching profession. Furthermore, this conceptualisation introduced this

dimension, differentiated into interactions with colleagues and students, presenting a critical advancement but complexity in measurement and analysis. While it suggests that previous studies may have overlooked or inadequately addressed the distinct influences of these social interactions to overall teacher engagement, there is a need for further studies specifically designed to explore these dimensions in depth, applying various approaches to capture the dynamic and complex nature of these interactions.

This multidimensional framework underpins the current thesis examination by providing the foundation for the Engaged Teacher Scale (ETS), detailed in Section 4.5.2, which measures teacher engagement. This section will also explain the application of the ETS to assess engagement levels among teachers, emphasising psychological resources and providing a comprehensive, empirically grounded approach. The framework offers a holistic view of teacher engagement, addressing EFL teachers' challenges and examining teacher burnout's impact on engagement aspects. The next section will build on this foundation to explore the characteristics of an engaged teacher as defined in the literature.

4.2.2 The Engaged Teacher

Having explored the theoretical concept of teacher engagement, it is crucial to define the characteristics of an engaged teacher. According to Rutter and Jacobson (1986), engaged teaching is characterised by enthusiasm for the subject, a deep commitment to student success, and a willingness to exceed basic requirements. Engaged teachers have thorough knowledge of their discipline, remain open to learning, take pride in their professional activities, and inspire others with confidence and optimism (Rutter & Jacobson, 1986). They are receptive to new ideas that can enhance their teaching practice (Marzano, 2003) and have high expectations for themselves (Boaler, 2004; Tyler & Boelter, 2008).

Although both 'engaged teacher' and 'committed teacher' are frequently used in research, they represent distinct concepts. Teacher engagement, as discussed earlier, refers to a psychological state in which teachers are absorbed, energised, and dedicated to their work. This concept emphasises an active, present-oriented experience where teachers invest their energy into daily tasks and interactions (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Engagement involves cognitive-physical,

emotional, and social dimensions, focusing on how teachers feel and perform in the moment (Klassen et al., 2013).

In contrast, teacher commitment is more future-oriented, representing a teacher's long-term loyalty and dedication to their profession, students, and institution. Commitment reflects a teacher's intention to remain in the profession, contribute to the success of their school or educational system, and achieve long-term career goals (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Day, 2004). While engaged teachers may also demonstrate commitment, engagement is primarily concerned with the immediate experience of work, whereas commitment relates to a sustained attachment to broader career and organisational objectives. Commitment, in this sense, refers to a teacher's sense of loyalty to their organisation, which is influenced by factors such as feelings of belonging, job satisfaction, and, conversely, emotional exhaustion or the motivation to leave the profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Pourtousi & Ghanizadeh, 2020).

In other words, an engaged teacher stays motivated to find creative solutions and improve the classroom, even when facing challenges like a difficult class or increased workload. In contrast, a committed teacher remains in the profession despite ongoing difficulties, guided by a belief in the importance of education or a sense of duty, even if their day-to-day enthusiasm wanes due to lack of support. Moreover, engagement might fluctuate throughout a teacher's career as daily experiences and work conditions change, but commitment implies a deeper, more enduring sense of obligation, possibly enduring even in times of low engagement. For example, a teacher could feel committed to their profession but might not feel engaged on a given day due to external stressors or burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

Teachers committed to their profession are generally more satisfied with their job, as evidenced by studies showing a positive relationship between job satisfaction and teacher engagement (Klassen et al., 2012; Eldor & Shoshani, 2017). Such teachers are more likely to be committed to their workplaces and perform better (Bakker & Bal, 2010). Positive behaviours, like increased lesson preparation, enhance engagement for both teachers and students (Cardwell, 2011). Cardwell (2011) also highlighted that higher teacher engagement positively impacts teachers' wellbeing and their students' psychological states, increasing classroom involvement. Earlier studies (Cotton et al., 2002; Lieberman & Miller, 1981) also emphasised the crucial role of committed teachers in learners' lives. However, students' perceptions of their teachers'

engagement can differ. Cardwell (2011) found that students sometimes perceive lower engagement in their teachers than teachers do themselves, and occasionally the opposite occurs. Philipp and Schüpbach (2010) noted that while many teachers are passionate and committed, some experience emotional exhaustion due to the demands of student interactions, as discussed in Chapter 3. Resilience is key in fostering engagement among teachers (Xie, 2021), and a lack of engagement can lead to burnout. The relationship between teacher engagement, burnout and resilience is critical in education, influencing teacher wellbeing, efficacy, and student achievements. This relationship will be further examined in the next section.

4.3   Teacher Engagement and Burnout

Reviewing the literature, it can be concluded that engagement is a positive state of teachers, resulting in enthusiasm and continuous improvement in teaching practice (Marzano, 2003). Teachers are likely to find themselves in emotionally straining/exhausted situations as teaching as a special human service can cause a lot of stress (Jennett et al., 2003). Depersonalisation or cynicism affect personal connections of the teacher, whereas reduced personal accomplishment has a negative effect on their efficacy, resulting in that they begin to be less committed to their tasks (Farber & Miller, 1981) (as discussed in Chapter 3). Thus, engagement and burnout have a close link, as recent research (e.g., Schaufeli et al., 2006; Salmela- Aro et al., 2019) initiated to investigate it. Thus, this section will explore the impact of burnout on teacher engagement, focusing on the relationship between resilience and the level of teacher engagement, before moving on discussing the concept on teacher disengagement.

4.3.1   Burnout Affecting Teacher Engagement

The relationship between burnout and engagement among teachers has been an important point of research, particularly in examining the contrasting dimensions of these two concepts. In examining job burnout, vigour and dedication dimensions were considered earlier to be the opposite two dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion and cynicism (Maslach et al., 2001), however, efficacy, the third dimension of burnout, and absorption have not been defined as being negatively correlated. A large scale cross-national study (Schaufeli et al., 2006) examining the link between burnout and engagement through 27 studies in ten different

countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, German, The Netherlands, Norway, South Africa and Spain), including educator participants, as well as blue-collar and white-collar and social workers, confirmed the negative correlation between engagement and burnout, supporting earlier findings suggesting that they might not be coexisting concepts in psychology, thus in teaching also.

Later, however, the study of Salmela-Aro et al. (2019) examining teacher burnout and engagement in Finland revealed that engagement and burnout are not necessarily mutually exclusive highlighting the crucial roles of both in teacher work-life dynamics. They identified two distinct profiles among participating teachers—*engaged* and *engaged-burnout*—challenging the conventional dichotomy between engagement and burnout, suggesting that these states can coexist in teachers. The *engaged teachers*, characterised by greater control and higher levels of resilience, demonstrated the significance of these factors in navigating the demands of the teaching profession. These teachers' ability to overcome difficulties and prevent burnout emphasised the role of individual coping mechanisms and the psychological resources that enabled some teachers to stay engaged despite challenging situations. On the other hand, the *engaged-burnout* teachers, who faced heavy workloads with less control over their work, represented a critical concern for educational institutions and policymakers. The difficulties of this group highlighted the detrimental effects of excessive demands and limited autonomy on teacher wellbeing. The findings of this study shared implications for educational policy and practice, highlighting the importance of providing teachers with the necessary support to enhance their resilience and control within their work environments. Such support could involve various forms, including professional development opportunities, mentoring programmes, and initiatives aimed at reducing workload and increasing teacher autonomy. Furthermore, the study suggested that addressing teacher burnout requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond individual interventions to include systemic changes, involving municipalities and policymakers, to create better working conditions for teachers.

Researching teacher wellbeing and the effects of personal and job resources on teacher burnout and engagement in Spain Bermejo-Toro et al. (2016) found engagement to have a great influence on burnout, regardless of teaching level (primary or secondary). That is, increased engagement might help with preventing burnout. Building on this perspective, research focusing on Chinese EFL teachers (Xu & Jia, 2022) investigated the link between their engagement and burnout, finding a positive link between teachers' work engagement and self-

efficacy. Conversely, they found a negative correlation between overall work engagement and stress, as well as between emotional exhaustion and work engagement, indicating that higher levels of stress and emotional exhaustion are linked to lower levels of work engagement. Research involving EFL teachers in Iran (Faskhodi & Siyyari, 2018) also confirmed the negative correlation between engagement and burnout, finding that the level of engagement might have a positive effect on burnout. They also found that the participating language teachers might have experienced decreased burnout as the number of years of practice increased. While several studies confirmed the idea that work engagement can be viewed as the positive counterpart to burnout, Timms et al. (2012) suggested that teachers might experience burnout and disengagement simultaneously, proposing the concepts of burnout and engagement to be extreme ends of a continuum, rather than being negatively correlated. This implies that teachers experiencing burnout can still find engagement in certain aspects of their work, indicating that burnout does not necessarily equate to disengagement. These findings might challenge traditional views discussed above and emphasise the need for more research for deeper understanding of the relationship between these two concepts, as future research might explore the complexities of teacher burnout and engagement and how they can be affected by each other.

Reviewing literature on teacher engagement reveals a critical link between teacher burnout and engagement in education. Improving teacher wellbeing involves not only reducing burnout but also sustaining and increasing teacher engagement. The complex relationship between burnout and engagement suggests that teachers can remain engaged in some aspects of their work despite experiencing burnout. Therefore, developing more effective support mechanisms for teachers could enhance resilience and passion within the teaching workforce. Further examination, including qualitative data from teachers' narratives, could provide deeper insights into the daily interplay between burnout and engagement. Additionally, the concept of resilience, prominent in EFL research, highlights its relevance to teacher engagement. The following section will explore the dynamics of resilience, examining its impact on teacher engagement, particularly in SLA.

4.3.2 The Dynamics of Resilience, Engagement, and Burnout in Teaching

Teacher resilience has been conceptualised as a teacher's way of maintaining teacher wellbeing by using available resources (Hiver, 2018). Resilience is particularly important for teachers, as relationships and caring are at the centre of teaching (Feryok, 2012), and not being able to cope with difficulties might result in demotivation or burnout. Mansfield et al. (2012) identified four key dimensions of teacher resilience: professional, emotional, social, and motivational. The professional dimension involves teaching skills, competencies, and classroom management. The emotional dimension is defined by attributes such as self-confidence and the ability to cope with stress. The social dimension refers to both professional and personal interpersonal skills and connections, illustrating the multifaceted nature of resilience and its positive impact on job satisfaction, engagement (Day & Gu, 2013), and student achievement (Gu & Li, 2015).

Gu and Day (2013) further suggested that daily resilience might equip teachers with the tools to navigate the complexities of their roles, including emotional and intellectual challenges. Studies by Fathi and Saeedian (2020) and Tonekaboni and Nasiri (2022) in Iran and Li (2023) in China, suggested a significant negative correlation between teacher resilience and burnout. This supports the protective role of resilience against stress and emotional exhaustion, as Li (2023) suggested the indirect role of emotion regulation in this dynamic, further linking resilience to burnout prevention.

Moreover, the interplay between resilience and self-efficacy is also crucial, as it has been found that resilience can increase self-efficacy and vice versa (Day, 2008; Mansfield et al., 2012; Razmjoo & Ayoobiyan, 2019). This synergy is important for enhancing teachers' achievements and their capability to engage students effectively. Also, the potential influence of teacher resilience on student resilience implies a broader impact on the learning environment, highlighting the importance of adopting these qualities for both teachers and learners (Parker & Martin, 2009; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

Recent studies further emphasised the significance of resilience in mitigating burnout and enhancing teacher engagement (Xie, 2021; Fathi & Saeedian, 2020; Polat & Iskender, 2018). For instance, Wang and Pan (2023) found that both teacher self-efficacy and resilience can predict work engagement, with self-efficacy being a slightly stronger predictor. This highlights the complex interrelation between self-efficacy, resilience, and engagement, a relationship

further strengthened by Heng and Chu (2023), finding that self-efficacy and resilience can not only contribute directly to work engagement but can also do so indirectly through reflective practices.

Having explored the link between teacher resilience, engagement, and burnout in teaching, particularly within the EFL teaching context, it becomes evident that emotional wellbeing of teachers is critical to professional efficacy and the overall learning experience. This further emphasises the need for support systems that provide support to the emotional demands of the profession, emphasising the development of resilience and emotional regulation to improve teacher wellbeing and the educational environment.

While it is essential to explore these dynamics to better understand the relationship between teacher burnout and engagement, it is also important to consider the implications of diminished teacher engagement, or disengagement. Thus, the following section will discuss the concept of disengagement, examining its relevance and impact within the teaching profession.

4.4   The Concept of Disengagement

The literature on work and teacher engagement highlights its critical importance in psychology and education. Engagement involves one's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social commitment to work, while disengagement indicates distancing from these aspects (Kahn, 1990). Kahn (1990) viewed engagement and disengagement as dynamic states, closely tied to psychological flow, allowing individuals to shift between being engaged and disengaged.

Mackay et al. (2017) defined engagement as an overarching attitude toward one's job, noting variability in worker engagement. They argue that disengagement should not be seen merely as a lack of engagement or a fixed attitude. Even generally engaged workers might occasionally need to distance themselves to navigate challenging situations effectively. This disengagement is typically temporary and not necessarily indicative of a permanent shift in attitude towards their job. It is crucial for maintaining psychological wellbeing and should not be confused with burnout, which is a more severe, enduring state of exhaustion (Maslach et al., 2001). Disengagement can be a temporary, adaptive response, allowing individuals to recharge and preserve their mental health and work performance. In contrast, burnout results from ongoing

workplace stress, characterised by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2001), as discussed in Chapter 2.

Theories such as coping theory (Lazarus, 1993) and the theory of psychological conditions (Kahn, 1990) view disengagement as context-specific, changing over time with various contextual factors (Gillet et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2013). Disengaged workers tend to be less interested in their job and less loyal to their workplaces, experiencing higher stress and job dissatisfaction (Dietz et al., 2010; Heikkeri, 2010). Possible reasons for disengagement include stress, workload, and lack of recognition (Andrews & Kacmar, 2001; Dietz et al., 2010; Heikkeri, 2010), similar to the causes of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016b).

Disengagement can have many consequences: disengaged workers often develop negative feelings more frequently than their engaged colleagues and are more likely to experience health problems (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Decreasing levels of engagement can lead to anxiety or depression (Robison, 2010), and as burnout develops, workers can experience emotional exhaustion or cynicism (Maslach et al., 2001). Teachers, particularly language teachers, who consistently encounter challenges and emotional demands in their roles (detailed in Section 3.3), are at risk of experiencing burnout (Acheson et al., 2016). This emotional effect can also lead to disengagement. Thus, the phenomenon of teacher disengagement will be the focus of the following section.

4.4.1 Teacher Disengagement

Several studies have identified student disengagement as crucial in researching motivation in foreign language learning and teaching. While teacher wellbeing, motivation, and engagement are recognised as critical to teaching effectiveness, teacher disengagement remains underexplored. Teacher disengagement can be defined as a temporary state of reduced commitment to everyday tasks and quality teaching, involving cognitive, physical, and emotional distance from work. Though both burnout and disengagement are psychological concepts, they are distinct. Disengagement is seen as a loss of commitment manifesting in cognitive-physical, emotional, and social dimensions (Klassen et al., 2013) (see Section 4.2.1), while burnout is a syndrome from unmanaged workplace stress, characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced professional accomplishment (Maslach, 1993).

Understanding these distinctions in teacher psychology is crucial for developing effective stress management strategies, renewing engagement, and enhancing teacher wellbeing and job satisfaction.

Addressing teacher disengagement and burnout in the teaching profession requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates individual, organisational, and systemic strategies. While disengagement is critical in education, research on its causes and reengagement methods remains limited. Identifying early signs is challenging as teachers might hide their emotions in the classroom (Näring et al., 2006, 2011; Philipp & Schüpbach, 2010), mainly for fear of facing professional consequences (Szabo & Jagodics, 2019). Furthermore, teachers' needs can vary widely; factors disengaging one may not impact another teacher, making a universal solution to disengagement partly ineffective. Additionally, a not supportive or negative school environment can also play a significant role in teacher disengagement and changing organisational cultures would be challenging. Another major factor is the burden of excessive workloads and a poor balance between work and personal life, which can also significantly contribute to disengagement. Addressing this issue without affecting the quality of education can also pose a significant challenge for both teachers and institutions. Moreover, job dissatisfaction can be worsened by ineffective leadership and insufficient administrative support (Okeke & Mtyuda, 2017), which can also lead to disengagement also highlighting the complexity of the problem. Yet, although there has been research on remotivating teachers, offering strategies to maintain and enhance motivation (Falout, 2010), the area of reengagement remains relatively unexplored, particularly in the field of SLA. This gap highlights the need to investigate steps that teachers can take independently as well as with institutional support to address their experiences of disengagement. This might include identifying techniques that can foster reengagement after brief or longer periods of disengagement or even following experiences of burnout.

When examining teacher disengagement, it is crucial to recognise its close relationship with student engagement. The importance of the student-teacher relationship on both individuals and teaching has been discussed previously (Section 3.2.2.5). Alongside motivation and emotional contagion, (dis)engagement is vital within classroom relationships. Disengaged teachers may question their ability to engage students and doubt students' willingness to learn (Washor & Mojkowski, 2013). Lawson and Lawson (2020) identified discrepancies between teachers' expectations and reality as a cause of disengagement, leading to stress, anxiety, and

self-doubt. Teacher disengagement can not only affect teachers but can also impact students. Teachers hold significant positions in students' lives (Falout & Maruyama, 2004). Teacher dedication and engagement enhance student motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) and achievement (Watt & Richardson, 2013), while disengaged teachers can negatively influence students. Positive relationships have been validated by positive psychology studies (e.g., Frenzel et al., 2009), but the negative effects require further exploration in SLA research.

This section has explored work and teacher disengagement, highlighting how they differ from burnout. Literature discussed in this section emphasises the critical importance of teacher engagement and, thus, disengagement, and the need for addressing it in further examinations, not only for the professional and personal wellbeing of teachers but also for its influence on student achievements. The link between the behaviours of teachers and student achievement highlights the need for more research looking into the negative impacts of teacher disengagement, especially in the context of EFL. That is, it is crucial to expand the understanding of these relationships to improve the learning environment and experiences for students which might have positive influence on both teachers and students.

Therefore, to enhance the understanding of teacher engagement and research methodologies on it more in-depth, the following section will present models for examining teacher engagement, focusing on frameworks that have been applied in quantitative and qualitative studies. The models discussed in this section have informed the design of the qualitative approach in this thesis, grounding it in the presented theoretical foundations while also allowing for the exploration of new connections in teacher engagement and burnout as they emerge from the lived experiences of EFL teachers.

4.5 Researching Teacher Engagement

As the demand for examining teacher engagement increases along with student engagement, several scales measuring engagement have been developed. These scales have been widely used for both quantitative and qualitative research, most of which have not been used standalone but in combination with other scales in teacher engagement research. The most frequently used measurement frameworks will be discussed, which are the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and The Engaged Teacher Scale (ETS). They all provide a solid

foundation for both quantitative and qualitative research, underlining their crucial role in exploring various facets of teacher engagement. Following the review of these models, the focus will shift to discuss how various studies have applied qualitative approaches to investigate teacher engagement.

4.5.1   Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), featuring a 17-item questionnaire with subscales for *vigour, dedication,* and *absorption*, has been essential in assessing work engagement across various professions, including teaching (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Vigour encompasses energy and resilience, dedication involves deep enthusiasm and involvement, while absorption is characterised by total immersion in work tasks. Despite its broad application, the UWES has been adapted for specific contexts, particularly in education, to measure teacher engagement through reflecting high energy, meaning in work, and deep focus. Studies across different countries, including Moyano et al. (2023) in Spain, Yi-Wen and Yi-Qun (2005) in China, and Simbula et al. (2013) in Italy, have validated the reliability of the scale and teacher engagement negative correlation with burnout, highlighting its global applicability in researching teacher engagement. However, the reliance of the scale on self-reporting and potential dimensional overlap have prompted critiques, as this framework fails to account for social engagement, which involves a significant investment in maintaining relationships, which is particularly unique to the teaching profession (Pianta et al., 2012; Klassen et al., 2013). This gap led to the development of an alternative measure by Klassen et al. (2013) to better capture teacher engagement, highlighting its critical role in enhancing teacher engagement research which will be discussed in the following.

4.5.2   The Engaged Teacher Scale (ETS)

In response to the weaknesses of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and its potential to overlook the social dimension of teaching, Klassen et al. (2013) developed a new measurement scale based on their conceptualisation (see 4.2.1). This context-specific questionnaire consisted of 27 items related to three dimensions: cognitive-physical, emotional, and social. Emotional engagement reflects a teacher's enthusiasm for their work (e.g., "I am excited about teaching"),

cognitive-physical engagement denotes effort, energy, and resilience (e.g., "I try my hardest to perform well while teaching"), and social engagement pertains to connections with colleagues (e.g., "At school, I connect well with my colleagues") and students (e.g., "In class, I show warmth to my students") (Klassen et al., 2013).

Since its first application, the scale has been the basis for numerous studies. It correlates with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, linking its emotional dimension to dedication, and cognitive-physical dimension to vigour, absorption, and self-efficacy. Piloting indicated the need to separate the social dimensions (students and colleagues) due to their distinct roles in teacher engagement. A shortened 16-item version with separated social factors has been effective in further studies. Yerdelen et al. (2018) confirmed its validity in Turkey, linking higher self-efficacy to greater job engagement, while Perera et al. (2018) found emotional and social engagements contribute to job satisfaction in Australian schools. The Engaged Teacher Scale (ETS) has been adapted globally, with Ho et al. (2021) validating its use in China.

Studies across various countries (e.g., Yerdelen et al., 2018 in Turkey; Ho et al., 2021 in China; Deng et al., 2022 in Iran) demonstrate the framework's efficacy in exploring teacher engagement, especially its social and emotional dimensions. This framework aids in measuring engagement levels and understanding engagement drivers, crucial for enhancing teacher wellbeing and student performance. However, the ETS's reliance on self-reporting may introduce biases, as teachers might misjudge their engagement levels. Despite this, the distinct dimensions (cognitive-physical, emotional, social-students, social-colleagues) provide a robust basis for educational research. Incorporating qualitative methods, like interviews, could enrich this approach by offering deeper insights into how negative factors affect engagement. The benefit of qualitative research in this context, discussed in Section 4.5.3, highlights its significance in investigating engagement during burnout.

This section reviewed two instruments for assessing teacher engagement: the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and the Engaged Teacher Scale (ETS), each offering unique insights into teacher engagement. Although these instruments are valid in various contexts, a single approach may not capture the nuanced dynamics between teacher engagement and burnout. This suggests the need for qualitative approaches to explore these complexities further, especially in EFL education regarding re-engaging teachers after burnout. These

frameworks, therefore, support broadening research through qualitative methodologies, which will be discussed in the next section.

4.5.3 Qualitative Approaches to Researching Teacher Engagement

The previous section introduced two models that are predominantly, though not solely, used in quantitative research for assessing teacher engagement, highlighting their significance in education and EFL teaching. This section will explore qualitative methodological strategies for examining teacher engagement. Qualitative methods seek to offer in-depth understanding of teacher engagement, with a focus on exploring the relationship between burnout and its effects on teacher engagement, complementing the insights gained from quantitative research. Interviews, for instance, can offer a more in-depth exploration of teacher engagement, as demonstrated in the study of Shokunbi (2016). This research investigated the antecedents of work engagement among teachers from eight secondary schools in Nigeria. The findings highlighted the diverse experiences of teacher engagement and identified six key factors influencing it: passion for teaching, access to necessary materials, the work environment, supportive relationships among staff, opportunities for training and development, and compensation. Interviews proved to be providing findings of personal and professional nuances of teachers' experiences, revealing factors influencing teacher engagement that could be dependent on the specific context and culture.

Another study, by Zou et al. (2024) explored teacher engagement within a college setting, applying a series of interview questions designed to investigate the impact of environmental and individual factors on teacher engagement China. Focusing on a variety of subject teachers, this qualitative research uncovered the behavioural mechanisms underlying the teaching engagement of Chinese college teachers. It was discovered that such engagement behaviours stem from specific intentions influenced by three main factors: the values associated with teaching engagement, the perceived expectations from significant others, and the professional knowledge and ability to teach, all interacting in various ways. These experiences, in turn, influenced their intentions towards teaching engagement. These finding also highlighted several insights that might not have been captured through quantitative surveys, emphasising the various experiences of teaching engagement among college faculty in China.

Although the majority of engagement research, in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, focuses on general education, there are a few within the context of EFL. For instance, Xie's (2021) study highlighted the significance of applying interviews to achieve a deeper comprehension of Chinese EFL teachers' perspectives on teaching engagement. This approach effectively complemented traditional quantitative measures, such as the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), the Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), offering a more holistic view of teacher engagement by integrating findings with quantitative data. The responses from interviews uncovered both extrinsic and intrinsic factors that might influence teaching engagement while the analysis also highlighted that both personal and job resources can serve as predictors of teaching engagement.

The examples of qualitative research on teacher engagement illustrate its effectiveness as a methodological approach for exploring teacher engagement across various contexts, highlighting its value. Specifically, the experiences of EFL teachers may be more accurately captured through spoken words than through quantitative surveys, indicating the value of qualitative methods in researching EFL teacher engagement, disengagement, and burnout. Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that qualitative research has also limitations, for instance, it requires significant time and data (through interviews, focus group discussion or observations). The subjectivity in qualitative data analysis encourages rigorous procedures to ensure the credibility of findings. To address some of the limitations of qualitative methods, the issue of researcher reflexivity will be addressed in the next chapter.

This section has reviewed various instruments and methodologies that are currently used in research on teacher engagement, including The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and The Engaged Teacher Scale (ETS), as well as qualitative research methods. Given these examples, qualitative methods might serve effective in examining how EFL teacher burnout can affect the various aspects of teacher engagement. By focusing on the qualitative aspects of teacher engagement, the thesis can aim to complement the frameworks previously discussed (4.5), this holistic approach may contribute to a better understanding of the factors contributing to teacher engagement and burnout, particularly in the context of teaching EFL teaching, where contextual variables can also play a significant role (as it has been discussed in Chapter 3). Thus, the incorporation of qualitative methods in this current study can not only enrich the research findings but might also highlight the complexity of teacher engagement and the

multifaceted influences of burnout, thereby contributing to the development of more effective mechanisms for promoting teacher wellbeing and engagement in education.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed work engagement and with a focus on EFL teacher engagement and its link to burnout, exploring both quantitative and qualitative research tools. Despite advancements in understanding teacher resilience, engagement, and burnout, research revealed a critical gap: the complex interplay between burnout and engagement, particularly how teachers maintain engagement during burnout, which aspects are most affected, and the reengagement process post-burnout.

Thus, the current research, detailed in the next chapter, aims to enrich the literature on teacher engagement and burnout by employing a qualitative approach through the lens of Klassen et al. (2013). This study will examine EFL teachers' experiences in Hungary, specifically their perceptions of burnout and engagement fluctuations.

Central to this thesis are three research questions focused on the impact of burnout on various engagement dimensions (cognitive-physical, emotional, social), the broader emotional experiences of teachers during burnout, coping with burnout and reengagement post-burnout. By investigating the challenges and coping mechanisms of EFL teachers, this thesis intends to deepen the understanding of the dynamics between teacher engagement and burnout within the Hungarian EFL context, the methodology of which will be discussed in the following chapter.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have highlighted the importance of understanding teacher burnout and engagement, both in general education and specifically in language teaching. This chapter will discuss the methodology applied in this investigation, laying the groundwork for an in-depth exploration of these phenomena based on three main research questions:

RQ1a: How does teacher burnout variously impact the dimensions of engagement (i.e., cognitive-physical, emotional, and social)?

RQ1b: Among the dimensions of teacher engagement (cognitive-physical, emotional, social), which is most adversely affected by burnout, and are there any dimensions that remain unaffected or are potentially positively influenced by burnout?

RQ2: How do the immediate and cumulative emotional effects of stress and burnout influence teachers?

RQ3: How do EFL teachers cope with burnout, and what techniques do they apply to reengage with their teaching roles post-burnout?

First, I will describe the chosen research approach—qualitative—and provide a rationale for this choice. Then, I will present the details of the exploratory study for this research project before presenting further details regarding the main study, including the teacher participants involved in this study, details on the research instruments and procedures. This will be followed by an explanation of the thematic data analysis applied to examine the data collected.

5.2 Research Approach: Rationale for a Qualitative Approach

This thesis focuses on an in-depth exploration of the critical issue of EFL teacher burnout and its complex interplay with teacher engagement. Such a connection is crucial for understanding teachers' professional lives and their efficacy in the classroom. As outlined in the literature review chapters (Sections 2.3 and 4.5), both qualitative and quantitative research methods have historically contributed to the understanding of teacher burnout and engagement. However, given the multifaceted nature of teacher burnout—including cognitive-physical, emotional, and social dimensions (Klassen et al., 2013)—a qualitative research approach was chosen as most appropriate for this investigation. This decision aligns with Miles et al. (2014), who argue for qualitative methods to capture the nuanced experiences within more naturalistic settings.

A qualitative approach was selected for this study to enable a detailed exploration of the complex phenomena of teacher burnout and its effects on various aspects of teacher engagement, coping mechanisms, and reengagement techniques. Flick (2007) emphasised the effectiveness of qualitative research in exploring social phenomena in real-world contexts. Qualitative research is valuable for uncovering in-depth insights into individuals' perceptions and experiences, allowing participants to articulate their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours in their own words (Flick, 2007). Thus, to examine the complexity of teacher burnout, a qualitative approach can not only support the exploration of its nature but its impacts on teacher engagement as well as coping and reengagement from the perspectives of teachers who have experienced this psychological syndrome.

Thus, to explore the complex relationship between teacher burnout and engagement, this study applied semi-structured interviews. This method strikes an optimal balance between structured examination and the flexibility needed to uncover emerging themes (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021), allowing for the collection of findings that can shed light on the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of teacher engagement.

However, applying qualitative research comes with its own set of challenges. The diversity inherent in qualitative methodologies can make it challenging to ensure a standardised set of quality assurance measures (Flick, 2007). Elliot et al. (1999) and Barbour (2001) argued for adopting method-specific standards that respect the unique theoretical and methodological needs of each study. These standards are essential not only for maintaining research integrity

but also for addressing the ethical considerations of qualitative approaches. Flick (2007) emphasised that ethical integrity and research quality are closely linked, suggesting that high-quality research validates the participants' investment of time and their sharing of personal experiences. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasised trustworthiness in qualitative research, highlighting credibility as its core aspect. They suggested enhancing credibility through:

- **Prolonged Engagement and Persistent Observation** involving in-depth and continuous engagement in the field, as well as the use of various methods, researchers, and data sources for 'triangulation', to ensure comprehensive and reliable results.

- **Peer Debriefing**, engaging in regular discussions with individuals outside the research project to identify potential biases and refine hypotheses and findings through external perspectives.

- **Analysis of Negative Cases**, examining instances that contradict initial assumptions or findings to deepen the analysis and understanding of the research subject.

- **Appropriateness of Interpretations**, ensuring the interpretations and assessments are grounded in the research context and data, maintaining relevance and accuracy.

- **Member Checks** for validating data and interpretations through feedback from participants or members of the field to confirm the accuracy of the findings with their experiences.

Thus, in response to these challenges, this thesis's research has taken measures to respect the contributions of participants and ensure the overall quality of the study based on the points above:

- **Prolonged Engagement and Persistent Observation:** In this research, although each participant was interviewed only once, I ensured prolonged engagement and persistent observation of the context by leveraging my extensive experience working within the Hungarian educational settings. This allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the teacher engagement phenomena during burnout. The studies discussed in Sections 5.3 and 5.4 yielded detailed data and insights into the effects of burnout on teacher engagement through these interviews. This approach provided a comprehensive view of the dynamics between teacher burnout and engagement. While some aspects of triangulation, such as the use of multiple researchers to interpret data, were not fully explored due to the focused nature of this PhD project and resource constraints,

credibility was maintained through diverse data sources and method triangulation, incorporating interviews.

- **Peer Debriefing:** I engaged in regular peer debriefing sessions with fellow PhD candidates and faculty members-supervisors not directly involved in the study. Throughout the research process, regular supervision meetings and reviews informed the research design and methodology, as well as to discuss and refine data collection and analysis processes. These sessions were invaluable for challenging my assumptions, providing alternative interpretations of the data, and refining my analysis.

- **Analysis of Negative Cases:** Throughout the analysis, I actively sought out and examined negative cases—instances that contradicted my initial assumptions or common patterns of teacher burnout and engagement, i.e., if burnout and engagement can coexist. This was crucial for deepening my understanding and providing a deeper analysis of how burnout can affect teacher engagement.

- **Appropriateness of Interpretations:** I ensured the appropriateness of interpretations by grounding my analysis firmly in the data collected and by continuously reflecting on the theoretical framework that underpins the study, i.e., the multidimensional framework of Klassen et al. (2013) (Section 4.2.1). Regular discussions with my supervisors about my interpretations and a careful process of data coding and theme development were applied with regularly revisiting the data to check that the interpretations remained consistent with the teachers' experiences. helped to ensure that they were not only supported by the data but also relevant and meaningful within the EFL context in secondary education.

- **Member Checks:** Member checks were not conducted with participants, as it was not feasible to engage all participants in this process due to time constraints and the practical challenges of scheduling follow-up meetings. However, to improve the trustworthiness of the study in the absence of member checks, a substantial description of the settings and participants was provided (see Section 5.4.1; Appendix C).

The research was designed to emerge findings with practical applications in EFL teaching in secondary education, as it will be detailed in Chapter 10. Furthermore, a participant-centred approach was adopted, offering flexible interview scheduling and formats (in person or online) to ensure participants' comfort and willingness to share their experiences (see Section 5.4.2.2).

Aligning with Flick (2007), this approach can enhance the depth and quality of the data collected.

Ethical considerations—such as data protection, minimising harm, and maintaining participant privacy—were integrated into the research process (see Section 5.4.4) as key indicators of quality (Flick, 2007). These measures are crucial for addressing potential ethical dilemmas that might arise from collecting detailed personal experiences, such as those involving personal challenges (Gibbs, 2007). To navigate these challenges, a comprehensive informed consent process was provided with the participants (see Section 5.4.3), ensuring a supportive environment for interviews, while being engaged in ongoing reflexivity (see Section 5.4.5) and ensured the confidentiality and respect of participants' experiences. In addition to the comprehensive informed consent process, several steps ensured a supportive environment for interviews. Participants received detailed information beforehand to set clear expectations and alleviate anxiety. Interviews took place in comfortable, private settings to encourage open communication. Initial informal conversations helped build trust, while active listening techniques demonstrated genuine interest. Sensitive questioning attempted to minimise distress as well as confidentiality was maintained by anonymising data and securely storing it with limited access. These steps contributed to addressing the challenges in the design of the study and completing it, thus improving its methodological rigor.

Having discussed some of the strengths and challenges of qualitative approaches, this thesis applied a qualitative methodology, emphasising ethical integrity and methodological rigor, to explore the complex phenomena of EFL teacher burnout and engagement. Through a detailed research design (Section 5.4), ethical measures (Section 5.4.4), and a reflexive research process (Section 5.4.5), this study aims to contribute meaningful insights and implications emerging from experiences of EFL teachers facing burnout, thereby contributing to current and future practices in the field of SLA.

In this thesis the main study was preceded by an exploratory qualitative study. Thus, the details of this exploratory study will be discussed in the next section.

5.3 Exploratory Study

This research commenced with an initial exploratory study designed to explore the dynamics of student-teacher synergy within the context of EFL teacher burnout and engagement in secondary education. Thus, the rationale for including both EFL teachers (n=3) and their students (n=7) was driven by a curiosity to understand the synergy between teachers' experiences of burnout and engagement and how these experiences align with or differ from student perceptions of this within the educational environment. This approach aimed to understand the classroom environment affected by these phenomena.

The exploratory nature of this study was instrumental in uncovering aspects of teacher and student experiences, shedding light on the interplay between teacher burnout and engagement from the perspectives of both teachers and students. A key realisation emerged during this phase: the most compelling insights came from the teachers' experiences of burnout and engagement. This became a turning point, leading to a refinement of the research focus solely towards understanding the complex experiences of teachers.

In addition to illuminating these insights, the exploratory study functioned as a pilot study, facilitating the improvement of the research instruments and methodologies applied in the main study. The findings validated the interview schedule and informed adjustments to the methodology, ensuring that the instruments were tailored to effectively capture the nuanced experiences of teachers navigating burnout. Consequently, this exploratory study served a dual purpose: it acted both as a preliminary investigation into the interconnected experiences of teachers and students and as a strategic pilot study that refined the research direction towards a focused exploration of teacher burnout and engagement from the teachers' perspective.

This section will discuss the details of this exploratory study, including participants, procedures, and implications for the main study—which is the focus of the thesis—highlighting its role in refining the approach to investigating teacher burnout and engagement.

5.3.1 Participants

The exploratory study involved participants, including three secondary school teachers teaching in Hungary, and their students, focusing on language teaching in secondary schools. The teachers (n=3), two from rural areas and one from Budapest, have postgraduate degrees in teaching English as a foreign language, with years of experience ranging from 10 to 30 years. They have faced various levels of demotivation, disengagement and burnout in their careers. Student participants (n=7), over 16 years old and students of each of the three teacher participant, were recommended by these teachers for the interviews for their willingness to participate from different classes taught by teachers. The procedure of this qualitative study will be discussed next.

5.3.2 Procedure

Data collection for the study began in April 2022, following ethical approval. Five secondary school English teachers were invited to participate via email, with three agreeing to join the research. These teachers responded to a social media call for participants. Students were appointed by their teachers (n=9); however, two students were unavailable for interviews. One teacher in Budapest chose a face-to-face interview, while the remaining participants (teachers and students) favoured the online format, despite all being given the option for an in-person interview for which I was willing to travel. Consent documentation (see Appendix F, G) was emailed and signed before conducting the interviews, which were recorded and lasted 40-70 minutes depending on the participant. The discussions, held in Hungarian for comfort and translated into English for analysis, focused on teacher engagement, disengagement, and burnout from the perspectives of teachers and students (for interview prompts see Appendix A1-teacher; A2-students). The interviews were transcribed in Hungarian and then translated into English. By June 2022, transcripts and translations were prepared for thematic analysis, detailed in the Data Analysis section.

5.3.3 Data Analysis

The study used thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) inductive approach, to analyse data (described in full in Section 5.4.5) from interviews translated from Hungarian to English. This process involved six steps: transcribing and translating interviews, generating initial codes, grouping codes into themes, checking and mapping themes, naming themes, and conducting a final analysis to draw conclusions.

By July 2022, the analysis identified four main themes related to teacher burnout, teacher engagement and disengagement. These themes were refined to focus on teachers' and students' perspectives on teacher (dis)engagement and burnout, resulting in detailed insights into the causes, experiences, and effects of teacher disengagement and burnout (for the Coding Scheme, see Appendix B).

Findings from the initial study uncovered significant observations, particularly that teachers can show signs of engagement while simultaneously experiencing burnout. This finding challenges the conventional understanding of burnout and engagement and their interplay, which, for example according to Schaufeli et al. (2006), these two phenomena might not be coexisting. Contrary to this, evidence from the study aligns with other research (Timms et al., 2012; Salmela-Aro et al., 2019) indicating that teachers can undergo both simultaneously, highlighting this as an underexplored area.

5.3.4 Implications for the Main Study

As discussed above, the initial study, positioned as an exploratory and pilot study, was critical in developing a focused and relevant research design for the main study. The findings ensured that the research instruments were well-suited to capturing the complexities of teacher burnout and engagement, setting a solid foundation for the subsequent phases of the study. By drawing on what was learned from the exploratory phase, the research was able to investigate the phenomena of teacher burnout and engagement more deeply.

This study was originally conceptualised as an investigation aimed at exploring two primary dimensions: the dynamics of student-teacher synergy within the context of burnout and the

manifestation of teacher/student engagement and disengagement in classroom settings. The intent was to understand these phenomena better in the context of EFL secondary education, exploring the interconnectedness of teacher and student experiences in the EFL classroom. However, during this study, a few reasons emerged for a shift to focus exclusively on teachers' experiences. First of all, preliminary findings highlighted the complexity of burnout among EFL teachers. Also, despite the initial aim to explore both engagement and disengagement across teachers and students, the data revealed patterns of engagement among teachers, even during burnout experiences, as discussed earlier. Although this finding is not entirely new to the literature, it still remains an underexplored area, particularly within the context of secondary education EFL teaching. This gap highlighted the need for a more thorough and focused investigation. Therefore, focusing on solely teachers' experiences allowed for a more in-depth exploration within the scope of the study's resources and timelines.

This focus on teachers' experiences is arguably significant to the field. While the student-teacher dynamic is undoubtedly a critical and under researched area, especially in the context of burnout, the unique challenges and resilience of EFL teachers in secondary education demanded immediate and concentrated attention. Understanding these aspects can contribute significantly to developing targeted support systems and interventions for teachers. Regarding the decision not to allocate word space for a discussion of the findings of this exploratory study in the thesis, it was a strategic choice to maintain a clear and concise narrative. The detailed examination of teacher burnout and engagement required an extensive analysis, which, if combined with an in-depth discussion of findings, could weaken the focus and clarity of the thesis.

Given these reasons, the decision was made to develop the initial interviews not as an end but as a springboard for the next phase of research. This turn meant refining the scope of the study to examine the experiences of teachers with their engagement during burnout. Consequently, the findings emerging from the initial phase were instrumental in designing the methodology and focus of the main study. This refined design allowed for an in-depth investigation into the impacts of burnout on teachers and their engagement, their broader emotional experiences, and the ways they attempt to cope with and reengage after burnout. The following sections will discuss the details of the main study methodology.

5.4   Main Study

The previous section discussed the details and implications of the exploratory study, which significantly shaped the direction of the main study. Consequently, the main study was designed to examine the phenomenon of teacher burnout and its consequences on teacher engagement, specifically investigating which aspects—i.e., cognitive-physical, emotional, social-colleagues, and social-colleagues (Klassen et al., 2013)—are most and least impacted by burnout. Additionally, the study also examined the broader emotional experiences of teachers during burnout. It also sought to understand the mechanisms teachers apply to manage burnout and the pathways they might follow to reengage with their profession after experiencing burnout. This section will discuss the methodology applied in the main study, including participants, research instruments, procedural steps, ethical considerations, and the approach to data analysis.

5.4.1   Participants

This research specifically focuses on teacher burnout and engagement in secondary schools in Hungary. The participants in this study consisted of secondary school teachers teaching the English language in various locations throughout the country.

Thirty-one teachers volunteering for the interview study were from different parts of the country; sixteen of them were from the capital city, Budapest and fifteen of them were from other Hungarian towns/villages (See Figure 1 and Table 1).

Figure 1: Participants on Map

Region in Hungary	Participants
Budapest (capital city)	Grace, Julia, Mia, Emma, Emily, Lily, Naomi, Luke, Madison, Alice, Nora, Mary, Michelle, Audrey, David, Amelie
Northern Transdanubian region	Anna, Molly
Western Transdanubian region	Vera
Southern Transdanubian region	Kate
Southern Great Plain region	Rose, Brandon, Ava
Northern Great Plain region	Valerie, Lucy, Stella
Central Hungary region	Diana, Bella, Kay
Northern Hungary region	Evelyn, Aaron

Table 1: Participants from Different Regions of Hungary

In this research, various factors impacting teachers' experiences will be explored, with a focus on the general challenges faced by teachers regardless of their location. Teachers across different contexts encounter similar difficulties, and while specific challenges may vary, the fundamental issues often remain consistent. For example, selective admission practices in competitive schools can influence classroom dynamics, with students in these schools often being more uniformly advanced in subjects such as English. This can reduce the occurrence of mixed proficiency levels within a class, thus streamlining the teaching process (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Goodpaster et al., 2012). Conversely, in areas with smaller student populations, classes may combine students of varying English proficiency, requiring teachers to address a broader range of needs and potentially increasing their stress levels (Hossain, 2016). These challenges, while manifesting differently, highlight the universal need for adaptable and responsive teaching strategies to manage diverse educational environments effectively.

However, there might be less support available countryside, which can result in professional isolation (Monk, 2007). Furthermore, in Budapest, teachers have more opportunities to take part in training and participate in workshops, and to get to know colleagues from near and far, to build relationships, an opportunity that is still rather limited in the countryside, almost unachievable outside of certain large rural cities. It can be mainly because of physical distance for those who work far from training facilities (Rude & Brewer, 2003; Weitzenkamp et al.,

2003). This could also further worsen the chances of recovering from burnout for those teachers who could reengage themselves with professional development.

The difference in gender is prominent, as only four of the thirty-one teachers are men (13% of the participants). This phenomenon is not unique to this research but reflects a broader trend within the Hungarian education system, where teaching has traditionally been a profession that attracts more women. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics highlighted in 2020 that approximately 70% of secondary school teachers in Hungary were women, underscoring the profession's appeal to female teachers similarly to other countries (Worldbank, UNESCO, 2020).

Various factors contribute to this gender imbalance in teaching. One possible reason for the predominance of female teachers could be the inherent appeal of teacher training programmes to women. A study in education across Central-European countries, including Hungary, explored the possible reasons behind the predominance of female teachers in Central European schools, attributing it to historical gender roles, economic factors, work-life balance preferences, persistent gender stereotypes, and the societal undervaluing of the teaching profession (Hanesová, 2015). The research highlighted that the feminisation of teaching is deeply rooted in societal norms that associate caring roles with women, coupled with economic disincentives for men. Men often face economic disincentives in the teaching profession due to relatively lower salaries compared to other professions that require similar levels of education and training. These economic factors might deter men from pursuing careers in teaching, as they may seek higher-paying opportunities in other fields.

Another explanation for the low participation of men could be that male teachers might be less willing to actively participate or apply for qualitative research or are not as active users of the social networks where data collection was reaching out to the participants. Although some studies have examined the correlation between gender and teacher burnout, finding that female teachers might be exposed to more stress than male teachers (e.g., Maslach et al., 2001; Van Dick & Wagner, 2001), no connection has been confirmed between levels of stress/burnout and gender (Evers et al., 2002; Hastings & Bham, 2003). However, the study by Lau et al. (2006) conducted in China showed gender differences in the three dimensions of burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalisation). They found that women appear to experience burnout due to emotional exhaustion and personal

accomplishment in teaching, while men tend to experience personal depersonalisation. Therefore, another reason for the higher proportion of female participation in this study could be that as a result of the effects of burnout women more typically experience, they are more likely to reach out and share their experiences of their burnout journey.

All participants hold postgraduate degrees in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, aside from Rose, Nora, Anna, Vera, Brandon, David and Audrey who have undergraduate degrees in the same subject. These teachers (aside from David) have gained only a few years of experience in teaching so far, which might be the reason why they have not they have not yet sought the opportunity for further education or a master's degree. The participants have between 1 and 33 years of experience in secondary school teaching (See Table 2), including seven teachers who have been teaching for more than three decades in secondary schools.

Years of experience	Participants
0-5 years (early career—early)	Rose (1), Brandon (1), Audrey (2), Vera (4), Nora (5)
6-15 years (mid-career—mid)	Anna (9), Lucy (10), Molly (13), Julia (15), Mia (15), Lily (15), Naomi (15),
16-25 years (mid-career—mid)	Ava (16), Evelyn (16), Bella (18), Valerie (19), Emma (19), Diana (20), Mary (22), David (25), Luke (25)
26-33 years (late-career—late)	Emily (27), Alice (28), Amelie (28), Kay (30), Michelle (30), Kate (30), Grace (31), Aaron (32), Stella (33), Madison (33),

Table 2: Years of Experience

As can be seen in Table 2 above, the teachers who had been teaching for the shortest time but had already experienced burnout were Rose and Brandon, who found themselves in this negative state almost immediately after leaving teacher training. A third of the participants (n=10) have more than 26 years of experience, but at the same time, they mostly encountered burnout currently or in recent years— according to their self-disclosures.

All of the teachers were asked and based on self-assessment, reported experiencing burnout at least once during their career. Many of the teachers have experienced burnout a couple of times, however, not all of them have managed to recover from it yet (see Table 3). Those teachers who have already recovered from burnout experienced burnout not longer than six years before the interviews. This timeframe suggests that these teachers might have a vivid memory of their burnout period, allowing them to reflect upon and share their experiences and recovery processes (e.g., Arvidsson et al., 2019). Particularly, knowing that they have overcome the condition, might provide valuable findings on the mechanisms of burnout recovery.

15 teachers of 31 admitted experiencing burnout currently, of whom two have experienced it more than once. Sixteen teachers have recovered from burnout and looked back from the perspective of one or two years, two or three years, four or five years and more than five years. Most teachers had already recovered from burnout or were in the middle of the recovering process at the time of the interviews. Three of the teachers, however, were still suffering from the effects of burnout and have not yet started to recover from it. Thus, participants were grouped into three groups based on their self-reflection: teachers currently experiencing burnout, teachers currently recovering from burnout and teachers reportedly recovered from burnout (see Table 3).

Current phase of burnout	Participants	Example
Currently experiencing burnout	Mia, Rose, Brandon	"That's what I'm in right now" (Mia) "I'm extremely tired all the time, I can't prepare as much as I'd like to, I'm exhausted, I feel like it is burnout." (Rose)
Recovering	Julia, Stella, Emma (experienced burnout more than once), Emily, Lily (experienced burnout more than once), Naomi, Luke, Ava,	"Now I'm feeling much better now and started to enjoy teaching the lessons again." (Julia) "There are many reasons why someone might burn

	Madison, Kay, Evelyn, Bella, Vera, Audrey, Amelie, Diana	out, but one common cause I see, especially among my colleagues, is the overwhelming workload. I experienced this myself, but it's better now for me." (Naomi)
Recovered (years ago)	Molly (4-5 years), Grace (1-2 years), Valerie (4-5 years), Lucy (2-3 years), Alice (more than 5 years), Nora (2-3 years), Kate (4-5 years), Aaron (4-5 years), Anna (2-3 years), Mary (2-3 years), Michelle (4-5 years), David (1-2 years)	"There was a period in 2017-18 that was very difficult. I just didn't care anymore. I was tired, very tired. I can say… I just didn't care about teaching anymore, I just wasn't interested in my work, it was burnout, right?" (Aaron) "Yes, I experienced it. It was it was about 2 years ago. I felt that I wanted to escape from that workplace at all costs, so for me it was the workplace that caused it." (Anna)

Table 3: Participants' Current State of Burnout

While majority of the participants (n=26) reported that they have experienced burnout once during their teaching career, two of them (Kate and Emma) have been through the syndrome twice, and three of them (David, Lily and Grace) have experienced the symptoms of burnout at least three times. Participants initially chose to partake in the study due to their self-identified experiences with burnout, as determined from their responses to the first few questions posed during the interviews (see Section 5.4.2.1). The analysis significantly benefited from their

detailed descriptions of burnout symptoms. Specifically, these descriptions contributed to the comprehensive portrayal of participants—including their positive and negative experiences with teaching and symptoms of their burnout—as outlined in Appendix C. The call for participants specified the need for teachers with experiences of burnout. Based on their self-reported experiences, no participants were excluded from the study, as it was determined that all had encountered burnout to some degree.

5.4.2   Research Instruments

In this qualitative study one-to-one online/in-person interview was the chosen data collection method (see details in Table 4—p. 107-108). Grace, Mia, Emily, Lily, Michelle and Audrey preferred to attend an in-person interview; other teachers chose online platforms (see Table 4 below). The details of the interview schedule and process will be discussed in this section.

5.4.2.1   Development of the Interview Schedule

Building on insights from the Exploratory Study discussed in Section 5.3.4, the interview schedule (Appendix D) was expanded to explore teachers' experiences more in-depth with burnout and engagement. This expanded schedule also included the three teachers who participated in the initial exploratory study. The exploratory study showed that teachers could experience both engagement and disengagement simultaneously during burnout, challenging traditional views that see burnout and engagement as mutually exclusive (Schaufeli et al., 2006). This insight prompted the inclusion of additional questions to explore different dimensions of teacher engagement and how they are affected by burnout. This approach led to a significant shift, focusing solely on teachers' experiences and perceptions, excluding student data.

For the interviews, 35 pre-written questions were drafted (Appendix D). Of these:
- 18 questions focused on teacher burnout, its effects on various aspects of teacher engagement, and the coping and reengagement techniques applied by teachers.
- 10 questions examined how stress/burnout can influence what teachers choose to engage with or disengage from.

- 7 questions investigated teachers' perceptions of the effects of stress/burnout, including its impact on their teaching practices and their students.

The first few questions aimed to understand how teachers assumed that they were experiencing burnout, as this was a criterion for participant selection (see Section 5.4.1). These questions, along with others on engagement and disengagement, were informed by the Exploratory Study and the multidimensional engagement framework of Klassen et al. (2013), which addresses cognitive-physical, emotional, and social engagement aspects—divided into two distinct categories: social-colleagues and social-students. Although the framework focuses on the measurement of teacher engagement with a scale, the 27 questions presented in the Engaged Teacher Scale (ETS) gave the basis for further questions which could be linked with burnout (which scale has been detailed in Section 4.5.2).

The construction of the interview guide for exploring teacher engagement, as based on the Engaged Teacher Scale (ETS), proceeded through several steps. Initially, a detailed review of the ETS was undertaken to identify core themes of engagement: cognitive-physical, emotional, and social (both students and colleagues). This review aimed to understand engagement in a comprehensive manner. The identification of these themes informed the development of open-ended questions. These questions were designed to capture teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding their engagement in their roles during burnout, shifting the focus from quantitative to qualitative insights. The approach was influenced by the multidimensional framework of Klassen et al. (2013) (Section 4.2.1), guiding the exploration of teacher engagement and its fluctuations during burnout experiences.

The questions were designed to align with the aims of the study, focusing on the complex relationship between engagement and burnout, including personal experiences with these phenomena, coping and reengagement, i.e., the impact of engagement on burnout recovery.

5.4.2.2 Interview Process (online and in person)

The study conducted the research mostly through Skype with voice recording with participants who did not prefer to take part in person, while some of the participants (Michelle, Lily, Emily, Mia, Grace and Audrey) chose in-person meetings. While all teachers were offered to have the interviews in person, due to practicality, only some of the teachers from the capital city took

the in-person opportunity. The primary benefit of online meetings is that participants can join the discussion from the comfort of their own homes, even when there is an option for an in-person visit at a place of their choice. Therefore, internet-based interviews can be particularly beneficial with those participants who might be difficult to contact in person due to physical distance (Fielding et al., 2008). The opportunity offered to choose the format of the interview (online or in person) can also result in reaching more potential participants for the research (Neville et al., 2016; Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021). All of the participating teachers were extremely busy at beginning of the school year, so they all appreciated being offered the opportunity of meeting online at the time of their convenience, instead of travelling to a meeting place. Both online and face-to-face meetings were voice recorded for later analysis.

5.4.3   Procedures

The data collection for this study started in October 2022. After receiving ethical approval from the University of Nottingham, participants who had previously participated in the exploratory study were invited for second-round interviews. These three participants (Valerie, Lucy, and Kay) agreed to participate, and their involvement in both the exploratory and main study interviews required careful consideration to ensure the validity of the data collected. The second-round interviews included additional questions that explored various aspects of teacher engagement, going beyond the scope of the initial exploratory study.

It is important to note that the two sets of interviews with these participants served different purposes. The first set of interviews, conducted during the exploratory phase, aimed to gather broad insights into the experiences of both teachers and students regarding burnout and engagement, with a particular focus on teacher-student dynamics. The second set of interviews, conducted for the main study, built upon the earlier insights but focused exclusively on the more specific aspects of teacher burnout and engagement from the teacher's perspective. This deeper exploration enabled a more detailed understanding of the participants' experiences.

To minimise any influence the initial interview experience might have had on the data collected during the main study, several measures were taken. The questions in the second interviews were carefully designed to expand on themes from the exploratory study without simply repeating previous inquiries. Moreover, the second interviews did not repeat the same content

as the first but rather built upon it. These new questions targeted specific dimensions of teacher burnout and engagement, allowing participants to reflect on more nuanced aspects of their experiences.

The inclusion of these participants in both the exploratory and main study did not compromise the validity of the findings. On the contrary, their previous participation allowed them to engage more deeply with the topics during the second interview, which may have resulted in richer data. The insights gained from these follow-up interviews were essential in refining the focus of the study and ensuring a comprehensive exploration of teacher burnout and engagement. Meanwhile, the first-round interviews from other participants (n=28), who were new to the study, were incorporated into the main dataset. These participants responded to a call advertised on a social media platform and met the criteria of actively teaching English as a foreign language in a Hungarian public secondary school and having experienced burnout at least once during their career.

Given that most of the interviews (n=26) were conducted in Hungarian, the translation process required careful and methodical attention to ensure both linguistic accuracy and the preservation of nuanced meanings. The first step in this process involved the transcription of the interviews, which was carried out in two phases. Initially, the interviews were transcribed using the speech recognition software Alrite. Although this tool is widely used, the initial transcriptions required manual checking and corrections due to errors common in speech recognition software. Once the Hungarian transcripts were finalised, the translation process began.

For the translation, a two-step approach was implemented to enhance accuracy. First, DeepL Translator was used to generate initial English translations. However, recognising the limitations of machine translation, particularly in capturing the cultural and contextual nuances of Hungarian educational terminology, these translations were manually reviewed and refined. This process involved a bilingual expert—a secondary school English teacher with over 20 years of experience in the Hungarian education system—who carefully reviewed key excerpts to ensure they accurately reflected the original Hungarian context.

The complexity of some Hungarian expressions required additional attention. For example, 'kivételezett tanárok', which directly translates to 'exceptional teachers,' posed a challenge.

Through consultation with the bilingual expert, it was determined that 'teachers with special status' was a more appropriate translation, as it captured the nuanced meaning related to specific working conditions or recognition these teachers experience in Hungary's educational landscape.

Key terms such as 'teacher engagement', translated into Hungarian as 'tanári elkötelezettség,' also presented challenges due to the nuanced differences in meaning between commitment, dedication, and engagement in both languages. In addressing these, consultations were made with relevant scholarly literature (e.g., Kovács & Kovács, 2012), as well as bilingual dictionaries and the bilingual expert mentioned above, to ensure the most accurate terms were chosen. This multi-layered approach ensured that both the linguistic and cultural nuances of the original Hungarian interviews were preserved, safeguarding the integrity of the data. The combined use of speech recognition software, machine translation, and expert review supported the reliability of the translated texts, allowing for an authentic representation of the participants' experiences and enhancing the rigor of the qualitative analysis.

While the recruitment of teachers was ongoing on several internet platforms, eight of the teachers who desired to participate withdrew due to lack of time or decided not to participate in the research after all. Consequently, this slowed down the process of data collection, but at the same time, a few applicants applied later, before the end of data collection, thereby increasing the number of participants from the original 28 to 31, which became the final number of participants in this research. Teachers received the documentation required for consent, including the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix G), Consent Form (Appendix F), and Full Privacy Notice for Participants via emails before the interviews started. After the consent forms were signed and returned, the video chat/face-to-face conversations took place. At the beginning of the interviews, the participating teachers were informed again about the research and its purpose and were able to get answers to all of their questions.

The interviews each took between 45-90 minutes with each teacher, which were voice recorded (mean interview time = 61.5 min). Most of the interviews (n=26) were conducted in Hungarian (except for the interviews with Emma, Luke, Mary, Audrey, and David). Although all teachers can speak English at a high level, the majority felt more comfortable discussing burnout in their native language, thus fostering a more personal, direct conversation. For the 26 interviews conducted in Hungarian, the transcription and translation followed a two-step process to ensure

accuracy. The full transcript was created in Hungarian first and then translated into English. The table below (Table 4) provides details of the word count (in Hungarian and English) and the length of each interview.

Interviewee	Word count (Hungarian)	Word count (English)	Length of the interview	Date	Interview	Language of the interview
Molly	1968	2251	45 min	October 2022	online	Hungarian
Grace	6279	6963	72 min	October 2022	in-person	Hungarian
Julia	8318	9877	91 min	November 2022	online	Hungarian
Stella	6315	7152	70 min	October 2022	online	Hungarian
Mia	5424	6096	55 min	October 2022	in-person	Hungarian
Emma	-	3257	50 min	December 2022	online	English
Emily	4645	5132	62 min	October 2022	in-person	Hungarian
Lily	3556	3949	59 min	October 2022	in-person	Hungarian
Rose	5033	5748	61 min	November 2022	online	Hungarian
Naomi	2883	3442	54 min	October 2022	online	Hungarian
Luke	-	8726	89 min	November 2022	online	English
Ava	4340	4846	61 min	October 2022	online	Hungarian
Madison	7292	8110	87 min	November 2022	online	Hungarian
Valerie	2679	3064	53 min	October 2022	online	Hungarian
Lucy	2734	3130	55 min	November 2022	online	Hungarian
Alice	3985	4616	60 min	November 2022	online	Hungarian
Nora	5334	6378	65 min	November 2022	online	Hungarian
Kay	4150	4699	60 min	November 2022	online	Hungarian
Brandon	6201	7111	71 min	October 2022	online	Hungarian
Evelyn	2641	3020	53 min	December 2022	online	Hungarian
Kate	3589	4103	57 min	November 2022	online	Hungarian

Interviewee	Word count (Hungarian)	Word count (English)	Length of the interview	Date	Interview	Language of the interview
Bella	4660	5338	64 min	November 2022	online	Hungarian
Aaron	3287	3685	57 min	November 2022	online	Hungarian
Anna	4258	4800	62 min	December 2022	online	Hungarian
Mary	-	2154	46 min	December 2022	online	English
Michelle	4350	4985	58 min	October 2022	in-person	Hungarian
Vera	4758	5516	63 min	November 2022	online	Hungarian
Diana	6066	7068	68 min	October 2022	online	Hungarian
Audrey	-	2260	45 min	January 2023	in-person	English
David	-	2981	49 min	December 2022	online	English
Amelie	5442	6112	65 min	November 2022	online	Hungarian

Table 4: Interview Details

By the middle of January 2023, the preparation of the transcripts and translations was completed, which were followed by the thematic analysis of the interviews. The process of the analysis will be discussed in detail in the Data Analysis section.

5.4.4 Research Ethics

Participants were informed about the purpose and topic of the research, which was engagement, disengagement and burnout associated with English language teaching and learning. However, of the thirty-eight teachers who originally responded to the invitation, thirty-one decided to participate in the research. All participants had the opportunity throughout the research to withdraw from research participation at any time and they were informed about this opportunity in the participant information sheet and consent forms. Since the focus of the research was on burnout and possible negative experiences related to it, in addition to

anonymity, the participants had the option not to answer certain questions if they did not feel comfortable doing so.

Before the dates were agreed upon and the interviews started, the participants were fully informed of their rights and gave their consent by signing the Consent Form (see Appendix F). In addition to that, all participants received a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix G) which informed them about the research, its aims and risks of taking part and data safety. The audio material was stored on a password-protected computer. To preserve anonymity, during the analysis, participants were given a pseudonym, they will not be called by their own name in the study. The schools from which the participants came were also not named in any part of the research.

5.4.5 Data Analysis

In this study, the data analysis was primarily guided by both inductive and deductive thematic analysis approaches, following the established framework by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019). Inductive thematic analysis is a widely used technique in qualitative research, particularly valued in psychology for its ability to surface patterns, themes, or categories directly from the data set. This approach emphasises the emergence of themes through a close examination of the data itself, rather than imposing pre-existing theoretical frameworks or hypotheses onto the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2017).

The data analysis began with the transcription and translation of interviews from Hungarian to English, with careful attention to preserving the original meanings and expressions conveyed by the participants (see Section 5.4.3). The next stage involved an open coding process—using the software NVivo—, where significant segments of the data were marked and initially categorised based on their content and relevance to the focus of the study. During this stage, significant segments of the data were marked and initially categorised based on their content and relevance to the study's focus.

For instance, one teacher, Amelie, described how increasing workload pressures impacted her ability to focus on her lessons. This excerpt was coded for themes such as "increasing workload stress", "exhaustion", and "difficulty concentrating on lessons", which were later grouped into

the broader theme of "difficulties with keeping attention focused on work", a key aspect of cognitive-physical disengagement (Section 6.2.1.1).

Similarly, another teacher, Evelyn, reflected on how student disengagement and a lack of interest in English affected her emotional connection to teaching. Codes such as "discouragement", "shift from teacher to educator role", and "loss of enjoyment in teaching" were assigned to this excerpt, culminating in the broader theme of "emotional disengagement from teaching" (Section 6.2.2.1).

Teacher	Excerpt	Assigned codes	Theme	Broader Category
Amelie	"The workload that was getting more and more stressful, and I just couldn't concentrate on my lessons that much. I think it was because we all had so much to do so we were less focused."	• Increasing workload stress • Exhaustion • Difficulty concentrating on lessons • Impact of workload on focus	Difficulties with keeping attention focused on work	Cognitive-physical disengagement
Evelyn	"So, I was really discouraged at that time. I had become more of an educator than a teacher, I just couldn't teach anything, because the students didn't pay attention. Because English was the least that they were interested in. I just couldn't enjoy teaching anymore."	• Discouragement • Shift from teacher to educator role • Students' lack of attention • Lack of student interest in English • Loss of enjoyment in teaching	Emotional disengagement from teaching	Emotional disengagement

Table 5: Coding Examples

These examples illustrate how individual codes were grouped into meaningful themes to reflect different forms of disengagement (see Table 5).

Regarding the research questions, the coding process was approached in a structured manner. Initially, a comprehensive coding scheme was developed to address all RQs simultaneously. This holistic approach allowed for a thorough exploration of the data, ensuring that key themes and patterns related to each research question were identified in the first reading of the transcripts.

In subsequent readings, the focus was narrowed to specific research questions. This iterative process involved revisiting the transcripts with particular RQs in mind, looking for more detailed evidence and insights that related to each question individually. By alternating between these broad and focused coding strategies, a nuanced understanding of the data was achieved, allowing for a more robust analysis of each research question. Once initial codes were established, they served as the foundation for grouping related data segments together, ensuring the identification of broader themes that summarised key aspects of the participants' experiences and perceptions. This phase was followed by constant comparison between codes, data segments, and emerging themes to refine and define the thematic structure of the analysis.

For instance, through the iterative process of coding and theme refinement, the codes related to "emotional support", "psychological help," and "journaling" were grouped under the theme "emotional and psychological coping". This theme encapsulated the various strategies teachers employed to manage the emotional and psychological effects of burnout.

The interviews started in October 2022 and by the end of April 2023, all interview materials in this study were broken down into codes and the following main themes were assigned based on the codes, while the analysis was in progress. After the coding (for the list of themes in the coding scheme, see Appendix E), the formed themes were the following: teacher engagement affected by burnout (i.e., cognitive-physical, emotional, social aspects), broader emotional experiences, coping with teacher burnout, and reengagement post-burnout.

Although the majority of the data was analysed inductively to allow for the discovery of unanticipated findings, the study also incorporated a deductive element in the examination of teacher engagement. This aspect of the analysis was informed by the multidimensional

framework of teacher engagement proposed by Klassen et al. (2013) (discussed in Section 5.4.2.1), which categorises engagement into cognitive-physical, emotional, and social (colleagues and students) dimensions. By grouping aspects of teacher engagement according to this established framework, the study aimed to systematically explore these dimensions within the context of the data collected specifically in relation to burnout. This dual approach led to a wide-ranging exploration of the data, where the inductive analysis brought new, data-driven insights, and the deductive analysis allowed for the examination of teacher engagement within a theoretically informed structure.

Since thematic analysis has been widely used in qualitative research, it has been revised and developed since its initial approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2017). While the initial framework has given the basis for qualitative research throughout different disciplines, based on experience a reflexive thematic analysis was developed (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2022, 2023), minimising the probability for misconducted analysis. That it, while themes emerging from data should be based on the collected data only, rather than on the presumptions and ideas formed by the researcher, the authors strengthen the importance of reflexivity. It involves being aware of the researcher's assumptions and biases and being able to reflect on how they can affect the analysis. Transparency in thematic analysis is stated to be essential in order to provide findings with credibility and validity. In their recent paper, Braun and Clarke (2022, p.8-9) articulated the principles of thematic analysis with a reflexive approach in ten key points, summarised as follows:

1. Researcher subjectivity is believed to be a valuable resource for reflexive thematic analysis which should not be considered as an issue.
2. The interpretation of data cannot be entirely objective; however, it can vary in strength, meaning that it can be weaker (i.e., underdeveloped), or stronger, (i.e., rich).
3. Good quality coding is dependent on two processes which are being familiar with the data in detail and, distancing with reflection and leaving space for development.
4. The quality of coding does not rely on the number of coders involved. Effective coding can be achieved by collaborating with various coders, as long as there is reflexivity in the process.
5. Themes are not result of predetermined concepts or presumptions but result of analysing data and emergent codes.
6. Themes are defined as patterns of meaning that focus on a concept or idea, rather than a summary of a topic.

7. Themes are not discovered in the data by the researcher, they are rather produced through systematic analysis, involving personal positioning, and creating an active analysing process.

8. While data analysis is based on theoretical assumptions, the researcher is expected to be aware of their influence.

9. Reflexivity is essential for the researcher to understand and acknowledge biases and assumptions which can impact the analysis, thus, the researcher can "own their perspectives".

10. Data analysis should be considered as an art rather than a science, involving creativity while being supported by a rigorous framework.

In this study, The Engaged Teacher Scale (Klassen et al., 2013) provided a structured framework for understanding teacher engagement, encompassing cognitive-physical, emotional, and social dimensions. This framework guided the analysis, allowing the identification of evidence based on these specific aspects within the data. Consequently, the process of coding and theme development was influenced not only by the raw data but also by the constructs and definitions established by Klassen et al. (2013). This interplay between subjectivity and theoretical frameworks facilitated the identification of themes that were deeply rooted in the data, while also aligning with broader conceptual understandings of teacher engagement and burnout. Such an approach underscores the value of reflexivity in thematic analysis, ensuring that the findings are both credible and meaningful, reflecting a nuanced interpretation of the complex phenomenon of teacher engagement.

Braun and Clarke (2023) also argued that thematic analysis includes multiple techniques rather than a single technique, making it a group of methods. Consequently, it was suggested that there is no universally accepted and standardised approach to thematic analysis, it can differ across various fields and areas of study. The recent paper of Braun and Clarke (2023) on the practice of thematic analysis provided ten recommendations for thematic analysis researchers to produce and report methodologically comprehensible thematic analysis. These include recognising the plurality of thematic analysis, determining fundamental research values and philosophical assumptions, justifying divergences from established practice, and ensuring all methodological procedures and concepts follow the research values and thematic analysis approach. It also highlighted the importance of linking personal reflexivity to analytic practice, being able to distinguish between topic summary and meaning-based interpretative story

conceptualisations of themes, providing a clear overview of themes, and ensuring quality standards and practices aligning with the thematic analysis approach and underlying theoretical assumptions.

In response to the key points mentioned above (Braun & Clarke, 2022), this thesis has implemented measures to ensure the overall quality of the reflexive thematic analysis in the study:

1. **Researcher subjectivity as a resource**: The challenge of balancing personal insights with academic rigor was addressed through reflective peer debriefing (Section 5.2) and the explicit acknowledgment of personal biases (Section 5.4.5.1), turning researcher subjectivity into a transparent component of the analysis. For instance, during interviews with teachers, I noted my own potential biases regarding teacher burnout and engagement based on my previous experiences in education (Section 5.4.5.1). By discussing these biases with peers, I ensured that personal insights enriched rather than distorted the analysis.

2. **Objective interpretation of data**: Recognising the importance of objective interpretation, the study employed a theoretical framework, such as the multidimensional framework of teacher engagement (Section 4.2.1), to critically engage with the data. This framework provided a strong foundation for data interpretation, enhancing the rigor and validity of the analysis, providing a strong foundation for interpreting the varied experiences of teachers facing burnout. For example, using this framework, I could differentiate between teachers who were emotionally engaged yet cognitively-physically exhausted and those who were cognitively-physically engaged but emotionally detached.

3. **Good quality coding**: Maintaining good quality coding was achieved through a balance of immersion in the data and critical detachment. Initial themes were identified through coding, progressing to more focused coding. Regular reflection and consultation with supervisors offered new perspectives and challenged existing ones, ensuring the coding process was both thorough and dynamic.

4. **Quality of coding and coders**: Given that only one coder was involved in this study, the point on the quality of coding and coders did not apply. However, this limitation was acknowledged and addressed through rigorous methodological practices.

5. **Emergence of themes:** To ensure the emergence of themes, patterns were allowed to develop naturally from the data through a rigorous and systematic approach to data engagement and coding. This iterative process, supported by reflexive practices, avoided fitting data into preconceived categories, thereby ensuring the authenticity of the themes. For example, instead of forcing data into pre-existing notions of burnout and coping, themes such as "emotional support", "psychological support" and "personal wellbeing" emerged organically, reflecting the teachers' lived experiences.

6. **Definition of themes**: The definition and refinement of themes were continually reviewed to capture the complex ideas relevant to the research questions. This iterative process ensured that themes were both accurate and meaningful. For instance, the theme "emotional support" in coping with burnout was refined to distinguish between "family support" and "support from colleagues", providing deeper insights into coping with burnout.

7. **Production of themes through analysis:** During the analysis, the multidimensional framework of teacher engagement (Klassen et al., 2013) was adopted as a guiding framework. This approach provided structure while allowing for new insights, demonstrating the flexible yet structured nature of the analysis. For instance, the framework helped contextualise findings within broader theories and concepts, highlighting how factors like emotional contagion, emotional labour and emotional experiences can influence teacher engagement and burnout.

8. **Theoretical assumptions in analysis**: Engaging with the theoretical framework critically throughout the analysis ensured that theoretical assumptions were constantly assessed for their applicability and impact on data interpretation. For instance, while the framework provided a solid basis, the study remained open to the emergence of themes that did not fit neatly within it, such as the broader emotional experiences of teachers during burnout and reengagement techniques post-burnout.

9. **Reflexivity in research**: Reflexivity was enhanced through dialogue with supervisors and peers, embedding reflexive practices within the research methodology. This ongoing engagement ensured that reflexivity was a continuous and integral part of the research process.

10. **Data analysis as an art and science**: Finally, data analysis was approached as both an art and a science. This challenge was met through a flexible yet structured methodology, allowing for creativity within the boundaries of the methodological framework. One example of embracing creativity within the methodological

framework, specifically Klassen et al.'s (2013) multidimensional framework of teacher engagement, was evident throughout the research on teacher engagement and burnout. This framework was pivotal in exploring how teacher engagement is affected by burnout and was integral in examining coping strategies and reengagement techniques post-burnout. By investigating these connections, I could identify which aspects of engagement were most negatively impacted and how this influenced teachers' choices of applying various coping strategies to mitigate burnout and techniques to reengage.

By taking these measures, I acknowledged the biases to maintain the credibility and validity of the research. Yet researching EFL teacher engagement and burnout through a reflexive lens presents a few challenges, including managing and recognising personal biases and assumptions and navigating emotional involvement. Overcoming these challenges required continuous reflection on biases, and the impact of these factors on the research process, supported by strategies detailed above to ensure the authenticity and depth of the research findings. Thus, reflection as a language learner and teacher in Hungary which shaped the research process will be discussed in the next section.

5.4.5.1 Reflection as a Learner/Teacher and Researcher in Hungary

Growing up in Hungary and learning foreign languages, I developed a keen interest in addressing the challenges and questions that might arise in education. During my secondary school years, I observed the stressful lives of teachers, especially since my parents also worked as educators. This exposure highlighted for me the various issues teachers face at work, such as managing large class sizes, dealing with diverse student needs/language levels, and navigating administrative demands, which can have serious consequences. Thus, teacher burnout became a crucial focus for me, especially given that it is currently one of the major problems in the education system, presenting significant challenges to teachers, school leaders, and students.

As a learner and teacher of English as a foreign language in Hungary, I was exposed to the cultural distinctions and values of the Hungarian educational system (see Section 1.4). This cultural sensitivity helped me better understand the current situation of English teachers and education in Hungary. For example, in rural areas, many students might not gain admission to

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prestigious schools in the capital after entrance exams, compelling rural schools and grammar schools to enrol students with weaker abilities or those who do not wish to take the entrance exams. Conversely, students aiming for specific secondary schools must write entrance exams and are assigned schools based on their scores. Consequently, teachers often find themselves dealing with a wide range of abilities and motivations within a single classroom, making it challenging to tailor lessons that engage all students effectively. Additionally, from my personal experiences, the lack of resources and support for teachers in both urban and rural schools can increase these challenges, contributing to higher levels of stress and potential burnout.

When I transitioned from being a student to a teacher, and eventually to a researcher, my assumptions about teaching and burnout evolved significantly. Initially, I assumed that burnout was primarily due to the demanding nature of the teaching profession. However, my experiences and research revealed that the causes of burnout are multifaceted, including lack of administrative support, inadequate resources and personality factors (Section 3.2.1), and the emotions involved in teaching (Section 3.3). Some assumptions, such as the impact of high workloads on teacher stress, proved to be accurate. However, I was surprised to discover the extent to which factors—such as professional development opportunities and peer support could mitigate burnout or play important role in reengagement. These insights challenged my preconceived notions and highlighted the complexity of the issue.

Throughout my PhD study, I had to confront several biases. One such bias was the belief that the engagement of early-career teachers would suffer significantly more during burnout due to their inexperience and the overwhelming nature of the job. Contrary to this assumption, the data revealed that mid and late-career teachers might also experience significant disengagement during burnout. This might be attributed to the cumulative effect of prolonged stress, increased responsibilities, and sometimes a lack of career advancement opportunities. Additionally, my initial scepticism about the effectiveness of peer support networks in coping with burnout was challenged. The data clearly indicated that teachers who received emotional support from their colleagues were better able to cope with burnout. Recognising this, I had to reframe my understanding of how burnout manifests across different career stages, acknowledging that both new and experienced teachers can face unique stressors.

The iterative process of theme development was crucial in ensuring the authenticity of the findings. Rather than forcing data into pre-existing notions of teacher burnout and engagement, themes such as "social isolation in social engagement", "instability in emotional engagement", and "classroom teaching in cognitive-physical engagement" emerged organically. These themes reflected the unique ways teacher engagement can be affected by burnout. For example, "social isolation in social engagement" highlighted how teachers' sense of isolation affected their social interactions at work, a theme that provided deep insights into the importance of collegial support. Similarly, "instability in emotional engagement" revealed how fluctuations in teachers' emotional connections with their work impacted their overall wellbeing. Finally, "classroom teaching in cognitive-physical engagement" illustrated the interplay between engagement and burnout in teaching, offering a more in-depth understanding of how cognitive-physical engagement can be resilient in some cases during burnout.

In conclusion, my personal and professional journey deeply influenced my research approach. The careful interpretation of data, while avoiding predetermined assumptions, was crucial in ensuring the credibility and validity of the research. Engaging deeply with the participants and the transcripts allowed themes to emerge naturally, drawing an authentic picture of teacher burnout and engagement in the Hungarian educational context. This reflexive practice, as well as continuous dialogue with peers and supervisors, ensured a thorough and nuanced understanding of the complex phenomenon of teacher burnout.

The data analysis followed the six steps of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019), moving from transcription to theme identification and interpretation. By using both inductive and deductive approaches, the study was able to capture data-driven insights while also situating them within established frameworks of teacher engagement and burnout (Klassen et al., 2013). Reflexivity, a crucial part of the research process, ensured that my positionality as a researcher was acknowledged, reducing bias and maintaining the integrity of the data (see 5.4.5.1).

5.4.6 Ensuring Reliability and Validity

Ensuring reliability and validity is crucial in qualitative research to establish the trustworthiness of the findings. This study applied Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework for trustworthiness

(as outlined in Section 5.2), which includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, to ensure that the data and findings were both rigorous and reliable.

- **Credibility**: Credibility was established through prolonged engagement, leveraging my prior experience in the Hungarian secondary education system to gain a deep understanding of the research context. Peer debriefing was regularly conducted with PhD colleagues and supervisors, providing external feedback and challenging assumptions. Additionally, negative case analysis was employed, searching for instances that contradicted initial assumptions to deepen the understanding of the research data.

- **Transferability**: To support transferability, rich contextual descriptions of the research setting and participants were provided (see Section 5.4.1; Appendix C), allowing readers to assess whether the findings could be applied to similar contexts.

- **Dependability**: Dependability was achieved by meticulously documenting the research process, including how data were collected, analysed, and interpreted. A reflective journal was kept to track methodological decisions, and regular discussions with supervisors helped ensure consistency and alignment with the research aims.

- **Confirmability**: Reflexivity played a key role in maintaining confirmability. By reflecting on my own biases and assumptions throughout the research process (see Section 5.4.5.1), I was able to minimise their influence on data interpretation. Additionally, an audit trail was maintained, recording coding decisions and theme development to ensure that findings were grounded in the data rather than personal bias.

By adhering to these strategies, this study ensured the reliability and validity of its qualitative findings, aligning with established standards for rigor in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles et al., 2014).

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the research methodology applied in the study. After discussing the research approach—qualitative—and the justification for it, the Exploratory Study and its significance in this research were presented, followed by the details of the methodology of the Main Study, including the 31 participants of the main study project, the research instruments, development of the interview schedule and the interview process (online and in-person). After

discussing research ethics, data analysis was explained, highlighting the importance of researcher subjectivity and thematic analysis reflexivity, which played an important role in the analysis of the present research. The findings and discussions will be presented in the following chapters, answering RQ1 in Chapter 6, RQ2 in Chapter 7 and RQ3 in Chapter 8.

6. CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION—DYNAMICS OF TEACHER BURNOUT AND ENGAGEMENT

6.1 Introduction

Chapters 3 and 4 discussed the existing literature on teacher burnout and engagement, underscoring their importance in the EFL context. This study builds on prior research, which emphasised the crucial role of teacher engagement during burnout challenges (Section 4.3). It investigates the lived experiences of thirty-one secondary school English teachers as they navigate their burnout journeys. This study aims to expand the literature on the interplay of EFL teacher burnout and engagement in secondary school language education by exploring the complexity of the connection between these phenomena as they unfold in the classroom setting. Therefore, this study is structured around three main research questions, as they were previously outlined in Chapter 5. These questions investigate the complex relationship between teacher burnout and engagement. Specifically, how burnout can influence teacher engagement, the mechanisms teachers apply to cope with burnout and reengage themselves after burnout experiences, and how teachers try to conceal their burnout from students, along with the perceived daily and cumulative impacts of these efforts.

This chapter addresses the first of the three research questions, divided into two parts:

RQ1a: How does teacher burnout variously impact the dimensions of engagement (i.e., cognitive-physical, emotional, and social)?

RQ1b: Among the dimensions of teacher engagement (cognitive-physical, emotional, social), which is most adversely affected by burnout? Are there any dimensions that remain unaffected or are potentially positively influenced by burnout?

To answer this two-part question, this chapter will present a thorough analysis and discussion of the results, exploring how teacher burnout can affect teacher engagement.

6.2 Diverse Impacts of Burnout on EFL Teacher Engagement

Teacher engagement is a positive mental state characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption, encompassing energy, enthusiasm, and concentration (Schaufeli et al., 2002, 2010). It is essential for motivation in education and manifests physically, emotionally, and cognitively (Saks, 2008; Schaufeli et al., 2006). Based on Klassen et al. (2013), this study expanded the traditional engagement framework by adding a social dimension to the analysis (Section 4.5.2), enhancing the understanding of how burnout impacts teacher engagement. In alignment with the framework introduced, this analysis will categorise the social aspect into two distinct groups: social-colleagues and social-students (as detailed in Section 5.4.2). This section, thus, focuses on understanding how burnout can influence teacher engagement dimensions, identifying the most vulnerable and potentially resilient aspects and those which might be unaffected during burnout experiences.

6.2.1 Cognitive-Physical Aspect of Teacher Engagement

Klassen et al. (2013) describe cognitive-physical engagement as the level of effort and energy teachers invest in their work, encompassing aspects such as attention, intensity, and performance. This engagement is crucial for teacher productivity and satisfaction, yet burnout can significantly affect these efforts and commitment (Farber & Miller, 1981). Among the thirty-one teachers in this study, those experiencing burnout, in recovery, or recovered, twenty-eight reported that burnout adversely impacted their cognitive-physical engagement. Compared to other facets of engagement during burnout, such as emotional and social, this aspect was predominantly affected negatively. This section will explore these consequences reported by teachers, including diminished focus, loss of interest in teaching, reduced lesson planning effort, disengagement from additional responsibilities, and changes in teaching methods and classroom engagement. Despite these setbacks, some teachers still found classroom teaching to be a source of engagement, highlighting the complex relationship between burnout and cognitive-physical engagement in teaching.

6.2.1.1 Difficulties Keeping Attention Focused on Work

Among the twenty-eight teachers who reported changes in cognitive-physical engagement, nine struggled specifically with maintaining their focus on teaching or preparing for lessons. Alice and Molly, both experienced teachers, who recovered from burnout around 4 years ago, reported that although they were trying to cover up these changes, they were sure that they were not always able to keep their attention on their job:

> "I think I just wasn't concentrating that much on the lessons. I was there, I was trying to teach, but I wasn't really trying to make it creative or enjoyable." (Alice)

> "Well, yes. I think I was just less focused. I have always loved teaching, but then I couldn't focus on teaching than before or now. You know, I was a little more scattered, less prepared. That's what I remember." (Molly)

While they are among those teachers who have experienced the changes during burnout and can see the differences between the burnt-out and the recovered state, their reflection suggests that they are more focused and engaged with their work in the current, recovered state.

Diana (mid) and Amelie (late) are still suffering from the effects of burnout but are reportedly recovering now. They are also trying to hide that they are struggling with exhaustion and constant negative feelings caused by burnout, however, they admitted that they cannot be always focused on their lessons which can sometimes result in disregarding what is happening in the classroom:

> "I didn't pay attention to the kids' reactions, if they understood anything of what we were learning. I was scattered and kept forgetting things or simply I just didn't pay attention to them." (Diana)

> "The workload that was getting more and more stressful, and I just couldn't concentrate on my lessons that much. I think it was because we all had so much to do so we were less focused." (Amelie)

The reflection of Naomi (mid) on her situation also illustrates how burnout could diminish her capacity to engage fully in her teaching responsibilities. As she noted, she "can't concentrate on what we really should be doing...so much other work to do that we can't prepare and do it properly" and indicates a sense of exhaustion and impatience, as well as her "inattention" as consequences of burnout. These point to a significant decrease in her attention and focus in teaching and related tasks, driven by an overwhelming workload, emotional exhaustion

(Maslach & Jackson, 1984) and decreased sense of accomplishment, key dimensions of burnout.

Vera, a teacher with four years of experience—currently recovering—who revealed that she tends to "sit more...maybe a bit…unfocused if I can say that…", illustrating the effects of burnout on the cognitive-physical dimension of her engagement. Her feeling of being "unfocused" suggests a decrease in her attention and concentration, crucial aspect of cognitive involvement, while she also mentioned another noticeable effect of burnout is in her day-to-day teaching life, to physically "sit more" during teaching sessions. Vera's experiences with burnout align with the findings of Hakanen et al. (2006) exploring that burnout may be affecting the ability to remain both cognitively and physically engaged in work This perspective is further supported by the framework proposed by Klassen et al. (2013), which combined cognitive and physical elements as one component, thus strengthening the notion that burnout has a comprehensive effect on cognitive-physical engagement in the workplace. These changes in her behaviour reflect a physical manifestation of burnout, characterised by a drain in energy (Maslach & Leiter, 2016b).

The findings indicate the impact of emotional exhaustion and decreased sense of accomplishment as key aspects of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1984) on teachers' cognitive-physical engagement. This condition can diminish their ability to concentrate as effectively as they did early in their careers. Alice and Molly observed a decrease in focus years after recovering from burnout, illustrating the enduring effects of this condition. Similarly, Amelie, Vera and Diana, still in recovery, reminisce about their initial enthusiasm and dedication, contrasting it with their current reduced focus. Naomi's experience, on the other hand, suggested the negative effect of burnout on her sense of accomplishment as well. These can affect not only the teacher's wellbeing but also the learning environment. The variation in how these teachers manifest burnout and engagement can be primarily linked to their different stages of recovery. Those who have had more time to recover (Alice and Molly) show a more reflective and managed response to their past burnout experience, while those still in recovery (Amelie, Vera, Diana, and Naomi) demonstrate more immediate struggles with engagement and cognitive focus.

6.2.1.2 Loss of Interest in Teaching

The interviews shed light on the fact that teachers might not only lose focus on their work, but also the interest in teaching. Eight of the teachers noticed that while experiencing burnout, they found themselves being less interested in teaching. Julia and Stella, both experienced teachers with 15 and 33 years they have spent teaching in secondary school, are among those sixteen participants who although experienced the negative effects of burnout, are recovering from them. Still, they could recall how they noticed the changes affecting their work as they lost their interest in teaching that they used to enjoy before:

> "I just really didn't care about the teaching then." (Julia)

> "It was getting monotonous, then. Well, when I was watching the clock, you know, oh my God, when is the lesson going to end." (Stella)

While Kate and Valerie have already recovered from burnout, they remembered how they lost their interest in what they had to do at school, and teaching became tedious and monotonous for them. According to Valerie, she became "more passive than before" and did not care "what the kids think or know, what they didn't know or understand in class". She thinks that her "teaching turned boring too" and was not interested in teaching anymore. Similarly, Kate "didn't really feel like coming to school" and her days became so uninteresting during burnout that she "was counting the days until the weekend and the breaks".

One of the most experienced teachers, Luke, who has also been teaching for a long time (for 25 years) is the only participant who realised his burnout with the help of a lecture on this syndrome. After the realisation, he remembered noticing some negative changes, including losing interest in his job despite being an always enthusiastic teacher, which came with constant tiredness too:

> "I was just extremely tired, and I felt lost, and I started to lose interest in doing my job, teaching and I was looking for other opportunities."

These reports support Maslach et al.'s (2001) finding of the link between burnout dimensions—emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation—and reduced job satisfaction and commitment, highlighting the importance of teacher enthusiasm. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) noted that a lack of commitment and passion in teachers could negatively impact both their wellbeing and their students' motivation. Furthermore, Schaufeli et al. (2002) identified dedication as a key component of engagement, influencing student motivation and success (Watt & Richardson,

2013). This suggests that while enthusiastic teachers can positively affect their students, those disinterested in teaching may fail to inspire. Frenzel et al. (2009) described this as 'emotional contagion', where student and teacher enjoyment are interconnected, affecting both positively and negatively. This highlights the significant role of dedication in teacher burnout and engagement, its impact on student motivation and achievements, and its influence on the learning environment.

6.2.1.3 Stopping/Reducing Time Spent on Lesson Planning/Materials Writing

Losing interest in teaching often results in teachers no longer enjoying lesson preparation or material creation. Eleven teachers indicated that burnout-related exhaustion diminished their engagement in lesson preparation. Among these, Aaron and Mary, experienced teachers with 32 and 22 years of teaching respectively, recognised a decline in their motivation for lesson planning as a significant effect of burnout. Despite their experience, they shifted their focus away from preparation, dedicating less effort to lesson planning and material development:

> "Obviously, I was so tired, and I had less energy, so I paid less attention to teaching. I think I cared less about teaching, or if students enjoy what we were doing, I just followed the structure of the textbooks, and prepared nothing extra for the lessons." (Mary)

> "In my 25 years of teaching, I was just going through the motions; I didn't prepare much. My concern for these aspects diminished significantly at that time. Yet, I made sure not to disappoint the students, some of whom I had taught for four to six years…" (Aaron)

Relying solely on textbooks and pre-written resources can serve as a crucial support mechanism for teachers, particularly those experienced with sufficient experience enabling them to conduct lessons with minimal preparation. This reliance on established materials, however, is not limited to experienced teachers. Rose and Brandon, two novice English teachers with merely a year of experience, observed shifts in their teaching methodologies towards heavier reliance on textbooks. Rose, who began experiencing burnout symptoms during her university studies, found that her initial enthusiasm for creating engaging and innovative lessons waned due to exhaustion. She increasingly restricted her practice to

textbook-based teaching, despite her reservations about the content and structure of these materials. She reflected:

> "I started to notice that it's easier to teach only from books… and we know that these books can be good, but a lot of times I'm not happy with the structure, the amount of practice material that's in them. And I noticed that I often just follow these books only, and so I don't necessarily pay attention to the fact that I should make the lessons interesting."

Besides exhaustion, Brandon, one of those teachers experiencing burnout early in their career, however, noticed that the reason for his behavioural change could be that he perceives the majority of his students cannot pay attention to the lessons, even when he prepared engaging lesson plans. Thus, he stopped caring about careful lesson planning, he started focusing on those students who might be interested in learning:

> "So, I've actually taken it a lot more relaxed. So, for lessons, I almost prepare nothing at all, because the level that we have to produce here… is, let's say, really low. And yes, I used to put really good plans together for the lessons. And then, you know, it just didn't work, most of the students just didn't care. I'm putting less and less energy into it now, so, now I can only pay attention to the fact that if there are, let's say, in a class, if there are, in a lucky case, let's say, five people at the most who want to pay attention, then I try to teach them."

Brandon and Rose's early-career burnout reflects that burnout can affect teachers at any stage, mirroring the experiences of more experienced teachers like Aaron and Mary, suggesting the vulnerability from the beginning of one's career due to possibly insufficient resilience-building experience (Gavish & Friedman, 2010). This early vulnerability, with symptoms developing in the first year, indicates that both novice and late-career teachers can face burnout for various reasons, yet younger teachers may additionally struggle with emotional exhaustion (Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010). This difference may also influence engagement changes, as seen with Brandon and Rose, who reduced their investment in preparation and felt a lack of success in their teaching efforts.

Similarly, Nora— an early career teacher with 5 years' experience—described a phase of disengagement and fatigue stemming from her professional life, "being tired of something that is otherwise a very important part of life". She also mentioned a shift towards being less energetic and spending less time for preparing for her lessons: "I didn't have time and energy to prepare that much for my classes...". This change, however, might not have only impacted

her satisfaction with her role but also likely affected the materials she provided to her students, indicating the impact burnout can have on teacher effectiveness and self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014).

Burnout can significantly reduce an individual's motivation and effort (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010), and for teachers, this may result in lower quality and less energetic lesson preparation. This phenomenon, often intensified by 'emotional contagion' (Frenzel & Stephens, 2013), showing how teachers' initial enthusiasm can diminish due to continuous negative feedback from students, leading to a routinised approach to teaching. For instance, Mia, a language teacher with 15 years of experience, initially prepared what she felt to be engaging materials. Over time, however, student disinterest led her to reduce her efforts substantially. She shared:

> "So, then I don't even try to do anything because when I see them not wanting to cooperate on any level, I don't really go into the reinforcement because it's unnecessary. And I experience that very often. And now, I just stopped putting so much effort into teaching. I know it sounds awful, but that's how I feel at the moment."

Similarly, Lucy, a decade into her teaching career, has also noticed a decline in her engagement, stating that she "took everything too easy" and "didn't get ready for lessons at all". Lastly, Kay, nearing the end of her teaching career, reflected on how her teaching had "become routine" and she had "just taught without putting real effort into it", indicating a decline in her motivation to put effort into both preparing and teaching. The experiences of these teachers illustrate how burnout leads to a decrease in teacher engagement and effort, impacting the effectiveness of their teaching.

One of the teachers, Lily, who is already in the process of recovering, has also experienced a similar moment to Mia, when she realised that she was not able to be as dedicated as she had been before. After realising that she might have experienced burnout, she could also tell that her teaching methods and practice had changed, mainly because she was repeatedly disappointed by the students' reactions to her enthusiasm. She also lost her enthusiasm and stopped putting a lot of effort into preparing for the lessons:

> "I can't give them the same dedication as before. And that has changed everything about my teaching, the methods, the practice…now I'm thinking about it…, for example, I used to spend a whole evening at home looking for little pictures, interesting

ideas for doing a little project with the students. And they weren't interested in them at all. So, I stopped doing that, I just stopped being enthusiastic about it."

Lily and Mia's experience also confirms that besides emotional contagion, the student-teacher synergy also plays an important role in the classroom. While this relationship in the classroom can have positive effects on teacher wellbeing, negative attitude and behaviour of the students can also influence the teacher's motivation and enthusiasm (Mercer et al., 2016).

The collective experiences of these teachers above illustrate how burnout can significantly affect teachers' professional lives. From a decreased dedication for creative lesson planning to an overarching sense of cognitive-physical disengagement, the analysis suggest that the impact of burnout can extend beyond the individual, potentially affecting the educational experience of students (Madigan & Kim, 2021).

6.2.1.4   Exploring Changes in Teaching Methods

Besides stopping or reducing time spent on lesson planning/materials writing, three of the teachers noticed changes in their teaching methods while they were/are experiencing burnout. These changes were reported mostly in the teaching methods/practices they had been following and improving since the beginning of their career. Luke, one of those teachers who recalled losing interest in teaching, gave up preparation and abandoned his personal teaching methods, because of time constraints and high expectations from the school and the government:

> "And I often feel that with some particular students I would need more time, I would need another method. But I can't do that, I just simply know we haven't got enough time for that. If I have four classes per week, there's no time for anything personal. There's no time for anything micro-teaching."

Although Luke has been teaching for over two decades, when he started losing his enthusiasm, he also stopped putting effort into prioritising his own methods for teaching.

Experiencing burnout, David noticed a change in his teaching approach from enthusiastic to disengaged, leading him to abandon his own methods for pre-written textbooks. He reflected:

> "I tried to do everything the same, but I couldn't fake my 'usual self'. I was standing in front of a group of teenagers every day and I wasn't enthusiastic to teach. So, I just let my usually way of teaching go and followed the textbooks and given materials."

This change highlights the impact of burnout on emotional labour, transitioning from deep to surface acting, as described by King and Ng (2018). The resulting emotional dissonance, a mismatch between felt and displayed emotions, contributes to stress, depersonalisation, and burnout (Hochschild, 1983; Acheson et al., 2016; Näring et al., 2006, 2011). David's experience underlines challenges in teaching, where the demands of emotional labour can increase stress, hinder coping and recovery, and diminish the connection with students and passion for teaching.

While Luke and David are among the experienced teachers with 25 years of teaching, Rose, who started her career as little as a year ago, also noticed changes in her teaching methods as soon as her burnout symptoms started developing. She realised that her own methods did not seem to be working although she "invested a lot of energy in it". She stopped putting her effort into teaching through her own methods as she declared this effort to be "unnecessary".

These three teachers, both experienced and early career, might have experienced a decline in their teaching as burnout could influence professional efficacy by turning it into ineffectiveness (Maslach & Leiter, 2000). While professional efficacy can result in a set of positive feelings about achievements and work, burnout and stress can have a reducing effect on efficacy (Leiter, 1989), as lack of personal accomplishment has been also stated to be one of the dimensions of burnout (Schaufeli et al., 1996; Taris et al., 1999). That is, it might indicate that in some cases burnout might affect the perception of teachers of their professional efficacy and own teaching methods.

6.2.1.5   Disengagement from Extra Work Responsibilities

Teachers also reported extra work responsibilities as activities they might be less engaged with during burnout. These tasks are usually responsibilities which are not closely related to classroom teaching but demand significant effort from teachers. Seven teachers reported having let these responsibilities go first in order to save time and energy, including Emma who stopped worrying about doing extra work and she "just did what was compulsory". As she has almost twenty years of experience in teaching, she had experience in finishing compulsory tasks and decided not to work more than mandatory "because she simply didn't have the desire, time, or energy for them". Alice (late) also reported similar experiences from the time she was

struggling with burnout. As she was losing energy and enthusiasm, she stopped dealing with "useless administration", since "at the time, it was something I didn't want to deal with in the least". So did Amelie, who similarly to Alice a late-career teacher, and also started keeping work to the minimum and refused to do any extra work while she was suffering from burnout:

> "So those school commitments were about the bare minimum. So, I tried to focus on my 45-minute lessons a lot more, nothing else."

Bella, who is also one of those teachers with nearly two decades of experience, also stopped spending long hours with extra work, as during burnout, she was also trying to save time and energy. This extra work involves every task she is not required to do but would make her lessons/teaching more colourful, for which she is not paid for and as she gets "the same amount of money", she does not feel the urge to "make the lesson more colourful".

While six of the teachers who admitted to having experienced disengagement from extra work responsibilities are experienced teachers with at least 18 years of teaching, one of them, Audrey, is an early career teacher, who has been teaching English for as little as 2 years. She is currently recovering and while she was experiencing burnout, she continuously felt "escaping" work, even though she "became even more stressed" as a result of letting her undone responsibilities pile up. However, she also showed to having experienced guilt as she "always felt like that there should be something to do with it" but she was not able to do so at that time Audrey's experience of burnout differs from that of more experienced teachers due to several key factors. She may have entered the profession with high expectations that clashed with the realities of teaching, leading to disillusionment. Early career teachers might be more vulnerable to burnout and guilt, while more experienced teachers can often step back without as much guilt. This combination of factors likely made Audrey susceptible to the same levels of stress and disengagement experienced by more experienced colleagues.

Teachers' experiences, both novice and more experienced, show that burnout can lead to a loss of enthusiasm for their job and even tasks beyond teaching, aligning with findings by Lee and Asforth (1996) and Cherniss and Krantz (1983) indicating that burnout can lead to a loss of enthusiasm not only for direct working tasks but also for broader job responsibilities. Seven teachers in this study specifically mentioned that extra tasks and responsibilities were the first to be neglected upon experiencing burnout symptoms. This neglect was not deliberate but a direct consequence of burnout, affecting duties not directly linked to teaching. While most

affected teachers had nearly two decades of experience, it is not exclusive to mid and late career teachers, indicating that burnout can impact engagement with broader job responsibilities across all levels of experience.

6.2.1.6   Classroom Teaching: Engagement amid Challenges

Previous studies have pointed out the complex relationship between teacher engagement and burnout, with Schaufeli et al. (2006) suggesting they might be on opposite ends of the spectrum. However, Timms et al. (2012) argued that teachers could experience both simultaneously, proposing these concepts exist on a continuum rather than being inversely related. This theory is supported by evidence that teachers can remain engaged in specific work aspects despite burnout (Rutter & Jacobson, 1986), with six teachers in this study reporting cognitive-physical engagement during burnout periods. This challenges the idea that burnout leads to total disengagement, highlighting the nuanced reality of teacher experiences.

Teacher burnout can impact their sense of responsibility and commitment to student success, even as enthusiasm decreases. Teachers may experience a loss of drive yet continue to strive for educational excellence, particularly in moments such as competitions or exams. Aaron, an experienced teacher with over three decades of experience, illustrates this dedication. Despite feeling disengaged and losing enthusiasm due to burnout, he recognised the importance of maintaining a high quality of teaching, especially when his students were preparing for significant events. He remembered:

> "Even though I didn't feel like doing anything, when I was in the classroom, I tried to make the most out of it. I remember, at that time we were preparing for a very important competition (OKTV- national competition) and final exams and I just knew that I couldn't let them down."

Aaron's commitment highlights how deeply teachers value their role in supporting student achievements, often pushing through personal challenges to ensure they do not disappoint their students.

Similarly, Vera (early) with 4 years of teaching, also felt responsible for her students and reported that she could never let teaching go despite experiencing burnout, even though she also reduced her preparation time:

"It's interesting, you know… Because the one thing I've always stuck to is teaching. I prepare less and I no longer spend hours at home on the weekend preparing tasks, but no lesson goes by when I haven't taught the children something. If it turns out that way, then with a more conversational class, but I could never help myself not to teach anything, because I'm not in my best state…"

Her example shows that while burnout impacted her cognitive-physical engagement, leading to reduced lesson planning, feelings of 'guilt' could motivate her to persist, even when she was not feeling at her best.

Alice, one of the most experienced teachers participating in this study (28 years) reported that her attention was reduced while she was experiencing burnout, also found teaching in the classroom motivating to some extent which could engage her in the most challenging time. She found it particularly rewarding when she could see "how far we could get together". These experiences might have been similar to Naomi's (mid) experiences, who although mentioned losing focus during burnout, she was trying to give "her best", keeping in mind that she "was going to make it through the class", even though she knew that she "wasn't 100 percent there in spirit". Her experiences also show that, despite having experienced symptoms and negative consequences of burnout, feeling responsible for teaching could engage her for the time of performing in the classroom.

The experiences of Aaron, Vera, Alice, and Naomi demonstrate that despite the impact of burnout on their cognitive-physical engagement, in some cases teaching can serve as a source of engagement. They all faced challenges such as reduced focus and less involvement in additional tasks during burnout but maintained engagement in cognitive activities, illustrating that engagement and disengagement can coexist. This suggests that the effects of burnout on engagement can be both negative and positive, supported by the concept of teacher self-efficacy—teachers' belief in their ability to engage and teach students effectively, even the challenging and unmotivated ones (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Achieving teaching goals can boost self-efficacy, which, in turn, is linked to higher levels of engagement, even during burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Xu & Jia, 2022).

This analysis shows that the majority of teachers experienced significant declines in their cognitive-physical engagement due to burnout, affecting their focus, interest, and enthusiasm

for teaching and extra work responsibilities. This was evident in 90% of interviews (28 out of 31), highlighting the adverse effects on both teacher wellbeing—manifesting in negative emotions and social isolation—and the learning environment (Zhang & Sapp, 2008). Burnout led both new and experienced teachers to rely more on textbooks and pre-prepared materials, diminishing their motivation to create engaging lessons. Despite the predominance of negative effects, about 20% of teachers found the experience of being in the classroom to have a positive impact on their engagement despite the challenges during burnout. This means that for these teachers, the experience of being in the classroom was able to mitigate the effects of burnout, thereby supporting continued engagement, suggesting that this syndrome does not uniformly lead to negatively affected engagement.

Across career stages, burnout impacted cognitive-physical engagement, with early-career teachers displaying significant disengagement probably due to less developed resilience and coping mechanisms. This was marked by reduced lesson planning and difficulties with keeping their attention on work. Interestingly, some, like *Vera* with four years of experience, encountered both positive and negative engagement shifts during burnout, highlighting early-career teachers' particular vulnerability to engagement fluctuations. Furthermore, 'guilt' played a significant role in Vera's experience with burnout and her inability to let go of teaching, even though she reduced her preparation time. This guilt might have stemmed from a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to her students and profession.

For mid to late-career teachers, responses varied from decreased focus and interest in teaching to reduced lesson preparation and involvement in extra tasks/activities. Despite these challenges, some experienced teachers (e.g., Naomi-15 years, Aaron-32 years, Alice-28 years) reported mixed effects on their engagement, suggesting a complex relationship between burnout and engagement at later career stages, with a possibility of diverse engagement experiences similar to earlier career teachers: better developed resilience and coping mechanisms of these teachers did not mean that they became fully 'immune'.

Particularly, the story of *Alice* stands out—an experienced teacher with almost three decades in the capital city, who has recovered from burnout, demonstrating the potential for engagement and disengagement coexisting during burnout, highlighting the resilience and adaptability teachers can develop. Het story illustrates a wide range of issues relating to teacher burnout, resilience, and engagement. During her period of burnout, Alice experienced a

significant decline in her cognitive-physical engagement with her focus to be decreased. She found herself struggling to maintain the same level of attention during her lessons and feeling detached from the classroom dynamics that once started energising her, thus, engage her through classroom teaching, challenging initial findings of the interplay of burnout and engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

This section emphasised the complex impact of burnout on teachers' cognitive-physical engagement, noting that burnout mainly had a negative effect, though in some cases, engagement remained unaffected. In the following, the analysis will explore the effects of burnout on the emotional dimension of teacher engagement, further exploring the multifaceted nature of this syndrome among EFL teachers.

6.2.2   Emotional Aspect of Teacher Engagement

Interviews indicated that burnout affects both cognitive-physical and emotional engagement, with emotional engagement being especially significant because of the inherently social nature of teaching (Yin & Lee, 2012). Burnout affects teachers' emotional responses to their duties, leading them to hide negative emotions, thereby risking psychological distress or emotional dissonance (King & Ng, 2018) and increasing emotional exhaustion, a central dimension of burnout (Näring et al., 2006, 2011; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Nevertheless, effective emotional regulation has been shown to maintain engagement (Greenier et al., 2021). That is, language teachers who manage their emotions well are more likely to be deeply engaged in their teaching. By effectively using intrinsic and extrinsic processes to control their emotions, they can achieve their goals, stay energetic, put in more effort, and feel encouraged, proud, important, and inspired (Greenier et al., 2021).

Although starting their careers enthusiastically, teachers reported various emotional effects due to burnout. Seventeen teachers noticed changes in their teaching-related emotions, with thirteen experiencing negative shifts and four encountering emotional instability. Despite this, some maintained their initial passion. This section will detail these emotional changes, categorising them into negative shifts, emotional instability, and sustained passion amidst burnout.

6.2.2.1   Negative Emotional Shift towards Classroom Teaching

Burnout can significantly impact teachers, leading to emotional consequences. Among 13 teachers recognising not only cognitive-physical but also emotional effects on their teaching, David (mid) and Aaron (late), reported recovery from burnout. Their experiences highlight the profound emotional toll of burnout. David stated, "When burnout was really bad, it felt abysmal...a sense of very deep emptiness" due to disengagement, especially when faced with challenging student behaviour. He found it to be "terrible to teach students who seemingly 'drain the life out of me': those who can be rude and arrogant, or those who cause conflicts in the groups/school". Aaron reflected, "I didn't really care much about teaching at the time...I was teaching like a machine," indicating a lack of enjoyment despite his successes. These cases illustrate how burnout can manifest as emotional exhaustion and cynicism, exacerbated by student misbehaviour and an indifferent attitude towards teaching accomplishments, respectively (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

Mia (mid) and Brandon (early) are both currently experiencing burnout, marked by a loss of enthusiasm and motivation due to daily encounters with disinterested students. Mia shared, "I used to love teaching, but this feeling is for sure not here...No, I haven't enjoyed it for a while now." Similarly, Brandon expressed, "There are days when it's nearly impossible to teach anything to them. I really don't like it." These narratives illustrate that the student-teacher relationship is crucial to teacher engagement and enthusiasm during burnout, affecting teachers' emotions towards their profession regardless of their experience (Hargreaves, 2000). Emotional dynamics in the classroom can influence both students and teachers through emotional contagion, leading to either positive or negative outcomes (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2015; Moskowitz & Dewaele, 2021). For Mia and Brandon, the negative impact manifests in diminished enjoyment and a sense of personal accomplishment in teaching, highlighting the critical role of student engagement and emotional reciprocity in teachers' professional wellbeing.

Evelyn and Bella (mid) are currently recovering from burnout. The feelings of Evelyn also turned negative towards teaching while she was experiencing burnout, as she found her students to be so disinterested that she stopped enjoying teaching, as well as the feelings of Bella changed negatively because of the lack of accomplishment she was experiencing during burnout:

"So, I was really discouraged at that time. I had become more of an educator than a teacher, I just couldn't teach anything, because the students didn't pay attention. Because English was the least that they were interested in. I just couldn't enjoy teaching anymore." (Evelyn)

"Now this burnout has brought me nothing. No enjoyment, or almost no enjoyment. But no, I'm not going to talk about it, that's not what's important in life. That's how things fell into place. No. If it's not important how many language exams I produce for the school, if it's not important what my results are in my final exams, then it's not important for me. My salary is the same even if I don't have any language exams and if I pass my exams with a 2. My salary is the same. So why am I bothering now?" (Bella)

Both Evelyn and Bella were developing negative feelings towards teaching as they could not experience sufficient achievement in work, therefore they started enjoying it less and having negative feelings about it. Thus, their experiences can relate to the personal accomplishment dimension of burnout which can be reduced with high amount of stress.

Participants' reports show that negative feelings can have serious consequences, both for teaching and for wellbeing. While teachers struggle with stressful tasks every day (MacIntyre et al., 2019), these struggles can be made even more difficult by burnout, for example by developing persistent negative feelings. Negative feelings towards teaching can reduce engagement in the long term, which can create new obstacles in coping processes.

6.2.2.2 Instability of the Emotional Experience (over and above 'normal' fluctuation)

While some teachers experienced negative changes (n=13) or positive emotions towards teaching (n=14), four of them reported their feelings to be rather instable during burnout than solely negative. This means that in the state of burnout, not only negative feelings can arise in the teacher, but sometimes positive feelings can also prevail, but this state is not constant, but rather fluctuating. These experiences were reported by only recovering (Emily, Luke and Naomi) and recovered (Michelle) teachers. Emily, similar to Luke, has been teaching for almost three decades and experienced mixed feelings towards teaching while experiencing burnout caused by decreased motivation, even though, according to her, she has always liked

teaching. The feelings of Luke were also fluctuating as he was experiencing disappointment in the educational system which might have slowed his recovery down:

> "I don't know…I have always liked teaching, and I still like it. At that time there were days when students made it easier and of course there were days I didn't enjoy teaching that much. I'm sure it was also because I was less motivated." (Emily)

> "And also, look, I'm not the best teacher in the world, I know. But I'm trying to be realistic and good and humanistic as much as I can. And of course, even though I like teaching, it's not always easy. Sometimes I also have negative feelings and disappointment- asking myself why I am doing this?" (Luke)

Emily and Luke, despite their extensive teaching experience, faced burnout and developed negative emotions towards teaching. While their overall motivation and joy in teaching occasionally persisted, their reports suggested a noticeable decline in their emotional engagement while facing burnout. Luke's experience reflects moments of self-doubt and negative emotions, highlighting the complexities and fluctuations in one's self-belief.

Michelle, on the other hand, is among those teachers who managed to recover from burnout and has been in the teaching profession for thirty years. While her memories reach back to approximately 4-5 years, her reflection clearly shows that she did not only have to deal with negative feelings during burnout, but with changing feelings towards teaching. Her feelings were also affected by her students, both positively and negatively:

> "Yes, it wasn't easy, there are students in every group who are not too motivated, like if everything is not right at home, or if there is a conflict between parents and children in the background… and at that time maybe I wasn't able to handle them so well. But then there were the hard-working, enthusiastic students, with whom it was quite easy to work. So, I would say, some days were maybe easier, some days were harder."

In the case of Michelle, the phenomenon of emotional contagion can be also observed, as her emotions were influenced by her students' emotions and motivation (Frenzel & Stephens, 2013). That is, Michelle's feelings turned negative when she experienced conflict with students and turned positive when she had to teach enthusiastic and interested students, creating an instable emotional experience for her, that she may not have been able to control as much as she was before burnout.

The experiences of teachers like Emily, Luke, and Michelle highlight the complex and fluctuating nature of emotions during burnout. Despite their extensive experience and passion

for teaching, these teachers faced periods of both positive and negative emotions. Their accounts reveal that burnout is not characterised solely by negative feelings; rather, it involves a dynamic interplay of emotions influenced by personal motivation, self-doubt, and interactions with students.

6.2.2.3   Unwavering Passion for Teaching Despite Burnout

While 17 teachers reported their feelings to be changed towards teaching changed during burnout, the other 14 teachers did not notice any changes in their emotional engagement while dealing with burnout. Two of these teachers have experience of less than 10 years. However, the majority of the teachers not experiencing their emotional engagement affected (eight) have been teaching for almost or more than 20 years, and four of them have been teaching English for more than 10 but less than 20 years.

Of the participants, Madison and Stella were the teachers who have been teaching for the longest (more than three decades) and both of them are in the phase of recovering from burnout now. Despite many negative effects and consequences, neither of them noticed changes in their emotional engagement. The effects of burnout were so negative for Madison that at that time she was considering leaving the teaching profession, however, she did not stop enjoying teaching and having positive feelings about it. Similarly to Stella whose feelings did not change towards teaching, as she also still liked teaching:

> "I had absolutely positive feelings about teaching because at the same time I was thinking about leaving public education, I was in a situation where I had the best classes in the school. For one year they were the best groups in the school, and I really enjoyed teaching, which was actually a very ideal situation." (Madison)
>
> "I don't know. I still liked teaching, I still wanted to teach, as it wasn't the teaching or the students who discouraged me a little bit." (Stella)

In the case of Madison and Stella, years of experience might have contributed to a protective barrier around their emotional engagement which allowed it to remain high even though they were experiencing burnout. Their experiences of teaching might have helped them gain self-efficacy which can positively affect engagement through generating more positive emotions and enthusiasm (Salanova et al., 2011).

Even after many years in the profession, teachers can still retain a passion for their work despite experiencing burnout, finding ways to recover and continue enjoying their roles. Alice and Valerie have also gained a lot of experience in teaching as their years in secondary school teaching are between 19 and 28 years, but both of them managed to recover from burnout. Thus, their reflections date back 2-5 years. Both admitted that despite experiencing burnout, they could still enjoy teaching and have always had positive feelings towards doing it:

> "There have been ups and downs, but I love this, it's my profession, I'm good at this. Sometimes I get insecure in my knowledge especially, when I have to deal with a higher-level class and I don't know if my knowledge is enough there...But I still enjoy teaching." (Alice)

> "I've been preparing for this career since I was in high school and I think I made the right decision. I love teaching and the successes that come with it, and of course I also have moments when I enjoy a few teaching days less, but most of the time I felt really positive about teaching." (Valerie)

Alice's experience highlights the importance of self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1993), in teaching. She acknowledges the varying experiences, however, she admitted to occasional insecurities, particularly when dealing with higher-level classes, revealing that self-efficacy can fluctuate based on specific situations. This demonstrates its dynamic nature as it has been found earlier (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016). Nevertheless, despite these doubts, her enjoyment of teaching remained strong. This enduring passion highlights the role of self-efficacy in maintaining motivation and resilience (Day, 2008; Mansfield et al., 2012; Razmjoo & Ayoobiyan, 2019).

Even among newer teachers, who may not have as many years of experience to draw upon during challenging times, it can be possible to encounter burnout yet remain positively engaged with teaching. Vera, unlike the experienced teachers, started teaching English only 4 years ago, and while she has not managed to recover yet, she is already in the recovering phase. Unlike the other teachers, Vera, despite experiencing burnout, did not undergo any significant changes in her emotional engagement. Her positive feelings toward teaching remained consistent throughout, and she continued to enjoy teaching.:

> "I still love it. So that hasn't taken my mind off it all anyway. I was more wondering if it could be like that elsewhere. Because I was already thinking, and if I go to another school, will it feel the same or different."

Alice and Valerie, with their extensive teaching experience offer insights into the journey of recovering from burnout. Despite challenging experiences, both teachers have managed to maintain their passion and positivity towards teaching. Similarly, Vera's—in the early stage of her career—emotional connection to teaching has not wavered. Her contemplation about whether the experience of teaching would differ in another school indicates a strong commitment to her chosen profession, even in the face of burnout.

This analysis highlights that, alongside cognitive-physical engagement, the emotional aspect of teacher engagement can be significantly impacted by burnout. Although a smaller proportion of teachers (42%) reported negative emotional changes compared to the cognitive-physical aspect, this was regardless of their experience level, affecting both experienced and early-career teachers. A minority of teachers (13%) experienced fluctuating emotions, possibly primarily influenced by emotional contagion or shifts in self-efficacy (Frenzel & Stephens, 2013; Klassen & Chiu, 2010), impacting their teaching and relationships with students and colleagues.

Conversely, a notable group (45%) maintained a stable emotional state during burnout. This implies that some teachers may be able to maintain their enthusiasm and passion even through periods of burnout. The story of *Madison* —the most experienced, recovering participant, with 33 years of experience teaching English in Budapest—also indicates this, reflecting her resilience and unwavering dedication, demonstrating that her commitment to teaching endured despite burnout challenges.

Emotional engagement in teaching careers is significantly affected at *all* stages, with early-career teachers like Brandon, who has a year of experience, showing more negative emotional reactions probably due to less developed coping mechanisms. In contrast, late-career teachers like Aaron (32 years) and Madison (33 years) displayed varied emotional impacts, with Madison maintaining enthusiasm despite burnout, suggesting passion can persist through challenges, unlike Aaron who lost his enthusiasm. Additionally, mid to late-career teachers, including Emily (27 years), Luke (25 years), and Naomi (15 years), showed negative emotional shift or instability during burnout, indicating that while new teachers face initial negative responses, experiencing teachers encounter fluctuations in emotional engagement as they advance, highlighting a broader spectrum of emotional experiences in the profession.

Especially, the narrative of *Aaron* stands out among these teachers—a language teacher in northern Hungary for 32 years— illustrating the emotional impact of burnout and the potential for recovery, because his experience underscores the deep emotional bond teachers can have with their profession. Despite experiencing a sense of loss and adopting a routine-driven approach to teaching during burnout, his journey towards reconnection with his passion highlights that recovery and reengagement are possible from this syndrome (which will be further explored in Chapter 8).

These narratives revealed the complex emotional landscape of teacher burnout, showing various experiences from enduring passion and fluctuating emotions. Further, the analysis suggested that the impact of burnout on the emotional dimension of engagement, with some teachers' emotional engagement remaining unaffected. The discussion will next turn to the social dimensions of engagement and their vulnerability to burnout, beginning with presenting findings on the social-colleagues dimension.

6.2.3 Social-Colleagues Aspect of Teacher Engagement

Social interactions with colleagues play a crucial role in understanding the effects of burnout on teachers. This chapter investigated the impact of burnout on teachers, particularly focusing on cognitive-physical and emotional engagement, and highlighted that relationships with colleagues and students can also suffer, following Klassen et al.'s (2013) model. The significance of relationships at work, especially with colleagues and management, is highlighted as a key factor influencing burnout symptoms like emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Khani & Mirzaee, 2015). Chan (2002) noted that support from these connections is crucial for teachers' wellbeing and burnout levels, and Wiley (2001) points out that colleague collaboration can enhance teaching efficiency. This section will explore the consequences of burnout on social ties, emphasising the deterioration of relationships with colleagues, the role of positive interactions, the use of social isolation as a coping mechanism, and how these dynamics may or may not change during burnout.

6.2.3.1 Strained Relationships with Colleagues and Loneliness

Research has established that support from colleagues is closely linked to teacher engagement and can significantly impact teachers' wellbeing (Bakker et al., 2008; Lipscomb et al., 2022). However, the interviews revealed that these connections often deteriorate during burnout, negatively affecting relationships. Seven of the teachers have noticed negative changes in their relationships with their colleagues during burnout. Four of them have already recovered from burnout, and three of them are currently recovering.

Three of the teachers who have already recovered from burnout—Aaron, Grace, and David—have more than twenty years of experience teaching English in secondary schools. Consequently, they were able to compare their recent relationships to those they had while experiencing burnout. Aaron (late), for example, remembered being more impatient with his colleagues and keeping his distance from them. Despite his colleagues' lack of understanding, he never blamed them for his burnout. David (mid) also experienced frustration among his colleagues, while Grace (late) was particularly disappointed by her unsupportive environment:

> "I was impatient a lot, but not because of my colleagues. Basically, I'm a calm person, but I was still surprised by my colleagues at times when they would call me, and they couldn't understand why I didn't want to talk. I know I was impatient those times. So that obviously played a part in the fact that I was a little less looking for the company of others, and maybe they didn't understand what happened." (Aaron)

> "I also remember experiencing a deep level of sadness and I was becoming frustrated with colleagues and administrative procedures." (David)

> "I think, I didn't get too much support from my colleagues at that time. It's really hard to remember, you know, I was so deep down." (Grace)

Aaron, Grace, and David have been suffering from the consequences of burnout, which include various negative feelings, such as irritability and isolation (Burke & Greenglass, 1993; Cedoline, 1982). These examples indicate that the emotional effects of burnout affect not only the individuals experiencing it but also influence their interactions and relationships with colleagues, often leading to isolation.

Burnout among teachers can significantly strain professional relationships, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Kay and Madison (late), on the other hand, are among those teachers who have not managed to fully recover from burnout yet. However, they are currently in the

phase of recovery. While suffering from burnout, they also experienced similar disappointment to Grace, as they felt that their colleagues and management's attitude changed towards them, which resulted in loneliness for both of them, as well as for Grace:

> "When I first experienced burnout, I experienced some problems there with colleagues and the management. They weren't too helpful and supportive; I just didn't feel good there. So, I was alone all the time, I felt really lonely." (Kay)

> "We didn't know about each other, we didn't have professional discussions, forums, because it wasn't part of the whole school culture. And then I could do that there on my own, but basically, I felt totally isolated and lonely." (Madison)

Deteriorating relationships with colleagues are connected to one of the dimensions of burnout, depersonalisation (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010), and in the case of Kay and Madison, the feeling of isolation could be caused by the behaviour of their colleagues, creating constant negative feelings for them about their relationships. Perceived negative interpersonal connections, however, can cause additional stress for teachers which can result in teachers having a harder time coping with the consequences caused by burnout.

Negative workplace dynamics can significantly increase the challenges of burnout among teachers, contributing to a phenomenon known as 'burnout contagion'. This concept suggests that burnout can spread among colleagues through emotional contagion, impacting overall wellbeing and making it difficult for individuals to cope with professional demands (Chan, 2002; Meredith et al., 2020; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000). Nora (early) provides an example of this dynamic. Despite her recovery, she continues to struggle with the negativity among her colleagues, which initially contributed to her desire to leave the profession. She reflected:

> "I feel like the negative feeling is caused by how negative teachers are in schools... I got to the point where I didn't really want to be in the teaching profession... Now, I have to be terribly careful not to be influenced by other people's negativity... But you know, I can't help them... I almost feel alone who can stay positive".

Nora's case highlights the importance of social dynamics in the development and management of burnout.

These experiences of teachers emphasised the significant role of social relationships during burnout, suggesting the need for supportive, understanding, and positive workplace cultures to address loneliness and strained connections during burnout.

6.2.3.2 The Value of Positive and Strong Relationships with Colleagues

Work connections have been shown to play an important role in teachers' lives (Kinman et al., 2011). While negative relationships can affect teacher wellbeing negatively, strong and positive connections and support can contribute to coping with burnout (Lambert et al., 2009). In the present study 12 teachers reported positive and strong relationships with their leaders and colleagues while experiencing burnout. Eight of them have recovered from burnout, three of them are recovering and one of them is still experiencing burnout now.

Mary and Michelle are among those experienced teachers who experienced a strong and supportive environment in school while having to deal with burnout. While they had already managed to recover from it, they both remembered that their colleagues always stood by them, even in the most difficult times:

> "I know it's quite rare, but we have a really good community in this school. I'm sure I'm not the only one who has experienced burnout, but we all try to help each other, no matter what. We regularly have meetings and events, so we have quite a few opportunities to get to know each other." (Mary)

> "I remember a colleague was hired who was very well prepared and had good methodological knowledge who then became the leader of the work community, and everyone accepted him, he had a fantastic appealing nature. He could be very human with everyone he, found the right voice. There was a very, very lively social life at the school, at one time we were named after a party. There was always something going on every month. And we really enjoyed it, the atmosphere among our colleagues became completely different." (Michelle)

Bella and Emma (mid) are both grateful to their colleagues and leaders (school principals and work community leaders) for supporting them in difficult times. Although Emma admitted to having experienced some problems with some of her colleagues, with most of them she could work as a team:

> "We are a very big school with a very big teaching staff. So, the fact that I didn't leave the school was solely due to my community leader, because he felt that I was very fed up, and then I thought I shouldn't leave, because it was important for him to keep me in the teaching team. And this was the only thread that kept me going, so that I could say that I appreciated him professionally. And that's why it was important to me, that somebody who I valued highly, who cared about me, cared about my work." (Bella)

"Personally, I was in quite a good relationship with most of them. So, we got on really well personally but not professionally. So, with some of them we could work as a team but with others it was hard. Not because they were not helpful enough, but they were not motivated enough." (Emma)

The only teacher who is still experiencing burnout but has a good relationship with her colleagues is Mia, who, as she assumes, all of her colleagues are going through the same difficulties as she is, the community has become a little bit better at her workplace, as colleagues can understand what others might struggle with, as they have the same problems:

"I think everybody in this school has this… burnout. I can't think of a colleague here who, apart from me, isn't bothered by the fact that what they're teaching doesn't make sense. It doesn't bother them. They've been over that a long time ago."

She also added that for 10-15 years she assumed that all of her colleagues have experienced burnout for shorter or longer periods of time. According to her, "they teach, because that's what they do, they have to do it". As Mia stated, this is one of the reasons why the community could become a bit better, as "we might be more understanding with each other, we all know what others go through".

Teacher's narratives on the supportive aspects of their work environments support the crucial role of social connections in both mitigating and coping with burnout (see 8.2.1.1). Such networks can be not only crucial for burnout prevention (Russell et al., 1987) but might also impact teaching efficacy (Chang et al., 2010) and serve as a key component in the coping process, potentially reducing burnout symptoms, i.e., emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Kahn et al., 2006). Emotional support from colleagues and management can thus play a significant role in improving teachers' psychological wellbeing (Cockburn, 1996; Hargreaves, 2001), by providing crucial emotional support and creating a supportive network that helps mitigate and cope with burnout and reducing anxiety, and enhancing job satisfaction (Pisanti et al., 2003; Morrison, 2004), a topic of which will be discussed in 8.2.1.1.

6.2.3.3   Social Isolation as a Coping Mechanism

While the value of personal connections at work has been found crucial in this study and literature before in both preventing burnout (e.g., Russell et al., 1987) and mitigating it (Kahn

et al., 2006), seven teachers reported experiencing social isolation during burnout. It means that as a result of high levels of stress and burnout, some of the teachers might keep emotional distance from their colleagues as a way of coping with difficulties. The reason for this could be different for different teachers who gave interviews, that is, for some of them, the management's negative attitude, while for others, the energy deficit caused by burnout encouraged them to keep a distance from their teaching colleagues.

The negative effect of the manager/principal's negative attitude on the relationship with colleagues, thus causing isolation within the work community, can be observed in the case of Vera, who, although only started teaching four years ago, already experienced signs of burnout. Despite the fact that she is already in the recovery phase, she still experiences negative effects on herself, and on her relationship with her colleagues, that is, she feels that the discriminative behaviour of the management encourages her and some of her colleagues to isolate themselves from those with "special status" although she considers the work community a supportive team. According to her, experiencing that some of her colleagues are allowed to cancel or finish their lessons much earlier and "some are allowed to do something, and some are not allowed to do anything" can "cause a lot of stress" for her and some of her colleagues. While she acknowledges that "this is a management problem", she kept her distance from not only management but some of her colleagues too while she was suffering from burnout. While she is recovering now, she has not been able to "restore" these relationships.

Evelyn (mid), Emily (late) and Julia (mid) also experienced social isolation while dealing with burnout as they or their colleagues have less energy for small talk and out-of-school programmes. All of them, however, stated that, while there are fewer interactions, they cannot tell if it has either a negative or positive effect on their relationships:

> "Maybe yes, in the sense that I am less in the mood for conversation, and I tend to be on my own. I used to talk with them a lot but now I don't feel like talking. We do have a cup of coffee or breakfast together, but I think I prefer to withdraw. It's not necessarily worse now, I just spend less of my free time with them." (Evelyn)

> "I have a few colleagues with whom I can say I have been on friendly terms. Now they call me less and less and we talk less and less. So, I don't know. I'm sure, I'm not the only one struggling with these problems, and I'm sure they have their own problems too. So it's neither worse or better, just different." (Julia)

"I definitely spent less of my free time with them. But it was because we all had less and less time then. But our relationship hasn't changed, it hasn't changed." (Emily)

While the reason for Vera's isolation is the attitude of the management, Evelyn, Emily, and Julia experienced emotional exhaustion that affected their relationships in a way that they reduced their contact during burnout. However, these reflections collectively suggest that reduced social interactions during burnout do not automatically equate to negative experiences of isolation. Instead, they can imply a proactive step towards personal limitations and a redefinition of social engagement. This perspective shifts the narrative from viewing isolation solely as a negative consequence to recognising it as a potential space for personal empowerment and boundary-setting.

Burnout can significantly alter teachers' relationships with their colleagues, often leading to decreased contact and/or feelings of isolation. Anna, who has been teaching for a little less than ten years now and has already recovered from burnout, also experienced that her relationship with her colleagues was somewhat different from how it was before burnout. She stated that she could not find "a common ground with them", which eventually made her stop "caring about it and had less and less contact with them". Anna's memories, therefore, show that although her relationship with her colleagues might not have worsened, the consequences of stress and burnout led her to less contact with her colleagues and isolation.

One of the teachers, who experienced social isolation soon after the symptoms of the burnout started developing, Amelie, realised that she was not the only burning out teacher in the school, which according to her, made the atmosphere toxic. It was happening because, unlike her, her colleagues did not show signs of fighting this syndrome and as a result she kept more distance from them although she has never had a negative relationship with them:

"Seeing some of my pre-retirement colleagues I was wondering why they were doing it? It is harmful, it is toxic either in the teaching profession or for the children, and I knew that I didn't want to be like that. So, I didn't have a bad relationship with them, but after realising that they didn't want to change their behaviour, I also kept more distance from them."

Similarly to her, Madison also experienced a change in the atmosphere of the working community, and while she did not "blame" her colleagues for this change, she could not "enjoy being with them anymore".

Amelie and Madison's experiences demonstrate that emotional contagion can occur among colleagues, not only in classroom settings. Negative emotions can spread from one teacher to another through frequent discussions about problems and experiences (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000), leading Amelie and Madison to isolate themselves. Despite Amelie not having poor relationships with her colleagues, she distanced herself from what she perceived as a toxic environment. This behaviour illustrates how burnout can lead to social withdrawal or escapist coping, where individuals avoid social interactions with colleagues (Leiter, 1991; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000).

6.2.3.4 Unchanged Dynamics in Relationships with Colleagues

Five teachers reported that their relationships with colleagues remained unchanged despite experiencing burnout, highlighting the resilience of social connections regardless of their initial quality. Brandon and Rose, both novice teachers, noticed symptoms of burnout but maintained stable relationships. Brandon commented, "They were always helpful...the relationship...hasn't changed." Rose added, "I don't think anything has changed in my relationship with them...I don't think it's worse now than before." These narratives align with research showing that social interaction can mitigate emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000). However, personal accomplishment, which is often challenged in young teachers experiencing burnout (Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010), does not necessarily impact social engagement. This suggests that less experienced teachers like Rose and Brandon may not experience the same degree of change in social dynamics as their more experienced colleagues.

While burnout often affects teachers' relationships with colleagues, its impact can vary widely among individuals. Diana (mid) and Stella (late) admitted that they did not notice any changes in their relationships while experiencing burnout:

> "That hasn't changed, it's the same bad, briefly... One short one. So, it was bad before and it's bad now. So, it hasn't really got better or worse." (Diana)
>
> "I don't think anything has changed at all. With some colleagues I have always had a really good relationship, with some others I don't have a close connection with, but the atmosphere is usually positive." (Stella)

While neither of them is new to the teaching profession, they both reported that burnout did not change their relationship with their colleagues. Diana perceived her colleagues' attitude to remain the same, which she described as being negative before and during burnout too. Stella, on the other hand, remembers always having positive connections, regardless of burnout.

Teachers' responses indicate that social relationships, especially with colleagues, can be affected by burnout across all levels of teaching experience. While the majority of the teachers reported positive relationships (38%) or no changes (16%) in workplace relationships, a significant number of them experienced negative changes (23 %) or social isolation (22%) due to burnout. This aligns with earlier research suggesting that support from colleagues and management is crucial in reducing stress and burnout among teachers (Kokkinos, 2007; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014).

Research shows that a supportive work environment can improve teachers' wellbeing, performance, and job satisfaction (Liu & Onwuegbuzie, 2012), whereas a lack of support can diminish job satisfaction and lead to attrition (Johnson et al., 2012). Thus, support from colleagues is instrumental in preserving or enhancing the social-colleagues aspect of teacher engagement during burnout. Particularly, the narratives of *Bella* and *Emma*, both with almost two decades of experience in teaching, highlight the significance of support from colleagues and leaders, showcasing how collegial solidarity can enhance resilience and the desire to stay in the teaching profession, emphasising the protective power of positive social connections against burnout.

Analysis suggests burnout may cause negative colleague relationships across career stages, underscoring the value of workplace support. Late-career teachers (Aaron and Grace) and some early-career teachers (e.g., Nora) noted increased isolation and strained relationships. In contrast, some early-career teachers Brandon and Rose reported consistent colleague relationships, indicating variability in the impact of burnout early on. Some of the mid to late-career teachers (Bella, Emma and Michelle) maintained positive connections, highlighting the mitigating effect of strong support against burnout. The strategy of social isolation, adopted across career stages from early (Vera) to more experience teachers (Evelyn, Julia and Madison), shows diverse responses to burnout, illustrating the complex interplay between career progression, burnout, and social interactions in teaching.

As outstanding examples, of others, the experiences of *Grace*, with her extensive, 31-yearlong teaching background while experiencing burnout a few times, and *Kay*—with three decades of teaching experience in a northwest Hungarian village—, who is recovering from burnout, illustrate how burnout can damage professional relationships and lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation, further emphasising the necessity of collegial support. Their narratives, along with others, confirm that positive interpersonal relationships play a vital role in mitigating the effects of burnout (see Section 8.2.1.1). Additionally, the student-teacher dynamic, another facet of social engagement, can be also affected by burnout, which will be explored further in the following section.

6.2.4 Social-Students Aspect of Teacher Engagement

Teachers also explained how they perceived the relationships with their students while experiencing burnout, which is part of the social aspect of teacher engagement (Klassen et al., 2013). This aspect refers to the teachers' views of their relationship with their students. Similarly to the relationship with colleagues, these changes were also very divisive and varied in the teachers' approach. The student-teacher dynamic has been found to be crucial in teacher motivation (Sampson, 2016) and, therefore, in teacher burnout and wellbeing too (e.g., Spilt et al., 2011; Mercer et al., 2016). While ten of the teachers managed to maintain positive relationships with their students, twelve reported negative changes five would experience complex interplay, and four defined their relationship with students remain positive through their continued care and effort, emphasising the importance of showing genuine concern, understanding, and emotional support to their students, which helped sustain a positive atmosphere even in challenging times. These variations highlight the significant impact that burnout can have on the social aspect of teacher engagement.

6.2.4.1 Students Save the Day: Positive Relationships with Students as a Port in the Storm of Burnout

Establishing strong, positive student-teacher relationships is crucial for teachers, as supported by existing research (Hargreaves, 1998; Nias, 1996; O'Connor, 2008) and confirmed by thirteen teachers in this study who reported strong, positive relationships with their students amid burnout. Some of these nine teachers have extensive experience in secondary education,

ranging from 13 to 33 years. Anna, a teacher with less than ten years of experience, highlighted her recovery from burnout, emphasising the unchanged, positive relationship with her students despite deteriorating relationships with colleagues and management. She attributed her decision to stay in teaching to her strong sense of responsibility towards her students, stating:

> "so, I only stayed in the school because of them, and really because I had a good relationship with them and I felt responsible for them. So, I actually had a worse relationship with everyone else than I did with the students."

This echoes O'Connor's (2008) findings that a positive student-teacher relationship is a key factor in teachers' decisions not to leave the profession, even when facing significant challenges. Thus, Anna's experience underscores the crucial role of student-teacher connections in teachers' commitment to their profession.

Two of the participating teachers, Julia and Naomi (mid) devoted effort into keeping their relationships with their students as positive as they could:

> "Well, I don't know what they thought of me. I'm not convinced that they loved me completely, or how should I say, so I was certainly not the favourite teacher. Because I'm not like that…. They loved me, so the students who liked me, they got my humour. And it hasn't changed at all. In general, everything was positive, even if some didn't like me, they respected me." (Julia)

> "Surely, I wasn't the most patient teacher at that time. I don't think that it affected our relationship, well, at least, in my opinion. I always tried to show as little as possible of my negative feelings or burnout." (Naomi)

Aaron is one of the most experienced participants, with over 30 years of experience in teaching. While Aaron reported that he has recovered from burnout, he managed to maintain their relationship with the students positively, despite dealing with a lot of negative thoughts:

> "I don't think my relationship changed with them. I cared less about teaching but not about them. And they were the reason why I stayed there; I think we still had a good relationship." (Aaron)

The example of Julia, Naomi and Aaron shows that teachers might find the connection with students to be important, even during burnout. This, however, is connected not only to their professional, but personal development, as positive relationships can generate positive feelings which can affect teacher wellbeing. The reports also indicate that regardless of teaching

experience, both experienced and early-career teachers can experience positive connections with students during burnout.

6.2.4.2 Negative Shifts in the Student-Teacher Dynamic

Thirteen teachers reported a negative shift in their relationships with students during burnout periods, attributed to stress-related classroom management difficulties (Downer et al., 2012) and emotional exhaustion, a burnout dimension causing negative social experiences (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Kay, a teacher with 30 years of experience, supported these findings. She recalled a period of burnout where she became indifferent to her students' needs and distanced herself due to her own problems:

> "I think at that time I just didn't care if students enjoy the lessons... Maybe I also kept distance from them, since my problems were already too much for me... But fortunately, this period lasted for a relatively short time, and I already feel that our relationship is much better now."

Kay's experience highlights how burnout can lead to a decrease in empathy and increased depersonalisation among teachers, affecting their relationships with students. However, she noted improvements in these relationships as she recovered from burnout.

Lucy and Mary are both among those teachers who managed to recover from burnout and also experienced that losing their interest and enthusiasm at work tends to affect the relationship with their students negatively:

> "That's a good question… I believe that when my enthusiasm decreases, my attitude also changes towards teaching and of course, the students. And it must have a negative effect on my relationship with them. And yes, I've experienced it quite a few times." (Lucy)

> "I'm trying to recall...At that time I was more impatient and less understanding. And yes, it had an effect on our relationship too. I wasn't even that interested in their problems, which I usually deal with quite a lot anyway. Because everything was too much for me." (Mary)

They both reported changes in their attitudes not only towards teaching but their students too, which was the consequence of experiencing burnout, as they were losing patience and

consequently having more negative relationship with their students (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008).

Mia, who has been teaching for more than 15 years now, also experienced some changes in her relationship with her students, however, she admitted that despite these negative changes, the relationship did not deteriorate significantly, even though she is still experiencing burnout:

> "It hasn't really changed too much. Or maybe a little bit. I don't care now that much if they like me. In the past, certain students involved me in their problems, but not anymore. I would call this a negative change. But our relationship didn't get particularly bad either, I think."

Teachers' narratives revealed that burnout may compromise their ability to maintain student relationships, reflecting research that links caring attitudes inversely with burnout symptoms; emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Teven, 2007). While twelve teachers noted a decline in student relationships during burnout, such effects can vary, shaped by environmental and individual factors (Farber, 1991; McCroskey et al., 2004). Moreover, the spread of negative emotions and possible burnout contagion from teachers to students can negatively affect student wellbeing and make teacher burnout observable to students (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000), highlighting the broader implications of teacher burnout on the educational environment.

6.2.4.3   Complex Interplay in Student-Teacher Relationships

The effect of burnout on student-teacher relationships can be complex, resulting in mixed dynamics. The quality of relationships with different students may vary throughout a teacher's career, and burnout can exacerbate these differences. Specifically, five teachers noted complex changes in their relationships with students during burnout, indicating that while some relationships remained strong, others weakened, thereby highlighting the effects of burnout on student-teacher interactions.

Kate, who has been teaching for 30 years now and has already recovered from burnout, had mixed experiences regarding her student group during burnout, as she had an exceptionally good relationship with her class she had been teaching for a long time, but also noticed negative

changes with the other classes she taught. While her experiences were varied in the student-teacher dynamic, she explained her relationship with rather classes and not individual students:

> "That was also an interesting thing, because now I have classes with whom I have been working for several years, and now they are about to graduate, and because I have been teaching them for so long… I would say that my relationship with them has improved a little bit. But it's just this class. With others I think it became a little bit worse then, as I cared a little bit less about everything then, including my students."

In the case of Kate, the mixed dynamics were caused by the differences she perceived among the groups she was teaching. She highlighted the class she had been teaching for years as she could manage to maintain a good relationship with the students, however, she was struggling with other classes. The reason for this might have been the level of her personal accomplishment, as her positive experiences with the group she had been teaching for long could reduce her negative feelings, and her relationship with them was not affected negatively.

Burnout can have complex effects on student-teacher relationships, influencing how teachers interact with different types of students. Michelle (late), Lily (mid) and Brandon (early), on the other hand, had various experiences regarding their individual students while coping with burnout:

> "Yes, it wasn't easy, there are students in every group who are not too motivated, like if everything is not right at home, or if there is a conflict between parents and children in the background… and at that time maybe I wasn't able to handle them so well. But then there were the hard-working, enthusiastic students, with whom it was quite easy to work. So, I would say, some days were maybe easier, some days were harder." (Michelle)

> "I think it was that those who my attitude was good, I had a good relationship with them, and those who didn't, I didn't have a good relationship with them. Maybe, I was a little more sensitive to them at that time, I could see who tried to be supportive and who didn't." (Lily)

> "There are some students I have had a good relationship with. I don't think it has changed a lot. And there are also some who wouldn't pay attention to me when I try to teach them, and I know I shouldn't, but I also ignore them. So, I would say, it's very mixed…" (Brandon)

Michelle, Lily and Brandon, similarly to Kate, were able to maintain good relationship with those students who might have contributed to their achievement and decided to isolate from those who did not show interest in learning.

These findings highlight the importance of social connections with students in teachers' professional lives, emphasising that these relationships are key, especially considering the significant time teachers spend with students. Although maintaining positive relationships during burnout is beneficial for coping, some teachers experience a shift towards negative dynamics. Literature indicated that such negative shifts may stem from teachers' attitudes (Farber, 1991; McCroskey et al., 2004), potentially leading to emotional or burnout contagion (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Frenzel & Stephens, 2013; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000), which can impact the student-teacher relationship. Despite these challenges, relationships with students can evolve in both positive and negative directions, creating complex dynamics within the student-teacher interaction.

6.2.4.4   Teacher Engagement through Student Care during Burnout

Interview findings indicate that experiencing negative emotions due to burnout or stress aligns with findings from previous research (Hargreaves, 1998; Schutz & Zembylas, 2009), highlighting the emotional labour aspect of teaching. Emotional dissonance, the conflict between felt and displayed emotions, can impact teacher wellbeing (Chang & Davis, 2009). Despite challenges, some teachers (n=4) find that caring for students remains a motivating aspect of their job that they cannot abandon, even during burnout. This suggests that while emotional dissonance presents difficulties, caring for students can still act as a driving force amidst burnout (King & Ng, 2018).

Luke (mid), for example, described himself as being not only caring but "natural and understanding" despite burnout. While he was constantly considering leaving the teaching profession, he was not able to stop caring about his students, who, according to him "appreciate it", which kept him engaged. Not only Luke, but also Emma realised that students could appreciate caring, therefore she considered it to be her "superpower", of which she was "quite proud". Remembering details of her students (e.g., their birthdays, hobbies or even families)

helped her not only to build rapport with them but to stay engaged despite experiencing an excessive amount of stress.

Similarly, Madison (late) cared about her students, despite the negative state of burnout, from which she is also currently recovering:

> "Because I've always had a good relationship with my students, they still came to me when they had problems. I couldn't send them away without helping them, even when I was really tired that day and had enough of problems and stress. I think that was what I couldn't let go of."

However, besides keeping important information about students and showing care and support, Amelie found it also important "not to be a bad example for the kids" as "I cared enough about them to try to block everything negative for the time of our class and try to make it work". While she put a lot of effort into blocking her negative emotions for the time of the lessons, she could stay engaged despite burnout.

While social connections—including with students—can be variously affected during burnout, the examples of Luke, Emma, Madison and Amelie indicate that caring can have a positive effect on teacher engagement. Caring has been found in previous studies influential on students' wellbeing and achievements (e.g., Barber, 2002; McCormick et al., 2013; O'Connor, 2008; Gkonou & Miller, 2019). However, positive emotions arising from caring can have positive effects on teacher engagement and wellbeing. That is, care requires teachers to manage and suppress their own emotions to meet societal norms of 'appropriate' emotional displays (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Teachers are expected to control negative emotions like anger and frustration, showcasing only positive emotions associated with caring (Gkonou & Miller, 2019). This continuing emotion management can increase stress as these emotional expectations can be mentally exhausting, causing dissonance between true feelings and required emotional displays, and ultimately impacting teachers' long-term wellbeing (King, 2016).

This section explored the impact of burnout on the student-teacher relationship, that is, the social-students aspect of engagement. Thirteen participants (42%) observed negative changes in dynamics during burnout, while nine teachers (29%) maintained positive relationships. Five (16%) described their connections as complex, and four (13%) felt that caring for students positively influenced their engagement.

The analysis showed that student-teacher connections can vary significantly, particularly influenced by the teacher's career stage. Early-career teachers, such as Brandon (1 year) might find the emotional aspects of teaching challenging, affecting their relationships with students. In contrast, teachers with more experience, including Kay (30 years), Mia (15 years), and Lucy (10 years), reported burnout impacting their student interactions differently, mainly negatively.

However, experienced teachers like Aaron (32 years), Julia (15 years), and Naomi (15 years) demonstrate that strong student connections can mitigate the effects of burnout, suggesting that these relationships may help navigate the challenges. Luke (25 years), Amelie (28 years), and Madison (33 years) highlighted the importance of maintaining care for students during burnout, showing how experienced teachers leverage their knowledge to foster positive dynamics, which can be crucial in managing burnout.

As examples, the narratives of *Lucy* and *Mia*—both mid-career teachers— demonstrate how burnout can affect the ability to connect with students, leading to a decrease in relationship quality. While Mia noticed a slight negative shift in her relationships with students, she did not view these changes as significantly as Lily did. However, Mia is currently experiencing burnout, which may affect her ability to fully distinguish changes compared to her pre-burnout state. On the other hand, Lily, who is in recovery, reflected on her experiences with burnout, offering a different perspective on the impact of this syndrome on student-teacher relationships. This suggests that stress and emotional exhaustion can affect the classroom atmosphere and student learning in various degrees.

Conversely, the story of *Brandon*—one of the youngest participants with a year of experience—reflects the diverse impacts of burnout on student-teacher interactions, with both positive and negative dynamics indicating that the effects of burnout are not uniform but can depend on factors like teacher resilience and the quality of existing relationships. Thus, he may have found it challenging to maintain solely positive relationships with students, possibly due to a lack of sufficient resilience developed early in his career.

These narratives collectively show that student-teacher dynamics are critical to teacher engagement and can be significantly influenced by burnout. Teachers' varied experiences revealed that, despite challenges, many can remain dedicated to their students, highlighting resilience in the profession. These narratives further emphasise the value of maintaining these

connections. Overall, the relationship with students can change in various ways during burnout, regardless of a teacher's years of experience.

6.2.5 Conclusion

Interviews with 31 teachers revealed that burnout significantly impacts teacher engagement across cognitive-physical, emotional, and social dimensions. While the primary effect was a decline in cognitive-physical engagement, the findings also showed that engagement and disengagement could coexist across all aspects. The importance of personal connections with students and colleagues to improve engagement during burnout was highlighted, showing both positive and negative influences.

The analysis revealed that burnout can adversely affect teacher engagement across all career stages, with variations in how it manifests based on experience levels. Early-career teachers showed significant disengagement in lesson preparation and negative emotional shifts, indicating a lack of coping mechanisms and resilience. Mid-career teachers experienced negative emotional changes and cognitive-physical disengagement. They struggled to maintain focus, lost interest in teaching, and spent less time on lesson preparation. This period represented a critical point in their careers, yet they began exploring new teaching methods. Late-career teachers, despite their resilience, faced severe cognitive-physical challenges, leading them to abandon extra responsibilities. Their relationships with colleagues and students were mixed, ranging from positive to strained. However, some teachers maintained engagement by caring for their students. Burnout affected social interactions at all career stages, with relationships with colleagues suffering the most during mid and late career, and relationships with students suffering the most during mid-career. These findings highlight the necessity for educational systems to provide comprehensive support, particularly in the areas of mental health resources, professional development, and institutional backing. Special attention should be given to new teachers, which will be discussed in detail in Section 10.5.

The results support the concept that burnout and engagement can simultaneously exist in the professional lives of teachers (Timms et al., 2012). This suggests that teachers undergoing burnout may navigate through periods of both engagement and disengagement with different aspects of their roles. Thus, burnout and engagement are not mutually exclusive but can coexist

within a single individual. This finding is crucial for understanding the complex nature of burnout as well as for the development of effective coping and reengagement techniques tailored to the varied experiences of teachers which will be discussed in Chapter 8.

These teacher narratives further emphasise the importance of emotional experiences in burnout through various experiences. Thus, the next chapter will explore teachers' broader emotional experiences, examining both the immediate and long-term emotional impacts of burnout on EFL teachers. This exploration aims to answer the second research question regarding teachers' emotional experiences during burnout.

7. CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION—BROADER EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE DURING TEACHER BURNOUT

7.1 Introduction—Emotional Landscape in EFL Education During Burnout

Emotions play a crucial role in both teaching effectiveness and teacher wellbeing, as shown by previous studies (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017; Pekrun et al., 2002; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Building on the previous chapter's discussion of how burnout affects engagement, this chapter addresses the second research question:

RQ2: How do the immediate and cumulative emotional effects of stress and burnout influence teachers?

Initially, this examination of emotional experiences was not anticipated. However, it emerged as a crucial theme in the previous chapter (Section 6.2.2), warranting a dedicated analysis. This chapter aims to unravel the complex emotional experiences of teachers facing burnout, highlighting both immediate and long-term consequences. The exploration will begin by addressing the immediate effects of burnout, such as its impact on daily teaching activities and interactions. Following this, the cumulative effects will be discussed, emphasising how prolonged emotional strain can affect teachers. This dual focus will provide a comprehensive understanding of how stress and burnout affect teachers' emotional experiences and overall wellbeing. This analysis will set the stage for the next chapter, which focuses on coping mechanisms and reengagement techniques post-burnout.

7.2 The Immediate Emotional Impacts of Teacher Burnout

Both novice and experienced teachers reported the effects of burnout and accompanying negative emotions, which likely influenced classroom dynamics and their own wellbeing. Additionally, some teachers displayed signs of emotional labour. Emotional labour in teaching

was discussed earlier (Section 3.3.1), involving managing personal feelings to meet the emotional requirements of the job, often through strategies like surface acting (i.e., hiding true emotions) and deep acting (i.e., aligning outward emotions with genuine feelings) (Hochschild, 1983; King & Ng, 2018). However, these strategies can lead to stress, emotional dissonance, and ultimately burnout if not managed effectively (Acheson et al., 2016; Näring et al., 2006, 2011). Although the interview schedule was not specifically designed to investigate emotional labour and its strategies, some of the data suggests that teachers may have applied strategies in an effort to conceal signs of burnout.

This section refers to immediate effects as those direct consequences observable within daily teaching activities and interactions soon after they occur. Immediate effects manifested in this study as visible shifts in teacher behaviours and emotional responses that can influence the classroom atmosphere in real time. Therefore, this section will explore these impacts found in the interviews as teachers detailed their experiences and observations, illustrating the immediate emotional effects of burnout on daily teaching activities and student-teacher interactions.

7.2.1 Effects on Daily Teaching and out of Teaching Activities

Chapter 6 explored how burnout impacts emotional and cognitive-physical engagement, both essential for effective teaching. Teachers such as Audrey, Kate, Naomi, Stella, and Valerie faced considerable strain due to burnout, which they occasionally attempted to conceal. These emotional experiences can directly impact their daily teaching activities. As they recalled during their interviews, the way they engage with their teaching duties was notably affected during periods of burnout. These emotional experiences were characterised by impatience, fatigue, or reduced creativity.

The impact of stress on teachers' behaviour in the classroom and their attention to students' needs is a significant aspect of burnout. Audrey (early) tends to care about her students' problems when she is balanced at her workplace, experienced that her attention can decrease while encountering too much stress and she becomes "more snappy and less flexible in the lessons and pay less attention to their needs too." Similarly to Audrey, Kate (late) also

experienced the direct impacts on her daily teaching routines, becoming more impatient in the classroom:

> "Let me give you an example: I'm usually not bothered by explaining the same grammar or something to the students again and again. But I can get really impatient, when I'm overwhelmed with problems."

These experiences indicate how stress might lead to decreased attention to students' needs and a shift towards a less flexible, resulting in negative effects of stress and burnout, a more impatient behaviour. This behavioural change, however, can negatively affect the student-teacher relationship, which is crucial for creating a safe, supportive environment for language learning (Gkonou et al., 2020). The experiences of Audrey and Kate further emphasise the influence of burnout on their cognitive-physical engagement (Sections 6.2.1.2.; 6.2.1.4.), supporting that there might be a decline in attention that may manifest as impatience and reduced flexibility in classroom environments where emotional interactions were found to be regular (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017). The immediate impact of burnout on Kate's emotional experience likely worsened, particularly given the complexity of her relationships with students (Section 6.2.4.3).

Naomi (mid) found herself to be much less enthusiastic on day-to-day basis:

> "And impatience were signs too, so I was much more impatient… I didn't feel like bringing creative tasks into class that I would otherwise do. And the fact that I just wanted to finish everything as soon as possible."

Naomi's experience suggests that burnout led to a rush to complete tasks and a reduction in creativity in her teaching practice. Unlike other teachers, Naomi faced both cognitive-physical and emotional declines in her engagement (Sections 6.2.1.1; 6.2.2.2). Despite these challenges, she reported cognitive-physical engagement (Section 6.2.1.6) and maintained a positive relationship with her students (Section 6.2.4.1). The negative emotional consequences of burnout seemed temporary and might have been influenced by positive classroom interactions and supportive student relationships during her burnout experience. These interactions appeared crucial in managing burnout, offsetting daily emotional downturns through relational dynamics. The broader classroom relational climate, involving student-teacher dynamics, could be also crucial in managing burnout. Studies indicate that relational conflicts significantly increase emotional exhaustion, emphasising the importance of positive student-

teacher relationships in mitigating burnout and enhancing teacher wellbeing (Alamos et al., 2022; Corbin et al., 2019).

In the case of Stella (late) burnout manifested through a decline in enthusiasm and creativity in the classroom. Stella described feeling "fatigued" daily, a state that led to diminished energy and enthusiasm for her teaching responsibilities, being connected to the cognitive-physical dimension (Section 6.2.1.2):

> "They felt the fatigue, yes. They felt the fatigue, but now I'm starting to let them get a little bit closer, and, well, I'm getting a really good attitude from the parents. Now I know my own class, first of all. And I'm sure with the other kids too. I see that they can feel it."

Stella revealed her inability to conceal fatigue from her students and admitted to showing them more of her personal struggles during burnout. This openness sometimes led to a deeper connection with her students. Despite the challenges, Stella's emotional engagement with her teaching remained unaffected during burnout (Section 6.2.2.3). This resilience highlights the complex interplay of teacher engagement dimensions and emotional experiences during burnout. Her adverse effects were immediate stress responses rather than indicative of a long-term impact on her teaching commitment. Her experience highlights the varied impact of burnout on teachers, affecting some aspects of their work while leaving emotional engagement relatively intact. The broader literature supports Stella's experiences. Gu and Day (2013) argue that daily resilience equips teachers to manage the emotional and intellectual demands of their roles. Additionally, research by Tonekaboni and Nasiri (2022) and Li (2023) identified a significant negative correlation between teacher resilience and burnout. These studies suggest that resilience can not only mitigate stress and emotional exhaustion but also plays a crucial role in emotion regulation to prevent burnout (Li, 2023). Therefore, resilience is vital in managing burnout, as illustrated by Stella's resilient emotional engagement amidst the complex factors contributing to teacher burnout.

The quality of learning experiences in classrooms can be significantly influenced by teacher wellbeing, with teacher engagement playing a crucial role in delivering engaging and creative lessons (MacIntyre et al., 2016). Valerie (mid) similarly felt the negative impacts on her day-to-day duties and teaching due to burnout, noting that her activities became less engaging, and

she often sought to quickly complete her teaching tasks when she was overwhelmed by negative emotions.

> "That I'm not in a very good mood, let's say, not as much as I used to, maybe the tasks are less exciting. You can definitely see in me that I just want to get over the tasks."

That is, her reduced enthusiasm led to a decrease in the creativity and excitement of her tasks, which can also impact students' enjoyment and engagement in language learning. Valerie's experience also illustrates a difference from the experiences of teachers discussed in this analysis who reported a decline in emotional engagement due to burnout. However, Valerie— now recovered— did not experience this form of disengagement. Instead, she experienced a consistent level of emotional engagement, indicating her ability to sustain her passion despite burnout (Section 6.2.2.3) despite experiencing negative effects on her cognitive-physical engagement (Section 6.2.1.2). This suggests that the impact of burnout on Valerie was predominantly characterised by short-term or immediate effects on her enthusiasm, which did not compromise her overall emotional engagement. This distinction highlights the complex interplay and distinction between disengagement and burnout, implying that Valerie's disengagement might have been temporary during her burnout phase, indicating both positive and negative emotional experiences during burnout.

Vera (early) is one of those teachers who was found to try to conceal the signs of burnout from her students:

> "Obviously I'm trying not to be demotivated because it's their lives at stake, not mine, but no, so it's so much of a muse…I'm doing stand up and 45 minutes and we're pushing and we're going and we're going. But anyway, I noticed in the marking that I'm having a hard time getting started. I'm having a really hard time with it. I've got four piles in my bag, and the work itself. The students haven't noticed this yet…" (Vera)

Vera's narrative highlights the complex dynamics teachers might navigate while experiencing burnout, balancing the need to perform energetically for their students despite the ongoing internal struggles they face. Her effort to protect her students from her burnout emphasises a deep commitment to their wellbeing. This shows signs of an emotional labour strategy she might have applied to manage her personal emotions to fulfil her job's emotional demands, where her true feelings were concealed (Hochschild, 1983; King & Ng, 2018).

The previous chapter illustrated how Vera encountered both cognitive-physical engagement and disengagement (Sections 6.2.1.1; 6.2.1.6) during burnout. Despite these challenges, Vera's emotional engagement remained stable (Section 6.2.2.3), allowing her to preserve her initial enthusiasm in the long term, even though she faced occasional struggles on a daily basis. Thus, Vera managed to maintain an emotional consistency that helped her maintain her emotional engagement despite the fluctuations in her cognitive-physical engagement and commitment to out of teaching activities suggesting that these negative emotional experiences might have been rather immediate effects of burnout.

In conclusion, the experiences of Audrey, Kate, Naomi, Stella, Valerie, and Vera further emphasise the multifaceted impact of burnout on teachers' emotional and cognitive-physical engagement. They illustrate not only the emotional toll caused by burnout but might also affect classroom dynamics and the quality of education. The immediate effects of burnout—ranging from reduced creativity and enthusiasm to stress and fatigue—can directly influence the teacher's ability to engage effectively with students, thus impacting the learning environment.

The interviews implied that the immediate impacts of emotional labour in burnout might often affect teachers' daily teaching activities. However, the experiences of teachers indicated that in some cases these effects might extend beyond day-to-day tasks to influence relationships and interactions with students. This impact, which can vary among teachers, highlights the complexity of the relationship between burnout and emotional experiences and will be further explored in the following subsection.

7.2.2 Effects on the Classroom Climate and Student-teacher Interactions

The emotional and professional challenges in EFL teaching are complex and significantly influenced by the emotional demands of the profession. These demands can affect teachers' effectiveness and wellbeing (Talbot & Mercer, 2018). Language teaching, which requires extensive interpersonal interactions, heightens the emotional intensity of the role (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017). Research highlights both internal and external challenges to teachers' emotional health, such as workload, lack of support, and societal expectations, emphasising the importance of social relationships in supporting their emotional wellbeing and maintaining a healthy professional environment (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Gkonou et al., 2020).

The impact of emotions is particularly evident during burnout, affecting teachers at various career stages. Teachers engage in numerous social interactions in the classroom, making it essential to build strong relationships with students (Atmaca et al., 2020). Teacher emotions are increasingly recognised for their role in managing emotional states (Chan, 2008) and preventing burnout (Chang, 2009a), thus playing crucial role during burnout. The experiences of Brandon, Diana, Emma, and Evelyn imply various effects of emotional experiences in teaching, illustrating how burnout can affect the teaching environment and the dynamics between teachers and their students which manifested in negative emotions and changes in attitudes towards students.

Brandon (early) initially entered teaching with enthusiasm but has faced changes in engagement due to burnout. He noted that students might have perceived his emotional changes:

> "I often also go to class when I'm upset, or, well, you could say, demotivated. So, when I can't hide it, I tend to show my negative state, they usually ask me, 'is the teacher in a bad mood?' and just I usually say that the 'teacher' is in a bad mood or that he is having a bad day. But I'm sure they realised that, that it's getting to be my usual mood."

His example illustrates how not being able to suppress his true negative feelings can affect the classroom environment in daily teaching activities, potentially leading to emotional exhaustion (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2015; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). In the analysis of the previous chapter, Brandon was found to be experiencing negative effects of burnout on his cognitive-physical and emotional engagement (Sections 6.2.1.3; 6.2.2.1). Brandon's possibly visible struggles with his emotions led to a shift in his classroom presence and student-teacher interactions, which might have affected daily interactions with students.

Research suggests that emotional contagion within classrooms can significantly affect the learning environment, as students are often perceptive to their teachers' emotional states (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). This dynamic was also found in the experiences of Diana (mid) and Emma (mid). As stress was increasing, their emotions were negatively affected, turning into impatience and changed attitude towards students and according to them, their students could sense these changes. Diana admitted:

"Yes, I get impatient, mainly with myself. And then I get impatient with the students too, so of course they can sense it. They never ask me about it, but they can see that something is different and I'm more negative and impatient than usual."

Similarly, Emma, who has participated in national educational protests against new laws and restrictions that disadvantage teachers and their working conditions, feels that her students can sense her frustration:

"They can surely feel it. I think it's not only me who's getting a little bit impatient now, but you know, there are these protests, and our students and their parents are very supportive. But we are still worried and also I don't know if it's the right word, but angry, maybe. We are very frustrated now and, even if we try to block it, students can sense it."

Diana and Emma's experiences highlight the various emotional effects burnout can have on teacher engagement and differences in efforts to or failure to mask the signs of these influences. Diana's cognitive-physical engagement decreased during burnout, a common issue among teachers as it was reported in (Section 6.2.1.1). She recognised that she was not able to hide her negative feelings from her students. Emma, however, showed a somewhat different response to burnout, driven by her care for her students (Section 6.2.4.4). This care for students not only helped her in maintaining her engagement but specifically her social-student engagement. Thus, her dedication to her students' needs, shown in Chapter 6, might have motivated her to conceal, "block out" her burnout symptoms to prevent negatively impacting them despite her admitting that her students might see these signs. This different response suggests the significance of caring in the teaching profession (King & Ng, 2018), particularly noted in language teaching as teaching-caring (Miller & Gkonou, 2018; Noddings, 2013). Diana's impatience and Emma's frustration during educational protests highlight the deep emotional connections between teachers and students, affecting the learning environment (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Reyes et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the experiences of Diana and Emma also highlight the concept of emotional contagion within educational settings (Frenzel & Stephens, 2013), suggesting that the emotional state of the teacher might significantly influence the classroom climate via contagious effects on the emotions. Moreover, their experiences emphasise the critical role of teachers' emotional wellbeing in creating an encouraging learning environment, as highlighted by Jennings and Greenberg (2009).

The emotional wellbeing of teachers is crucial for maintaining effective teaching and positive student-teacher interactions. Emotional exhaustion, a common symptom of burnout, can significantly undermine a teacher's ability to engage students, manage classroom dynamics, and maintain enthusiasm in language teaching (MacIntyre et al., 2016). This dynamic is shown in the experience of Evelyn (mid). Despite her efforts to maintain a professional manner and not let personal or negative feelings affect her teaching, Evelyn admitted to the challenges of concealing her emotional state:

> "I try not to bring private things into the class. So, I prepare and pay attention to the child and the lesson in the same way. Specifically, these children I mentioned as a second example. They must have seen on my face that Miss Evelyn is sad or has a blank look on her face."

Her struggle with disillusionment in her educational environment and the difficulty of maintaining academic achievement among demotivated students (as discussed in Section 6.2.2.1) illustrates the significant pressures on her to address not only linguistic challenges but also varied motivational levels and academic competencies of their students as it has been found in literature (Dewaele et al., 2018). The feelings of discouragement and difficulty in enjoying teaching reported by Evelyn highlight the profound impact of burnout on daily teaching interactions and her relationship with the profession. Furthermore, the previously discussed analysis indicates that her emotional engagement was significantly affected during her burnout phase (Section 6.2.2.1), further highlighting the emotional consequences of experiencing burnout.

The findings in this section indicate that the emotional impacts of burnout on teachers is complex; it might influence not only their personal wellbeing but also their interactions with students and the overall learning environment. The experiences of Diana, Emma, and Evelyn reflect how emotional distress might manifest in the classroom which can affect student-teacher dynamics (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Additionally, findings support the contagious nature of emotions within educational settings, where students can often perceive changes in their teachers' emotional states, potentially affecting their learning environment (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2015).

This section has discussed the complex interplay between teacher burnout and teacher engagement in daily teaching activities and classroom dynamics within the EFL teaching context. The emotional toll associated with EFL teaching (King & Ng, 2018), as illustrated by the experiences of these teachers indicates the immediate impact that burnout can have not only on teachers' wellbeing but potentially also on their professional efficacy and learning environment. Furthermore, the experiences of these teachers highlight the varying emotional effects of burnout across different stages of their careers, emphasising the necessity for further examination into emotional experiences during burnout across various career stages.

Additionally, the analysis in this section revealed that Naomi and Vera are among those teachers who have experienced both negative and positive influences on their cognitive-physical engagement. This suggests that their experiences might have been different from other teachers, as they reflect a broader spectrum of the impacts of burnout on this aspect of engagement specifically, not only its negative effects. This further emphasises the possibility of dual effects of burnout, suggesting that the emotional experiences associated with burnout can have immediate impacts on teachers, potentially leading to short-term consequences for these teachers rather than long-term effects in this aspect.

Moreover, some teachers reported either no negative impact on their emotional engagement or even a positive influence during burnout, indicating the complex interplay of emotional experiences in EFL education. Thus, findings imply that engagement in classroom activities and positive relationships with students can help mitigate these negative impacts, highlighting the complexity of student-teacher dynamics and their significant role in influencing teacher wellbeing and aiding recovery from burnout.

However, it is also important to discuss that some teachers might have experienced cumulative effects from the emotional burdens of burnout, the analysis of which will be explored further in the following.

7.3   The Cumulative Emotional Impacts of Teacher Burnout

The previous section explored the immediate emotional effects of burnout on teachers' daily experiences. However, these effects can also accumulate over time, resulting in long-term consequences. In this section, cumulative effects refer to the progressive impact of repeated

emotional efforts that, over time, may result in significant changes in a teacher's engagement and wellbeing. Thus, this section will discuss these cumulative effects of burnout on teachers found in data, as experienced by teachers at various stages of their careers. These effects manifested as reduced creativity, energy, enthusiasm, and self-efficacy, as well as increased long-term impatience.

Through the experiences of David, Kay, Nora and Aaron—who were found to experience cumulative effects in the analysis—this section will discuss how negative emotional experiences during burnout can diminish teachers' creativity and reduce their energy levels, therefore resulting in cumulative effects on teaching activities.

Burnout can cause a marked decline in teachers' creativity and engagement, driven mainly by reduced energy and enthusiasm for planning and delivering lessons. For example, David (mid) noted that his students might have sensed his burnout by experiencing less creative and engaging lessons than they had before, as he put less effort into preparing for them:

> "I had no time or even energy. I still did my best in teaching, but it wasn't as creative or exciting as it had been before. And I'm sure they noticed it"

His journey through burnout suggested a significant decrease in the enthusiasm and involvement of his lessons, marked by a period of negative effects on his cognitive-physical—through changing his teaching methods (Section 6.2.1.5)— and emotional disengagement while he was experiencing burnout (Section 6.2.2.1). That was, due to a lack of time and energy, he experienced his emotional engagement being affected, leading to long-term impacts on his lessons and how he delivered them.

Similarly, Kay (late) reflected on her fluctuating enthusiasm and energy for teaching, indicating how burnout has made her feel tired and less energetic, especially nearing her retirement. Despite enjoying the interaction with students, she acknowledged feeling "a bit tired with the story" and noted that "it's been pretty hard this last year", but "even on the worst day, we usually did something good", therefore attempting to show her enthusiasm, demonstrating the cumulative emotional effects of burnout on her motivation and overall energy levels, as her cognitive-physical engagement was also found to be affected (Section 6.2.1.3). Her reported fatigue may also be associated with the negative change in her relationships with both of her colleagues (Section 6.2.3.1) and students (Section 6.2.4.2), indicating that her social

engagement might have been affected during burnout potentially worsening the long-term consequences.

Language teaching involves significant emotional demands, requiring teachers to enhance students' skills, motivate them, and manage classroom dynamics (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017). These demands can increase, as shown by the experiences of David and Kay, which can impact their engagement levels, and leading to potential cycles of reduced satisfaction for both teachers and students. Burnout, marked by decreased lesson quality and teaching enthusiasm, can affect teachers' ability to maintain supportive learning environments, due to reduced personal accomplishment (Pas et al., 2012).

The experiences of David and Kay highlight that burnout can have not only immediate but also cumulative emotional impacts on teachers. David's struggle with burnout compromised his ability to create an engaging learning environment affecting his cognitive-physical engagement (Section 6.2.1.5). His loss of teaching enthusiasm suggests that his emotional engagement was affected (Section 6.2.2.1), while Kay's experiences suggested her cognitive-physical (Section 6.2.1.3) and social-students engagement (Section 6.2.4.2) to be affected during burnout, resulting in decreased energy. Chang (2009) emphasised that effective teaching necessitates emotional energy; and as burnout can negatively affect teachers' emotional investment in lessons, it can risk student achievement and interest in the language.

Teacher burnout can affect classroom performance, with a notable decrease in self-efficacy and lesson delivery, further illustrating the cumulative emotional effects of burnout. Nora (early) is an example of a teacher who, only five years into her teaching career, found herself disengaged to prepare for her lessons due to a lack of time and energy due to burnout. This lack of preparation not only affected her cognitive-physical engagement (Section 6.2.1.3) but might have led to a perceived decrease in the quality of her lessons, according to her manifesting in less enjoyable instruction. As she noted "the lessons became boring and less creative than before" which made her not feeling "proud of her teaching" and she was "very impatient" when she was struggling, therefore generating negative feelings and reduced self-efficacy during this period. She would have been "a bit ashamed if somebody had seen what was going on" while struggling with burnout. This suggests the cumulative impact of burnout, highlighting a significant reduction in self-efficacy during periods of burnout. High self-efficacy in teachers

is associated with more effective classroom management, greater commitment, and enthusiasm (Klassen & Chiu, 2011), as well as better teaching performance, job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014), and wellbeing (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Thus, Nora's burnout and decreased lesson quality might be linked to lower self-efficacy. Maintaining or enhancing self-efficacy could have potentially kept her classroom performance effective, her commitment strong, and her enthusiasm intact, even during challenges.

Teacher burnout can significantly affect self-efficacy and classroom dynamics, often diminishing the supportive nature of the learning environment. This complex relationship is emphasised by findings from Razmjoo and Ayoobiyan (2019), who demonstrated that self-efficacy is closely tied to resilience in teachers. Enhanced resilience enhances teachers' abilities to engage students effectively, thus promoting a positive learning atmosphere. In contrast, diminished self-efficacy, a key psychological mechanism during burnout (Friedman, 2000; Pines, 2002), can lead to a sense of reduced personal accomplishment, adversely impacting the teacher's capacity to foster a supportive classroom environment (Pas et al., 2012). This dynamic is also illustrated in the narrative of Aaron (late) who recently transitioned to a principal role and has experienced recovery from burnout. Over his three-decade career, Aaron observed that stress and burnout brought significant changes in his teaching approach and communication style, which in turn, affected his interactions with students:

> "Sometimes I was really impatient and of course, I cared about teaching less than before. And the kids noticed that. When I sounded a little harsher once or twice, they were really surprised."

This experience highlights the subtle ways, specifically impatience, in which changes in a teacher's emotional state can affect the student-teacher relationship. Further supporting this notion, research by Madigan and Kim (2021) suggests that emotional exhaustion can lead teachers to adopt a more critical and less motivational stance, which negatively affects the classroom climate. The cumulative impact of such emotional shifts is not only detrimental to the teacher's self-efficacy but can also influence their cognitive-physical engagement (illustrated in Sections 6.2.1.3 and 6.2.1.5).

The analysis presented in this section highlights the significant emotional impacts of burnout on language teachers, revealing how it can compromise self-efficacy, creativity, and ultimately, both teacher and student outcomes. Johnson et al. (2012) noted that such impacts extend to the classroom atmosphere, influencing the quality of instruction and the overall learning

environment. This degradation in the classroom experience can significantly reduce student enthusiasm and engagement, highlighting the extensive emotional ramifications of teacher burnout.

The analysis—examining teachers at early (e.g., Nora), mid (e.g., David), and late (e.g., Aaron, Kay) career stages—reveals crucial insights into how the effects of burnout can evolve over time. Nora, at the beginning of her career, demonstrates how early-stage burnout can affect self-efficacy and diminish the perceived quality of teaching materials. Her struggles with lesson preparation, creativity, and a general lack of time and energy highlight the potential for burnout to lead to disengagement with enduring consequences on a teacher's emotional experience. Mok and Moore (2019) emphasised that high levels of self-efficacy can increase teacher confidence, critical for enhancing student learning and achievement, which are notably undermined by burnout.

In contrast, mid- and late-career teachers like David and Kay can experience long-term consequences of burnout on their emotional states due to their extended years of teaching. David's reduced dedication to lesson preparation reflects a gradual decline in engagement and enthusiasm, impacting the learning environment. Kay's narrative of increasing fatigue as she nears retirement implies the cumulative emotional burden of burnout, manifesting in both reduced energy levels and a declining capacity to engage with teaching.

Aaron's experience is particularly illustrative of the emotional impacts of burnout. While experiencing a mix of cognitive-physical disengagement and engagement (Sections 6.2.1.3; 6.2.1.6), it is his emotional engagement that notably suffered—diminishing his enthusiasm and altering his teaching delivery (Section 6.2.2.1). Despite these challenges, Aaron managed to maintain a positive connection with his students, who played a crucial role in supporting him through his burnout phases (Section 6.2.4.1). However, his relationships with colleagues deteriorated (Section 6.2.3.1), highlighting how burnout can differentially affect various aspects of a teacher's professional life and emotional states.

In summary, this analysis in this chapter discussed the immediate and long-term detrimental effects of burnout across different stages of a teaching career, significantly impacting teachers' self-efficacy, engagement, and teaching practices. The findings not only illuminate the adverse

consequences for teacher wellbeing but also the critical need for educational systems to address these challenges. Effective intervention and support mechanisms are essential for promoting an educational environment where both teachers and students can thrive.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored the complex emotional experiences associated with burnout and their impact on teachers. It underscored the significance of the study's key findings regarding the emotional consequences of burnout, showing how burnout can result in either short-term or lasting effects, as reported by teachers. The analysis also connected these emotional impacts to different aspects of engagement. The analysis indicated adverse emotional impacts across different teaching career stages. It also further emphasised the coexistence of engagement and disengagement during burnout periods, highlighting the critical need to differentiate between burnout and disengagement. While this thesis initially did not focus on exploring these emotional experiences in-depth, this connection emerged as an important theme from the data unexpectedly, however, it urges further investigation. Additionally, these findings urge the need for addressing burnout and the emotional consequences of it, including continuous support to aid teachers in coping and reengaging post-burnout. Therefore, the next chapter will present findings on the ways teachers attempt to manage burnout and the methods teachers apply to rediscover their engagement during or after recovery from burnout. This examination aims to further emphasise the complex relationship between teacher burnout and engagement, addressing existing gaps in research and offering implications for educational practice in Chapter 10.

8. CHAPTER EIGHT: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION—OVERCOMING BURNOUT: COPING AND REENGAGEMENT

8.1 Introduction

In language education, the phenomenon of burnout and its consequences on teachers' professional lives are crucial. Gregersen et al. (2021) highlighted the critical role of coping for teachers with stress, and therefore, reengagement also plays an important role in the context of teacher burnout. This chapter builds upon previous discussions that explored the multifaceted impact of burnout on teacher engagement (Chapter 6) and the daily and cumulative emotional influences of burnout (Chapter 7). Their findings have highlighted the ways in which burnout can affect the cognitive-physical aspect of teacher engagement, from shifting teaching methodologies and decreased focus to negatively affected enthusiasm for additional responsibilities (Section 6.2.1). Furthermore, emotional engagement, including teachers' passion and commitment to teaching (Section 6.2.2), alongside social connections within the educational ecosystem with both colleagues (Section 6.2.3) and students (Section 6.2.4) have been shown to suffer significant strain. Furthermore, the coexistence of engagement and disengagement during burnout episodes supports the complexity of teachers' experiences and the need for effective coping and reengagement techniques post-burnout. However, it is important to acknowledge that while some teachers manage to reengage, others may leave the profession entirely due to the overwhelming effects of burnout although it is not the case in this sample. This highlights the importance of addressing burnout comprehensively to support teacher retention and wellbeing.

Therefore, this chapter aims to uncover the mechanisms EFL teachers apply to navigate through burnout and renew their engagement with teaching roles. Exploring these two crucial elements of teacher burnout the discussion of this chapter is guided by the third research question of this study:

RQ3: How do EFL teachers cope with burnout, and what techniques do they apply to reengage with their teaching roles post-burnout?

This chapter will first examine the coping strategies adopted by teachers, followed by an analysis of reengagement techniques, drawing insights from in-depth interviews with the same thirty-one teachers. Through this exploration, the chapter aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the coping and recovery processes in the teaching profession, shedding light on the different pathways of teachers across various career stages during and after burnout.

8.2   Coping with Teacher Burnout

Earlier chapters explored how burnout affects teachers' motivation and engagement in their work, revealing its detrimental impact. The analysis highlighted the complex emotional effects of burnout, showing both immediate and long-term influences on teachers' professional lives. This analysis shed light on broader consequences, such as changes in teaching methods and psychological challenges like isolation, reduced self-efficacy (Burke & Greenglass, 1993; Cedoline, 1982), and depression (Burke et al., 1996), emphasising the significant impact on teachers' wellbeing and work.

To address burnout, teachers might employ both adaptive and maladaptive strategies. Adaptive strategies, as identified by Seidman and Zager (1991), include engaging in hobbies, physical exercise, and fostering positive relationships, particularly with colleagues. Conversely, maladaptive strategies encompass harmful behaviours like alcohol consumption, smoking, and overeating. Roohafza et al. (2014) further differentiated coping styles into positive (proactive problem-solving and emotional management) and negative (avoidance and distancing from stress sources), with positive coping linked to better psychological outcomes (Chan, 1998). While negative and maladaptive coping are closely related, they are not synonymous; negative coping strategies are ineffective or lead to undesirable outcomes, while maladaptive strategies may temporarily relieve symptoms but are harmful long-term, increasing stress and causing psychological distress. Research discussed in Section 3.5.2 shows that adaptive strategies, such as direct-action and palliative approaches, can reduce stress and enhance resilience, whereas avoiding the root causes of stress is maladaptive and worsens outcomes over time.

Interviews revealed diverse coping mechanisms to mitigate burnout, focusing on emotional and psychological coping, leisure activities, and avoidance-distancing negative behaviours. This analysis highlights the strategies teachers use to navigate stress and burnout, aiming to improve their wellbeing and maintain teaching efficacy.

8.2.1 Emotional and Psychological Coping

The majority of teachers interviewed (n=17) indicated they sought emotional or psychological help to mitigate the impacts of burnout, to reduce the negative effects on their students. Among both experienced and novice teachers, nine reported receiving valuable support from their colleagues. Four others found the support from their family members during challenging periods useful. Additionally, three teachers pursued professional psychological help, and one teacher began journaling as a mechanism to navigate through the tough times.

8.2.1.1 Emotional Support from Colleagues

Literature categorises social support into two main types: emotional support from family and problem-solving support from the workplace (Halbesleben et al., 2010; Hargreaves, 2001). While family members can be of great help for teachers while suffering from negative emotional consequences, nine of the teachers mentioned their colleagues as being also helpful in managing negative feelings. Colleagues and supervisors have been found to provide help by contributing to the resolution of stress-related problems and the introduction of new professional methodologies (Fiorilli et al., 2017).

One of the teachers enjoying support from colleagues (Mary) was found to experience their relationship with their colleagues remain positive during burnout, while four of them (Vera, Emily, Julia, Evelyn) were experiencing mixed (both positive and negative) relationships at their workplaces (Section 6.2.3).

The importance of colleague support in managing stress is emphasised by the experiences of Ava and Evelyn (mid), who highlighted the significance of social support in the teaching

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profession, particularly in overcoming burnout. Ava noted the therapeutic effect of discussing problems with trusted colleagues:

> "So, I try to communicate my problems... I have a couple of great colleagues I can share my thoughts with, and it definitely helps. Talking definitely helps."

Similarly, Evelyn found support in confiding in a particularly supportive colleague:

> "I have a colleague who is very good to talk to about everything... It doesn't always help to fix the problems, but... I can let my negative feelings out."

Their stories illustrate the vital role of social support in the teaching profession, especially in overcoming burnout. They have both navigated recovery with help from empathetic colleagues, highlighting how peer support can not only offer emotional support but also build a community and collective resilience among teachers (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Day et al., 2011). Evelyn's experience illustrated signs of isolation, as evidenced by her reduced interactions with colleagues during periods of burnout (Section 6.2.3.3). Her isolation, while initially a response to the increased stress associated with burnout, likely evolved into a coping mechanism in itself. This self-imposed isolation from her colleagues may have been an attempt to protect herself from further stress, indicating a complex interplay between cause and response in her coping strategy. Simultaneously, her ability to confide in a colleague about her struggles further emphasises the significance of the workplace environment in coping with this syndrome. This duality indicates the complex role that social dynamics play in the experience and coping with burnout. That is, the duality of social dynamics in managing burnout highlights both the positive and negative aspects of colleague interactions. Thus, this complexity lies in the interplay between seeking support and the instinct to withdraw when overwhelmed. This dynamic implies that while social support is crucial, the nature and timing of this support are important, as the example of Evelyn indicates.

The supportive role of colleagues in managing stress and mitigating burnout is a critical aspect of the teaching profession, as also illustrated by the experiences of Valerie and Mary (mid). Valerie described a significant shift in how she handles stress, noting:

> "In the past, my negative feelings were overwhelming... Today, these occur less often... It helps a lot that I can share everything with my colleagues, and they sometimes have very good suggestions."

Similarly, Mary emphasised the support she received:

"I don't think I can do much with my negative feelings... I share my problems with my colleagues, who are really supportive and helpful when it's stressful."

Their experiences also highlighted the essential role of supportive colleagues in the teaching profession, especially in mitigating burnout. With decades of experience, both reflected the significance of sharing and communication with colleagues as crucial in managing burnout, suggesting that a supportive community among teachers is key to fostering resilience and wellbeing (Seidman & Zager, 1991). Furthermore, Mary described having positive relationships with her colleagues, attributing this to a strong community within the school. She expressed confidence in not being alone in experiencing burnout, noting that there is a mutual effort among staff to support one another. Regular meetings and events provided opportunities for developing interpersonal connections (Section 6.2.3.2). This illustrates that burnout might not have deteriorated her social relationships with colleagues; rather, these relationships formed part of her coping strategies, aiding her in overcoming burnout.

Regular meetings and after-school discussions can be critical strategies in managing challenges within the teaching profession, as highlighted by the experiences of Vera (early) and Emily (late). Vera found it helpful to share her experiences with her colleague and shared:

"I usually walk home with a colleague, and we talk. It helps so much to share my problems, and sometimes she also has good ideas. Hearing each other's opinions is very useful."

Similarly, Emily values the supportive community at her school, noting:

"Our community at school is good. Talking to my colleagues helps, and they often have good ideas for managing problems. My experience helps me be less affected by negative events."

Emily and Vera—similarly to Evelyn—both experienced feelings of isolation from their colleagues during periods of burnout, as discussed in Section 6.2.3.3. This suggests that stepping back from colleagues might have been a deliberate strategy to manage the increased stress they faced. Despite previous negative interactions with some colleagues, both of them found some supportive relationships within their workplace, which facilitated their ability to cope during challenging times. Although neither of them has fully recovered from burnout, the support from these colleagues has been crucial in mitigating the effects of burnout.

The examples of these teachers indicate that social support, particularly from colleagues with whom they have good relationships, can help manage negative emotions associated with burnout. This aligns with Cooley and Yovanoff's (1996) finding that colleague and supervisor support positively influences the three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment. Similarly, Unterbrink et al. (2012) found that social support positively affects emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment among secondary school teachers. Moreover, high levels of social support can enhance psychological, mental, and physical health (Doménech, 2006).

In Chapter 6, teachers' narratives regarding their support networks during burnout highlighted the critical importance of social ties within the teaching profession. These networks were found to be crucial for navigating burnout, suggesting that social-colleagues engagement can improve conditions for certain teachers, thereby aiding in coping with burnout, as exemplified by Mary (Section 6.2.3.2). A nurturing and supportive environment was found to mitigate emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Kahn et al., 2006). This analysis also illuminates the complex responses of teachers like Evelyn, Emily, and Vera, who experienced social isolation from colleagues during burnout (Section 6.2.3.3), possibly as a coping mechanism. Consequently, they encountered deteriorating relationships and reduced social engagement with colleagues. This highlights the paradoxical nature of social interactions during burnout: while some relationships may intensify burnout, others provide essential support.

8.2.1.2 Family Support

Of 31 interviewed teachers, four mentioned that one of the greatest supports for them is their families, whose financial and emotional support can/could help them to cope with the negative feelings caused by stress and burnout.

Family support emerged as a crucial coping mechanism for these teachers dealing with the emotional consequences of burnout, offering a foundation of stability and advice during stressful periods. For example, Aaron, even after teaching for longer than three decades, claims and gets a lot of support from his family which does not allow him to stay in a negative state for a long time which can occur when excessive stress happens:

"My father helped me as much as he could, and we talked and gave advice when we needed it. And the fact that our family background was financially stable also meant a lot."

The critical role of family support in managing stress is also illustrated by Alice, who has relied on her family, particularly her daughter, for nearly 30 years of her teaching career. Talking through her problems and negative experiences, she has learnt how to manage her negative feelings caused by stress:

"I talk a lot at home…sometimes my daughter can also help me to solve a problem, and it helps me through stressful situations. But I don't know where I would be now without being able to talk about my problems with someone."

Family support served as a crucial coping mechanism for Diana, who has been sharing her challenges with her family for over two decades. She found it particularly important to share her problems with someone, as she tends to blame herself for issues occurring and her negative feelings can overwhelm her sometimes:

"So, I absolutely blame myself when it happens, and I can have really negative feelings at that time. What helps then is talking. I talk to my family, my husband, obviously not to my children yet, they are very young. But I often complain to my husband, we talk about it, I let my negative feelings out and I feel a bit better. "

The significance of family support in managing the emotional consequences of burnout is also demonstrated by Nora, a teacher with five years of experience. Facing challenging situations similar to other teachers, Nora turns to her family for support during difficult times. She describes the benefits of this support, stating:

"Definitely my family- they have always been my side, and I can just complain to them whenever I want. It helps, it really does, then I have fewer negative feelings to deal with."

The examples of Aaron, Alice, Diana and Nora indicate that family support can act as a coping method with burnout for some teachers as they can turn to those people for help during burnout who are the closest to them.

The reports of these four teachers highlight the crucial role of family support in coping with stress and burnout. While some found the greatest support from family members, others turned to colleagues for help. Workplace social and emotional support can significantly impact teachers' wellbeing, as colleagues and leaders can help mitigate burnout (Unterbrink et al.,

2012). Emotional support from both family and colleagues, as discussed in this and the previous section, serves as an effective coping mechanism for emotional overwhelm. This is supported by literature emphasising family support's importance and the intertwined relationship between occupational and familial responsibilities (Greenglass et al., 1994). Fiorilli et al. (2019) also noted that teachers facing professional exhaustion often seek family support. Additionally, Seidman and Zager (1991), as discussed in Section 3.5.2., identified maintaining positive relationships as an adaptive strategy, noting that support from colleagues and leaders might be more beneficial than family support, as colleagues better understand the situation. These connections, both professional and personal, provide emotional support and contribute to teachers' long-term psychological wellbeing.

8.2.1.3 Coping through Psychological Help

Besides emotional coping strategies, another strategy teachers tried to manage their negative feelings caused by stressful situations and burnout is seeking for professional/psychological help. Although it might be an available option for teachers at school, some were seeking for help privately, at other psychological services. Three of the participants mentioned that they needed psychological help because they were not able to manage their negative feelings alone.

The exploration of psychological help as a coping strategy for negative emotions among teachers is illustrated through the experiences of Madison (late) and Luke (mid). While Madison chose this form of help first mainly to decide if her negative feelings were symptoms for developing burnout, she unfortunately, did not get the proper help from the talks with the psychologist and eventually, she stopped seeing her. Luke, on the other hand, decided to seek help as his depression triggered by burnout overwhelmed him and was not able to deal with it on his own anymore:

> "Yeah, what I tried to do was when I thought I was depressed I went to a psychologist. I went two or three times, but I'll be honest, it didn't help that much. So, I felt a little bit that I probably hadn't found the right person, because there's not a lot of better psychologists around here, and this lady was recommended to me, and she was very nice, very kind, I just don't know. I think I've been to her two or three times, so I've tried, for example, not to go to therapy, but just to talk to a competent professional to

see if something turns up, because I couldn't really decide what my problem was, that I'm a very introverted person, or I had burnout syndrome." (Madison)

"When I was really depressed, I went to therapy and I suffered a lot. And after a while, I think it helped, at least to manage my negative emotions somehow." (Luke)

Madison and Luke navigated their struggles with negative emotions through psychological consultations, although with differing outcomes. Madison sought psychological help to understand if her negative emotions signalled burnout. However, her sessions did not meet her expectations for identifying or mitigating her symptoms, leading her to end these consultations. In contrast, Luke, overwhelmed by depression, pursued therapy. Despite initial doubts about its effectiveness, he eventually found it somewhat beneficial in managing his distress. The experiences of these two participants highlight the complex nature of mental health support in the educational sector and emphasises the necessity for personalised approaches in psychological interventions for teachers facing emotional challenges.

Additionally, Madison's experience with burnout led to a decrease in her engagement with colleagues (Section 6.2.3.1), suggesting that she may not have found the necessary support within her immediate work environment. This lack of support might have prompted her to seek external help. On the other hand, Luke experienced emotional instability in his teaching career (Section 6.2.2.2), which led him to seek help in the form of therapy. his external intervention was beneficial for him, highlighting the varying needs and responses of teachers facing burnout.

Another source of professional psychological support can come from within schools. The importance of supportive internal resources for teachers facing burnout is emphasised by Emma's reliance on her relationship with the school psychologist. She appreciates having someone within the school who is also focused on staff wellbeing:

"Sometimes I need to turn to the school psychologist... She listens to me. I can tell her my problems."

Her experience emphasises the value of supportive internal resources for teachers facing burnout. With regular sessions, Emma found a stable support system in her school psychologist, indicating how effective support structures within schools can help teachers cope with burnout and emotional stress. This underlines the role of school psychologists in fostering a resilient teaching community through open communication and targeted support, aligning

with findings on the effectiveness of direct-action strategies in managing burnout (Castro et al., 2010).

Seeking help from family, colleagues, and engaging in leisure are key coping methods (Cancio et al., 2018), but psychological sessions can offer unique benefits in stress relief and learning to navigate challenges. However, these sessions might not always be universally effective, as seen with Madison, highlighting the complexity of finding the right support. Despite having access to psychological sessions, she did not find them as beneficial as expected. This suggests that while professional support is crucial, it must be personalised and adaptable to each individual's circumstances. Thus, this finding suggests the variety in approaches to coping across different experience levels in the teaching profession.

8.2.1.4   Coping through Journaling

As another emotional coping mechanism, one of the teachers found writing a journal useful in managing negative feelings. Rose, who is one of the youngest and least experienced teachers in this study found writing a journal to be especially valuable when she first started developing the symptoms of burnout and has been regularly using this coping method since then:

> "So far it's worked really well that I write a few words down about the situation, you know, like in a diary, I write about my thoughts, I write about lot of things happening that day and then it helps me to get along a little bit better."

Journaling has also been found to be an effective mechanism in coping with burnout (Von der Embse et al., 2019), although Rose was the only teacher who mentioned its positive effects. While she has been writing her journal since she first started developing negative emotions connected to teaching, she admitted experiencing burnout at the moment of the interview. That is, she could not comment on whether it is a really successful method in coping with burnout. At the same time, she reported a significant positive change, that is, while describing her thoughts, she sometimes manages to get rid of her negative feelings for a while, which may even become a mechanism that works in the long term.

The experiences of the teachers presented in this section, applying emotional and psychological coping mechanisms, highlights the significant role and challenges of emotions in EFL teaching. To mitigate the psychological impacts of burnout in emotional labour, teachers may employ

strategies for managing their emotions, as it was found in literature earlier (Yin et al., 2013). This includes emotional regulation, which teachers use to navigate challenges, improving their sense of control and self-efficacy (Liu & Chu, 2022). However, as reported throughout Section 8.2.1, some teachers find relief from emotional strains through seeking support from family, colleagues, professional psychological help, and journaling. The reason for seeking emotional and psychological support could stem from the consequences of emotional exhaustion, suggesting that such support might be perceived as a highly effective coping mechanism during these experiences and emotional difficulties.

In the literature on coping with teacher burnout, two primary strategies have been identified: direct-action and palliative methods (Kyriacou, 2001), both aimed at reducing emotional exhaustion and enhancing teacher resilience (as discussed in Section 3.5.2). Direct-action strategies are proactive and include seeking help from colleagues, engaging in professional development, setting work limits, and reflective practice (Kyriacou, 2001; Chang, 2009b; Sharplin et al., 2011). Conversely, palliative strategies focus on lowering stress levels through internal and emotional reaction-modifying techniques such as positive self-talk, goal setting, establishing psychological boundaries, using humour, engaging in spiritual or religious practices, emotional management, and seeking both social-emotional support and professional help, along with regular exercise (Kyriacou, 2001; Sharplin et al., 2011; Beltman et al., 2011; Mansfield et al., 2012).

This analysis has identified instances of both direct-action and palliative coping strategies among teachers. However, it appears that teachers did not frequently engage with specific palliative strategies such as positive self-talk, goal setting, and emotional management. The absence of these techniques in teachers' coping may suggest a need for further training or support in integrating comprehensive psychological and emotional management strategies into their stress reduction practices.

Additionally, the analysis shed light to that, teachers with negatively affected cognitive-physical but positive social engagement (e.g., Mary—Sections 6.2.1.3; 6.2.3.2) may benefit more from peer support, while those facing social isolation (e.g., Madison—Section 6.2.3.3) might prefer individualised methods, i.e., professional help, even though it was not effective for Madison on this occasion. Family support was found to be crucial for those with mixed engagement effects (e.g., Aaron— Sections 6.2.1.3, 6.2.2.1, 6.2.3.1; Alice— Sections 6.2.1.1,

), offering emotional stability despite professional challenges. However, it may not be enough for those having experienced strained work relationships (e.g., Nora— Section). Seeking professional help (Madison, Emma, Luke) indicate coping mechanisms chosen based on personal and workplace support needs, suggesting the complex interplay between various aspects of engagement in coping with burnout. Other teachers, however, have shared their use of alternative methods to cope with the challenges of burnout, focusing on leisure and non-teaching activities, which will be explored in the following discussion.

8.2.2 Pursuing Leisure and Non-Teaching Activities

While emotional and psychological support were reported by more than half of the participants (n=17) as a way to cope with negative emotions during burnout, some of the teachers (n=8) mentioned keeping themselves busy with free time activities as a good method to cope with negative feelings caused by stressful situations and burnout. These activities mentioned by teachers were out of classroom activities they are trying to pursue in order to deal with the consequences of burnout.

Pursuing leisure and non-teaching activities is a coping strategy that appeared to be important regardless of career stage. Stella, David, and Kate, teachers with over 25 years of experience, have found leisure and non-teaching activities helpful while coping with burnout. Stella shared:

> "Well, I think it's very difficult for me. It's very difficult for me. I try to engage myself with more work, or I try to watch something on TV that's like, you know, keeps me somehow busy."

While Stella attempts to pursue leisure activities to cope with burnout, her admission also highlights her struggle of balancing work and self-care. Her effort to immerse herself in more work or keep herself busy with television illustrates a common strategy to distract and alleviate stress, as a direct-action coping method.

David found peace in nature: "I lie in a garden and listen to the wind...walk my dog, play music..." Kate enjoys gardening and cycling, "gardening...watering...cycling home on the dam...nature can always push me back…" These activities represent crucial coping mechanisms against stress and negativity of professional life. Their commitment to engaging in pursuits that bring joy shows the importance of self-care and balance, building resilience

essential for coping with burnout, thus contributing to managing professional challenges effectively (Xie, 2021; Fathi & Saeedian, 2020).

Bella, Naomi and Molly are all mid-career teachers and also tried to keep their mind busy when experiencing negative feelings in order not to be affected by them. They always try to let those negative feelings go which usually helps them to manage them effectively:

> "I'm really letting them go now. I'm really letting them go. So, I'm not going to let myself get upset about it, I keep my mind busy and work a little bit more or do something I can enjoy." (Bella)

> "I do a lot of yoga, walk the dog, ride my bike, so whatever happens, but sports, movement, which keeps me busy, too busy to think of any negativity. You know, I always escape any negativity." (Naomi)

> "Well, I definitely try to get out of my daily routine and do something very different. I think creative work can give me a lot, or some kind of creative or artistic activity, or spending time in nature is a totally different way of being. I think it can give you a lot of strength and energy." (Molly)

The narratives of Bella, Naomi, and Molly reveal a common strategy among mid-career teachers for managing professional stress: engaging in activities outside their teaching duties to mitigate negative emotions. Their approaches, such as yoga, biking, and seeking comfort in nature, underscore the importance of active coping mechanisms in addressing burnout. These teachers demonstrate that focusing on enjoyable, fulfilling activities can significantly enhance overall wellbeing and manage challenges effectively. Their experiences align with previous research (Cancio et al., 2018) that supports active coping strategies in overcoming burnout. This underscores that, across the teaching profession, regardless of experience or age, engaging in leisure activities outside the classroom is crucial for maintaining mental health and professional endurance.

Moreover, these teachers faced varying impacts on their emotional engagement due to cognitive-physical challenges: negative for Bella and David (Section 6.2.2.1), positive for Stella (Section 6.2.2.3), and unstable for Naomi (Section 6.2.2.2). This suggests that teachers experiencing cognitive-physical disengagement due to burnout may turn to leisure and non-teaching activities as coping methods. These activities, often active and physical, do not demand intense cognitive engagement, which is crucial when burnout affects this aspect. The choice of coping mechanisms may also be influenced by their emotional state, indicating a

complex interaction between cognitive-physical and emotional aspects in deciding on coping methods.

The examples in this section highlight the significance of positive coping styles in managing burnout (Roohafza et al., 2014), with a notable majority of the teachers (25 out of 31, or 80%) adopting proactive styles to address and mitigate the negative impacts of burnout. This preference was found across teachers of varying experience levels, emphasising the widespread acknowledgment of positive coping mechanisms' effectiveness in stress and burnout reduction among teachers (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008).

Strategies that mitigate stress can enhance psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2004), crucial for burnout resilience, promoting optimism and proactive problem-solving. Teacher resilience (Hiver, 2018) is vital, using available resources for sustained wellbeing, as teachers in this study used emotional and psychological help, linked to higher job satisfaction, engagement (Day & Gu, 2013), and student performance (Gu & Li, 2015). Gu and Day (2013) suggest resilience fosters better management of challenges and emotional and cognitive demands, essential for teachers' efficacy and wellbeing. However, some teachers may adopt negative coping, such as avoidance (Roohafza et al., 2014), highlighting the need to examine struggles in adopting positive coping methods.

8.2.3   Negative Coping Approach- Avoidance and Distancing

The previous subsections discussed various positive coping styles applied by teachers to mitigate burnout. However, six participants admitted to struggling with stress management due to a lack of institutional or social support, resulting in avoidance and distancing strategies. These methods include considering leaving their positions or the teaching profession, emotional distancing through overeating, and feeling unable to manage negative emotions effectively. Such approaches were identified as negative coping styles in psychology (Roohafza et al., 2014), indicating that without adequate support, some teachers might withdraw or fail to take proactive steps to address burnout.

Despite their enthusiasm and commitment, young teachers can often encounter significant challenges in managing burnout early in their careers primarily due to emotional exhaustion

and stress (Antoniou et al., 2006; Brunsting et al., 2014; Lau et al., 2005). Brandon and Audrey, relatively new teachers with 1 and 2 years of experience respectively, struggle with burnout management. Brandon feels escape from teaching is his only solution due to unmanageable negative emotions, while Audrey, who is in a recovery phase, describes a cycle of stress, disengagement, and overwhelmed feelings due to accumulating responsibilities:

> "It's really difficult for me to calm down... I can't really manage my feelings now so well that I'm already planning what I'm going to do next... I see that to be the only way out." (Brandon)

> "When I am stressed or disengaged, I escape my work, then become even more stressed as my undone responsibilities pile up... These feelings are gone eventually though..." (Audrey)

Their experiences suggest age-related differences in coping with burnout, contrasting with more experienced teachers in this study who reported diverse coping strategies. Mukundan and Khandehroo (2010) found younger teachers often face emotional exhaustion and a lack of personal accomplishment, attributed to their relative inexperience in managing the emotional toll of burnout.

As teachers progress through their careers, the challenge of managing burnout and its associated negative emotions does not necessarily diminish, as illustrated by the experiences of mid-career teacher participants. Two of the mid-career teachers are Lily and Mia who also reported that they were having issues with dealing with negative emotions during burnout. They both have been teaching for 15 years now. While Lily reportedly was unable to manage her negative feelings and came to a decision to change workplace instead a few times, Mia felt desperate to handle her feelings well, but she admitted to having issues with it:

> "Sometimes I try to tell myself, that it's all happening because it's difficult to handle these kids, but it's really hard to let those feelings go. Since I'm more stressed, I eat more too- it didn't really help with my wardrobe… Now I'm trying to eat less of chocolate… Sometimes I feel like I can't really handle my feelings." (Mia)

> "So, I don't know. You know, I've left teaching a few times and never managed to fix these problems. I'm teaching now again but I keep running up against the same problems and I'm thinking about leaving again…" (Lily)

The experiences of Lily and Mia as mid-career teachers highlight the number of challenges in managing negative emotions during periods of burnout. Despite their years of experience in

this profession, both Lily and Mia have been suffering from the overwhelming nature of their feelings, leading to significant distress and uncertainty about their professional futures. Mia struggles to let go of stress-related emotions and Lily is having recurring thoughts of changing workplaces. This suggests the complexity of addressing burnout even for more experienced teachers. While they are currently in the process of recovering from burnout, the persistence of their emotional challenges shows an ongoing impact that burnout can have on individuals, even long after its initial appearance. This suggests the potential for recurrence of burnout if these emotional challenges are not effectively addressed.

Kay, the most experienced teacher with 30 years of teaching experience, expressed her struggle with coping with burnout by stating that she "will be happy to retire and that's what I do, just wait for my retirement," viewing her retirement happening soon as a form of coping mechanism. Her perspective sheds light on the overwhelming impact of burnout on even the most experienced teachers. That is, with three decades of teaching experience under her belt, awaiting retirement highlights the significant effect that burnout can take on an individual's wellbeing and job satisfaction. Viewing retirement as a coping mechanism, however, indicates the severity of the effects of burnout she might be experiencing and also emphasises the need for a more effective coping mechanism to mitigate these effects.

The examples of Brandon, Audrey, Mia, Lily and Kay—early-career, mid-career and late-career teachers— indicate that both less experienced and more experienced teachers can find it difficult to manage the negative emotional consequences of burnout, regardless their age. The reason for this might be the link which was found between teacher burnout and coping differences (Betoret & Artiga, 2010), claiming that problem solving can be connected to higher level personal accomplishment and avoiding the problem might be linked with higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation. That is, avoiding coping can be a result of high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Austin et al., 2005). It has also been confirmed by Antoniou et al. (2013), finding that stress and low wellbeing might lead to negative coping styles.

Another contributing factor to the adoption of negative coping mechanisms among teachers may be linked to how burnout impacted their engagement. Within this analysis, all teachers claimed negative effects of burnout on their cognitive-physical engagement (Section 6.2.1).

Furthermore, Brandon and Mia highlighted how their emotional engagement suffered (Section 6.2.2.1), while Brandon, Lily, Mia and Kay reported challenges in their relationships with students—ranging from complex interactions (Section 6.2.4.3) to complete negative experiences (Section 6.2.4.2). These findings suggest that the severity of the impact of burnout on engagement—across all aspects—may hinder teachers' ability to adopt positive coping strategies.

Particularly, the situation of *Mia* illustrates a unique contrast; despite facing negative effects in cognitive-physical, emotional, and social-students aspects, she reported positive relationship with her colleagues. This observation can raise an important consideration: a supportive collegial environment alone may not contribute to applying effective coping mechanism, which mechanism was found to be effective for other teachers. Alternatively, the perception of Mia of her relationships with colleagues might have been falsely optimistic, suggesting a possible lack of trust or depth in these relationships that would be necessary for seeking support during the challenging periods of burnout. This further emphasises the complexity of teacher engagement and coping mechanisms, suggesting the necessity for a multi-faceted support system that can address the various aspects of teacher engagement impacted by burnout.

Research highlighted the efficacy of direct-action—e.g., looking for help from colleagues, professional development and setting work limits (Kyriacou, 2001; Chang 2009; Sharplin et al., 2011)—and palliative coping strategies—e.g., seeking social-emotional support or professional help, seeking professional development, and regular exercise (Sharplin et al., 2011; Beltman et al., 2011; Mansfield et al., 2012)—over avoidance and distancing methods, which might worsen burnout symptoms like emotional exhaustion (Chan & Hui, 1995). Positive coping strategies can aid teachers in stress management (Akbari & Eghtesadi, 2017), while negative coping can intensify burnout (Austin et al., 2005; Chan, 1998), emphasising the need for support systems and proactive interventions in educational environments. Although the data did not show that these coping strategies intensified burnout—therefore not suggesting that they may be maladaptive—, further research is needed to determine if these strategies can lead to harmful effects. The experiences of Brandon, Audrey, Mia, and Lily illustrate the urgent requirement for interventions aimed at improving teacher wellbeing and reducing stress and burnout.

8.2.4 Summary of Coping with Burnout

This section has presented various strategies teachers might apply to manage burnout, categorised as positive (direct-approach and palliative) and negative (avoidance and distancing) styles. Positive styles involve emotional and psychological coping mechanisms such as support from colleagues, family, journaling, professional psychological help, and leisure/non-teaching activities, chosen by 80% of the interviewed teachers. Conversely, negative strategies include avoidance and distancing, where teachers feel overwhelmed by stress. The interviews also emphasised the importance of positive coping styles documented in literature (Roohafza et al., 2014) for teachers experiencing burnout. Unlike negative coping styles, positive methods can significantly reduce stress and the impacts of burnout (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Although most teachers preferred positive coping strategies, not all adopted this approach, possibly due to overwhelming stress leading to avoidance coping (Antoniou et al., 2013).

This chapter further highlighted the complex phenomenon of EFL teacher burnout. Chapter 6 presented how cognitive-physical, emotional, and social aspects of engagement can suffer during burnout, causing negative emotions (Chapter 7), potentially affecting the learning environment and student achievement (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Exploring these aspects has illuminated the social dimension of teacher engagement and the influence of various aspects on teachers' coping mechanisms during burnout.

Most teachers applied positive coping strategies, indicating they managed their stress despite burnout challenges. However, the emphasis on negative styles such as avoidance and distancing reveals a critical area of concern. These methods provide temporary relief but do not effectively address stressors, highlighting the importance of positive coping mechanisms. The analysis revealed varied experiences of early-career, mid-career, and late-career teachers in coping with burnout, showing a spectrum from adaptive to maladaptive approaches. Early-career teachers (Brandon and Audrey) struggled with negative emotions, considering leaving teaching. Mid-career teachers (Mia and Lily) faced similar challenges, with Lily considering workplace changes and Mia overeating as a stress response. In contrast, a late-career teacher (Kay) looks forward to retirement as her escape from burnout pressures. Other teachers across career stages found comfort in positive styles like collegial support, family support, journaling, psychological help, or leisure activities.

Mia's experiences, despite receiving colleague support (Section 6.2.3.2), suggest that a supportive environment alone might not suffice for effective coping, uncovering deeper issues like lack of trust. This complexity in coping might be influenced by the degree of burnout impact on teacher engagement, emphasising the need for a multi-faceted support system tailored to individual needs and career stages to improve resilience and promote a healthier professional life for teachers.

This section has explored various coping strategies teachers use to navigate burnout. Despite these efforts, teachers in the recovery phase or post-recovery may still find it challenging to fully reengage with their teaching roles. The following section will investigate the approaches teachers across different career stages might adopt to regain their engagement after burnout, aiming to uncover the complexities of reengagement after burnout.

8.3   EFL Teacher's Journey to Reengagement After Burnout

Gregersen et al. (2021) highlighted that coping is crucial for addressing stress—and, consequently, burnout—among language teachers. However, it is equally important to emphasise the role of reengagement in recovery after experiencing burnout. Klassen et al. (2013) described teacher engagement through a multidimensional framework emphasising cognitive-physical, emotional, and social aspects. Thus, these dimensions are vital for teachers' effectiveness and the creation of positive learning environments, indicating the intertwined nature of engagement with teaching. Therefore, this study not only explored how teachers navigate burnout but also how they attempt to reengage with their work, revealing varied experiences. Teachers recovering/recovered from burnout (n=19) reported engaging in professional development, taking on new roles, benefiting from student feedback, and seeking to achieve a work-life balance. These reengagement techniques post-burnout will be discussed in this section.

8.3.1   Professional Development with the Opportunity to Build New Connections

Opportunities for teachers to learn and grow have been found to significantly enhance their awareness of various aspects of their lives, fostering a sense of balance and a deeper

appreciation for how they use their time (Gregersen et al., 2021). Consequently, these opportunities may help teachers reengage after experiencing the negative consequences of burnout. In this study, these trainings and courses were in many cases the choices of participant teachers, as they did not receive support from the management in finding these opportunities. Despite the fact that according to previous studies burnt-out teachers were found to have rejecting attitude towards professional trainings (Carlsson et al, 2019; Fiorilli et al., 2017, 2019), six of the teachers in this study decided to take steps towards professional development to learn new skills in teaching which could help them to reengage themselves during burnout.

Professional development and networking opportunities were found in this analysis to play a crucial role in helping teachers maintain or revive their enthusiasm for teaching after and during recovery. Luke and Amelie, who are both with over 25 years of experience and currently recovering from burnout, looked for new opportunities at teacher forums and associations, which helped them not to lose their enthusiasm completely towards teaching. While Luke enjoyed taking part in conferences and events to spark new ideas, Amelie found particularly the new connections helpful for her:

> "Of course, I was really motivated to go to Oxford Teacher Training Conferences every year and go to maybe IATEFL conferences and as member of it I can read other people's stuff and watch some YouTube English teachers and I try to do whatever I can and come up with interesting things, but it's not easy to engage students even when I enjoy these activities." (Luke)

> "When I really wanted to leave, I was seeking for new opportunities, and there were these trainings I took part in. They were in Budapest and there were also some in the countryside. They were also small workshops especially for English teachers. And yes, I also did a mentor course. Not only did I learn a lot but getting to know the community and new colleagues is what really helped me. We discussed that many of us are in the same bad situation at the moment, we shared ideas with each other, and somehow this could always give us a new boost." (Amelie)

Their reports show that teachers enjoy the advantages of trainings and conferences in order to find continuous improvement which can be considered as a sign of engagement (Marzano, 2003). While Luke was mainly focusing on learning and improving, Amelie appreciated the prospect for new relationships during these events which could also contribute to her recovering besides reengaging her in teaching.

Similarly to Amelie, Lucy also found getting to know other teacher colleagues outside of her workplace engaging when she experienced losing her enthusiasm and decided to enrol in non-compulsory trainings that helped her to get away from the everyday stress she had been experiencing at that time:

> "It's really not easy… but first, when I just couldn't keep on teaching, I decided to do some extra trainings. It wasn't compulsory, I found them myself and forced myself to do something different. And it was really helpful, I met other teachers, some of them were going through the same difficulty. However, I have less and less time to do these trainings now."

The cases of Amelie and Lucy confirm that the presence of social connections and support play a crucial role in teachers' lives (Cunningham, 1982; Farber & Miller, 1981; Maslach & Jackson, 1984) and can affect teacher wellbeing either positively or (with the lack of) negatively.

Besides the joy of improving as a language teacher and relationships, non-language related activities can also act as a reengaging tool. For example, Naomi, who is also currently recovering from burnout, also tries to reengage herself by enrolling different courses and trainings, sometimes even non-teaching related ones. She, however, also mentioned that besides the amount of work they are required to do, she has just little time to enjoy these trainings:

> "I really love learning something new. I've just finished a yoga course, and I became a yoga instructor. But I also take part in teacher trainings and workshops if there are any. After a training I always feel more motivated, I can forget about all the annoyance. It's a shame that we teachers have little time for such trainings due to the amount of administration and tasks."

The experiences of Luke, Amelie, Lucy, and Naomi suggests the positive impact of training and professional development on teacher engagement and wellbeing. Such opportunities can not only facilitate professional growth but also promote social interactions and collegial support. Engaging in learning and development can improve teachers' sense of autonomy and competence, positively affecting their wellbeing and increasing self-efficacy (Zwart et al., 2015). High teacher self-efficacy is linked to greater job satisfaction and engagement, and

inversely related to burnout (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012), suggesting that enhancing self-efficacy might also help preventing burnout.

Furthermore, all teachers who pursued professional development as a means of reengagement observed negative changes in their cognitive-physical engagement. For instance, Luke experienced a loss in interest in teaching (Section 6.2.1.2), Lucy reduced her preparation efforts (Section 6.2.1.3), and Amelie and Naomi noted changes in their attention (Section 6.2.1.1).

Among the teachers, *Naomi*'s experience is particularly noteworthy due to her dual experience of both positive and negative shifts in cognitive-physical engagement. These fluctuations likely motivated her decision to pursue further training, aiming to reengage through innovative teaching methodologies and professional enhancement. Furthermore, this dual experience is particularly crucial because it highlights the complex nature of teacher engagement, highlighting that it is not a static but a dynamic state that can fluctuate based on various factors. Naomi's decision to pursue further training can be seen as a proactive response to these challenges. Thus, her proactive approach highlights the importance of continuous professional development in sustaining teacher engagement and effectiveness, suggesting that such training can help mitigate the challenges and enhance the fulfilment of teaching.

8.3.2   Taking on a New Role and Tasks

In addition to training opportunities, three teachers mentioned taking on new roles or tasks as a path to reengagement. While professional development can foster growth and open new teaching approaches, new roles outside the classroom can help teachers discover other strengths. Among three teachers, Aaron remembers that taking on a new role as a principal in the school he had been teaching at for more than 20 years could reengage him after burnout from which now he managed to recover:

> "and then the opportunity arose that the planning principal at the secondary school had retired, and I had all the qualifications and experience to take his place, so I applied, and I was eventually chosen, and then I think by starting to deal with new things, I suddenly started to become more motivated, and not only in my new position, but also in teaching…"

Like Aaron, Kate, who also has a lot of experience in teaching English (30 years), was also offered with a new role- to become a leader of their English teacher community, which helped her top reengage herself and started to enjoy her work again:

> "It was a couple of years ago, when I was thinking about doing something completely new. I was tired, not necessarily because of teaching but because of the administration and useless tasks we had to do. Then I was asked to be the leader of our English teacher community. I was first hesitating but then I accepted it. It was definitely a good decision, it's a great challenge for me. Now I'm more energetic than before."

Madison's reengagement post-burnout in her 33-year teaching career came from engaging in a new school project, which boosted her self-confidence and revealed her "hidden talents". She shared, "I'm very motivated when I have to work with a lot of people...I really enjoyed it...I realised that I was actually really good at many aspects of it", highlighting the role of self-efficacy in her professional resurgence. Self-efficacy was found to influence classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Mok & Moore, 2019). High self-efficacy linked with improved classroom management, commitment, enthusiasm (Klassen & Chiu, 2011), and significant reductions in teacher stress and burnout (Mede, 2009; Motallebzadeh et al., 2014; Ozkara, 2019; Fathi & Saeedian, 2020; Bing et al., 2022). Madison's story supports the critical role of self-efficacy in teacher engagement and the need for supportive environments that promote teacher growth and resilience.

Aaron previously noted declines in both his cognitive-physical (Section 6.2.1.3) and emotional engagement (Section 6.2.2.1), while Kate experienced a negative shift in her cognitive-physical (Section 6.2.1.2) and social engagement, reporting complex interactions with students (Section 6.2.4.3). This suggests that Aaron and Kate sought reengagement through adopting new roles, possibly as a response to diminished efforts, enthusiasm, or strained relationships with students, which necessitated a shift in their professional identities. This transition into new roles was also associated with self-efficacy, indicating a link between the pursuit of new professional paths and the belief in their teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, Madison and Aaron reported experiencing a reduction in their social engagement with colleagues, manifested in feelings of loneliness (Section 6.2.3.1). This suggests they might have looked for different roles within their professional settings, partly to foster new relationships with other colleagues or in the hope of improving existing connections. Thus, these findings imply that

teachers' choice of reengagement strategies could have been driven by the specific dimensions of their engagement that were most affected during burnout. It suggests that the decision to pursue new roles/tasks may be associated with changes in cognitive-physical, emotional, and social-colleagues aspects of engagement.

8.3.3 Positive Feedback and Meaningful Relationships with Students

Receiving feedback has been considered as one of the most important influences while examining wellbeing (e.g., Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), therefore it can result in acting as a reengaging tool for teachers. Five teachers mentioned that positive feedback and relationship with students to be an engaging influence after burnout. Anna and Molly, teachers who managed to recover from burnout, consider feedback from their students and the positive relationship with them being one of the greatest motivators, even when feeling demotivated:

> "If the feedback from the students is positive, so if I think of things like, for example, if they say that the lesson was good, or that they liked something, or that I can see that they are enthusiastic about doing something, then it has a good effect. When I succeed in a lesson, I feel that I have achieved the goal. It is also positive if I feel that my relationship with the children is good." (Anna)

> "I think feedback from the students definitely. I think it can also be hugely reinforcing, but then again it can also be something that can make someone completely demotivated. I mostly received positive feedback though and it usually helps my motivation." (Molly)

The importance of student engagement in the recovery process from burnout is highlighted by Audrey's experience. She finds that regular interactions with her students, both during lessons and breaks, significantly enhance her engagement post-burnout.:

> "I think any engagement helps. Talking to students in the lesson as well as in breaks, for example. I really enjoy when I have a good relationship with them. Some nice words from them can also engage me."

Anna, Molly, and Audrey's experiences highlight the reengaging power of student feedback for teachers recovering from burnout, enhancing personal accomplishment and self-efficacy, which positively impact job satisfaction and teacher wellbeing (Ortan et al., 2021). Positive

student feedback (Pas et al., 2012) can mitigate the stress associated with a lack of recognition and burnout effects (Maslach et al., 2001). Thus, emphasising positive affirmations can significantly contribute to teacher reengagement and burnout reduction (Lo, 2014).

Furthermore, Anna experienced positive interactions with students during their burnout (Section 6.2.4.1), whereas Audrey and Molly faced a negative shift in their cognitive-physical engagement (Sections 6.2.1.1; 6.2.1.4). This indicates that variations in the cognitive-physical and social-students dynamic, whether positive or negative, can lead to a renewed focus on connecting with students and valuing their feedback. Positive feedback can enhance the emotional dimension by making teachers enjoy their teaching more or again.

8.3.4 Work-Life Harmony after Burnout

While the ideal work-life balance has always been challenging for teachers working in school, being more conscious of this issue and allowing more free time to spend enjoyable activities and families through "slower pace" can contribute to less stress (Gregersen et al., 2021), and therefore to reengagement. Of five teachers, who reported gaining more work-life balance after burnout, Emily reported that for her it meant taking a conscious decision to prioritise her life outside of work at weekends, which has helped her in recovering from burnout, as she now tries to finish administration and assignment corrections at school, and she has to deal with less stress at home:

> "So, I don't bring work home, especially for the weekends. It's not easy, you know, because teaching is not a nine-to-five job, we have a lot to do after the teaching hours… So even when I have some tests to check or correct, I don't think about it, and if someone writes to me at the weekend, of course I'll check, but if it's not vitally important, so it's not that, you know, there's something with the child that's serious, then I won't answer until Monday morning. This is because I used to give almost all of my free time for work, and that simply wasn't good, I never had time for myself... Now, it's getting better definitely."

The significance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance as a strategy for reengagement after burnout is also illustrated by the experiences of Vera and Bella. Vera found helpful while recovering from burnout that she takes less work home and tries to finish her work at school.

According to her, she can concentrate more on teaching and can be more resilient to issues if she has time to relax at home and she does not spend her free time on marking assignments:

> "I think I've taken less work, assignments, tests home recently and I try to enjoy my free time once I get home. We have a lot of assignments and essays to check or correct and I used to do these at home, but it was just too much for me. I felt like working all day long, teaching at school then correcting at home. So, I don't do that anymore. I have time to recharge at home so I can be more enthusiastic at school, I think."

Bella believes that she managed to learn how to keep up the ideal work-life balance, as she is recovering, which can enhance her engagement despite the difficulties:

> "I'd like to believe that now I'm getting stronger, which is maybe not the best word to describe it I think I've taken less work … but maybe more resistant to all the negatives happening around. I'm not going to lie, it's really not easy, but I'm just trying to let the problems go and concentrate on teaching, because I like it."

Grace who is among those teachers who recovered from burnout, admitted that years of experience and going through burnout a few times helped her to build resilience and learn how not to let herself be affected by negative factors while teaching, which method has worked for her so far:

> "Now I just try to protect myself from everything negative happening. When I'm in a class, I'm there. So, I have to be very attentive. I have to focus on what's going on right here and now. And you know, it takes me being 56 years old to make this work, and it takes a lot of work and time and concentration, but after going through burnout a few times, I learnt how to bounce back. And most times, my techniques work, they do work."

These findings align with previous studies indicating that a balanced work-life can mitigate burnout and enhance wellbeing (Boström et al., 2020; Capone et al., 2019). The cases of Emily and Vera, who pursued work-life balance to reengage after burnout, contrast with Bella and Grace, who sought to prevent negative experiences by concentrating solely on teaching and avoiding involvement in issues. These narratives suggest that mid-career teachers may be more adept at achieving and maintaining work-life balance post-burnout, highlighting the effectiveness of reengagement strategies among more experienced teachers.

Teachers who aimed to maintain a healthy work-life balance in reengagement, reported declines in various aspects of their engagement, including Vera (cognitive-physical— Section 6.2.1.1; social-colleagues—Section 6.2.3.3), Bella (emotional—Section 6.2.2.1), Grace (social-colleagues—Section 6.2.3.1), and Emily (emotional—Section 6.2.2.2; social-colleagues—Section 6.2.3.3). *Vera* is particularly outstanding among the teachers, as an example for an undiminished passion for teaching during burnout. This enduring enthusiasm likely shaped her approach to reengagement strategies, aiming to regain her focus or to address the social isolation encountered during burnout. Her efforts suggest a desire to restore work-life balance and reconnect with the core values of her teaching profession.

Overall, the findings imply that teachers facing challenges in multiple aspects of their engagement may choose to separate their professional and personal lives as a technique to improve their engagement levels.

8.3.5 Summary of Reengagement

Findings show that teachers can reengage after burnout through various methods such as professional training, new roles, positive feedback, meaningful student relationships, and work-life balance. Teachers noted that professional growth is motivating post-burnout, but opportunities may be limited outside the capital city due to physical distance (Rude & Brewer, 2003; Weitzenkamp et al., 2003).

Revisiting engagement dimensions (Chapter 6), the analysis suggests professional development and new roles enhance cognitive-physical, emotional, and social engagement. These activities not only foster pedagogical growth but also improve collegial relationships, aiding post-burnout recovery. Teachers regaining cognitive-physical engagement used techniques to refocus and dedicate themselves to teaching tasks.

Positive feedback and meaningful student relationships impact engagement dimensions, potentially restoring teaching passion and work focus. Work-life balance mitigates fatigue and increases enthusiasm, strengthening engagement. These reengagement techniques are closely tied to specific aspects of engagement affected by burnout. Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of these techniques, considering engagement levels during burnout and career stages.

Reengagement techniques vary significantly among early-career, mid-career, and late-career teachers, reflecting different coping mechanisms. Early-career teachers like Audrey were found to encounter burnout by facing negative emotions and stress, that can result in considering leaving the profession. They were seeking reengagement through positive feedback from students, highlighting the need for support and professional development opportunities to facilitate reengagement. Mid-career teachers, represented by for example, Naomi, were shown to aim for professional growth to reengage, benefitting from training and expanded social networks, suggesting that professional development and social support are crucial for periods after/while overcoming burnout. Teachers (e.g., Anna, Molly) in this group also indicated that positive feedback and meaningful relationships with students contributed to their reengagement following burnout. Late-career teachers, such as Kate and Aaron, were found to engage in new roles and tasks, or trainings (e.g., Amelie) indicating that significant role changes or responsibilities and professional trainings can renew their sense of purpose and effectiveness in their teaching careers, aiding in recovery from burnout. Additionally, this group demonstrated that achieving work-life harmony could be an effective engagement method for late-career teachers, aiming for an optimal balance between their professional and personal lives.

The narratives of these teachers emphasise the importance of professional development, pursuing new roles/tasks, the value of positive feedback from students and work-life balance as a reengagement technique, suggesting implications for teachers at any career stage navigating the path to recovery from burnout.

8.4   Conclusion

This chapter revealed the complex dynamics of coping with and reengaging after burnout among EFL teachers, identifying coping mechanisms that include seeking support from colleagues and family, journaling, professional psychological help, leisure activities, as well as avoidance and distancing strategies. Positive styles, demonstrated by the majority of the participants, highlighted the potential for significantly improving teachers' lives by mitigating stress and burnout. The reengagement process, including professional development, new professional roles, positive student feedback, and work-life balance, suggested a pathway to regain teacher engagement across cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. However, the

analysis also revealed that experience level can influence the decision of choosing these reengagement opportunities.

The narratives of teachers across varying career stages demonstrate the range of experiences in addressing burnout on the individual level. The findings of this section answering the third research question of this study further emphasises the need for a comprehensive support system, coping and reengagement techniques based on the to the unique circumstances of each teacher, to enhance resilience and promote a rewarding professional journey after burnout. The following chapters will extend this discussion, exploring implications that arise from these findings and their significance for future research and practice.

9. CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION

9.1 Introduction

This thesis investigated burnout and engagement among EFL teachers in Hungarian secondary schools, focusing on how burnout impacts different dimensions of engagement and the relationship between these two phenomena. Specifically, the previous chapters uncovered how different dimensions of teacher engagement (i.e., cognitive-physical, emotional, and social aspects related to students and colleagues) can be impacted by burnout, identifying which dimensions are most vulnerable, which might remain unchanged or may even be positively affected during burnout (Chapter 6). Additionally, the analysis in Chapter 7 explored the importance of the day-to-day and cumulative emotional effects of burnout on the teachers while Chapter 8 attempted to understand how teachers cope with the consequences of burnout as well as the techniques teachers apply to reengage with their work following burnout.

This chapter will extend these discussions focusing on three key areas and answering the three research questions of this thesis: the Dynamics of Teacher Burnout and Teacher Engagement (RQ 1), the Broader Emotional Experience During Teacher Burnout (RQ 2) and Coping with Burnout and Reengagement Post-Burnout (RQ 3), before discussing the implications, limitations, and future research directions in the next chapter (Chapter 10).

9.2 RQ1- Dynamics of Teacher Burnout and Teacher Engagement

The analysis presented in Chapter 6 offered an examination of the impact of burnout on teacher engagement, revealing its multifaceted effects across cognitive-physical, emotional, and social dimensions. This discussion aims to interpret these findings within the broader literature, thus leading to suggestions for future research (Section 10.7).

One of the key findings of this analysis is how different aspects of engagement can be affected by burnout. This insight aligns with the concept discussed by Timms et al. (2012) and contrasts with the traditional perspective suggested by Schaufeli et al. (2006). While Schaufeli et al.

(2006) suggested that burnout and engagement are at opposite ends of a continuum, Timms et al. (2012) argue that teachers can remain engaged in certain aspects of their work despite experiencing burnout, suggesting these experiences are intertwined along a continuum rather than mutually exclusive. That is, Maslach and Leiter (2000) found that burnout might result from shifts in the aspects of engagement, specifically, energy transforming into exhaustion, involvement becoming cynicism, and efficacy becoming ineffectiveness (p. 24). Nonetheless, burnout is not synonymous with an overall lack of engagement, although the two can influence each other. The recognition of the impacts of burnout across cognitive-physical, emotional, and social dimensions further emphasises with the multifaceted conceptualisation of burnout posited in the literature before (Maslach et al., 2001). This suggests that the experience of burnout and its impact on engagement might more dynamic and context-specific than previously understood, highlighting the need for further investigation into how individual factors and career stages might vary these effects.

Moreover, the critical role of personal connections with students and colleagues in navigating the challenges posed by burnout is consistent with previous findings (Pines & Aronson, 1988; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This emphasises the support that positive workplace relationships provide against the negative effects of burnout.

The multidimensional framework developed by Klassen et al. (2013) was used to analyse teacher engagement in burnout. This framework emphasises the crucial roles of cognitive-physical, emotional, and social (with colleagues and students) dimensions of teacher engagement in the context of teacher burnout. However, this framework underpinned the analysis, revealing the link between the aspects of teacher engagement and teacher burnout, coping and reengagement.

Through the analysis of thirty-one secondary school English teachers' experiences, it was observed how burnout can impact teacher engagement across different career stages. This sheds light on the complexities of navigating professional challenges in EFL education, which will be discussed in this section.

9.2.1 Burnout Impacting the Cognitive-Physical Engagement

The findings indicate that burnout primarily impacts the cognitive-physical dimension of engagement, as many teachers reported challenges such as decreased focus, reduced interest in teaching, and a lack of enthusiasm for preparing lessons or creating engaging materials. Thus, the findings shed light on the significant role that burnout plays in affecting the cognitive-physical aspects of teacher engagement, echoing the findings of earlier studies (Klassen et al., 2013; Farber & Miller, 1981). These studies have previously highlighted the importance of teachers' focus and passion, while findings pointed out that burnout can greatly undermine teachers' ability to fulfil their roles effectively. This supports the notion that the vigour and attentiveness required for teaching can severely suffer during burnout and high levels of stress, illustrating findings of previous research. Xu and Jia (2022), for instance, identified a negative correlation between overall work engagement and stress, and between emotional exhaustion and work engagement. This suggests that increased stress and emotional exhaustion are associated with reduced levels of work engagement among EFL teachers.

Moreover, the findings align with more recent studies by Bardach et al. (2020; 2023), which highlighted the importance of cognitive abilities in managing stress. This suggests that a decline in cognitive capabilities, caused by stress and burnout, could significantly decrease teachers' engagement in their roles. This correlation supports the idea that sustaining cognitive resilience may protect against the negative impacts of stress and burnout on teaching engagement.

On the other hand, the findings diverged from those of Thékes (2019), who found that English language teachers in Hungary primarily reported emotional consequences from burnout. This difference could stem from Thékes (2019) may have focused on a different aspect of burnout while uncovering the extent of burnout among Hungarian English teachers and to identify which type of school poses the greatest risk of burnout for teachers. He also used different—quantitative—methodological approach, which could account for the discrepancy in findings. Qualitative methods might reveal subjective experiences and emotional narratives that might not be captured in studies applying quantitative measures. This also emphasises the complexity of burnout as a multi-faceted phenomenon that can manifest differently depending on the context and the lenses through which it is examined.

Furthermore, the analysis identified the impact of burnout on cognitive-physical engagement in teaching across different career stages, suggesting a complex landscape of teacher burnout. It revealed that the levels of disengagement due to burnout can vary, with early-career teachers experiencing significant cognitive-physical disengagement, while those advancing in their careers showed varying levels of both disengagement and engagement (see Table 6).

Early-career teachers were found to experience significant cognitive-physical disengagement due to burnout. This can be attributed to the overwhelming nature of their initial years of teaching. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) suggested that early-career teachers may experience high levels of stress due to reality shock or less successful occupational socialisation. This intense early stress can also significantly impact their cognitive-physical engagement. Mid-career teachers show varied levels of both disengagement and engagement. At this stage, they often take on additional responsibilities and tasks. While these new challenges can be energising, they can also find them overwhelming and might find themselves less engaged with extra responsibilities, preparation for lessons and might experience difficulties keeping their focus on work. This career group also showed a significant loss of interest in teaching, which may result from the increased administrative responsibilities and tasks. Additionally, evolving expectations from students and parents can require teachers to continuously adapt to new technologies and methods, adding to their workload. Late-career teachers continue to experience varied levels of disengagement and engagement during burnout. Their experience of burnout can be influenced by factors and while some were found to feel a renewed sense of purpose and engagement, others experienced a decline in motivation and increased disengagement from extra work responsibilities and lesson preparation due to cumulative stressors over their careers. Thus, this variance highlights the influence of career stage on teachers' experiences with burnout, suggesting that while early-career teachers may be particularly vulnerable, mid and late-career teachers are not immune to its negative effects.

Career Stage	Cognitive-Physical Engagement	Key Observations
Early-career	Significant disengagement	High stress due to reality shock and unsuccessful occupational socialisation. This can lead to difficulty maintaining focus and energy for lesson planning.
Mid-career	Varied levels of engagement	Some teachers maintain engagement, but the added responsibilities, such as administrative tasks, increase their workload, causing a decline in interest in teaching and leading to disengagement.
Late-career	Varied levels of engagement	Experiences vary: some teachers feel a renewed sense of purpose, while others experience declining engagement due to cumulative stress.

Table 6: Cognitive-Physical (Dis)engagement Across Career Stages

The study also uncovered that teachers might continue to find fulfilment in their work despite the presence of burnout, challenging the predominant belief that engagement and burnout might not be coexisting concepts (Schaufeli et al., 2006). This finding aligns with Timms et al. (2012), suggesting a complex interplay between engagement and burnout that acknowledges the ability of teachers to find joy and satisfaction during these challenges. Furthermore, as the analysis indicates, some teachers may experience both engagement and disengagement in the cognitive-physical aspect. This phenomenon highlights a complex interplay of factors that can simultaneously engage and disengage teachers in teaching activities. Thus, it indicates that factors affecting burnout such as excessive workload, classroom environment, and social support (as discussed in Section 3.2.1.) can significantly impact the level of teacher engagement. That is, high levels of workload and insufficient support may lead to burnout (Yong & Yue, 2007; Khezerlou, 2013), lack of energy and motivation, therefore disengagement, as was documented in literature (Andrews & Kacmar, 2001; Dietz et al., 2010; Heikkeri, 2010; Kahn, 1990). Conversely, personality factors can also significantly influence teacher burnout, as outlined in Section 3.2.1.2. Expanding on this, research among Chinese EFL teachers (Xu & Jia, 2022) examined the relationship between their engagement and

burnout. The study discovered a positive correlation between teachers' work engagement and their sense of self-efficacy. This suggests that the reason for both cognitive-physical engagement and disengagement in burnout might be attributed to individual differences in how teachers perceive and react to their professional challenges as well as external factors—school environment and classroom climate (e.g., Khezerlou, 2013), social support (e.g., Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010), and workload (e.g., Yong & Yue, 2007)—that might affect their burnout experiences.

Thus, the findings suggest that teachers' experiences with burnout are multifaceted, with burnout affecting various aspects of their professional lives differently. While it can negatively affect their enthusiasm and focus, leading to negative feelings towards teaching and lesson preparation, it might not always lead to disengagement. Some teachers manage to maintain— as three teachers (approximately 10%) did not perceive any negative changes in their engagement levels—or even find new forms of engagement within their work, highlighting the resilience of teachers in navigating the challenges of their profession (Day & Gu, 2013). In their mid to late careers, Evelyn, Michelle, and Madison showed no signs of cognitive-physical disengagement according to their interviews. This may be attributed to their active engagement in professional development which might explain their sustained motivation and effectiveness towards their teaching activities.

In conclusion, findings on how burnout can influence cognitive-physical teacher engagement highlight the complex interplay of teacher burnout and engagement, emphasising the significance of considering contextual, personality influences, career stages, and personal resilience. This approach, however, not only expands previous findings on teacher burnout and engagement but also has practical implications for strategies to support teachers facing these challenges, which implications will be discussed in Section 10.5.

9.2.2   Burnout Impacting the Emotional Engagement

The analysis revealed the various emotional experiences teachers might face during burnout— negative, instability and unwavering passion—, confirming the critical role that emotions play within the teaching profession, a notion supported by previous research (Yin & Lee, 2012; Klassen et al., 2013). The findings on negative shifts in emotions related to teaching roles

emphasises the concept of emotional labour in education, highlighting how it can increase psychological distress (King & Ng, 2018) and emotional exhaustion, a core dimension of burnout. This aligns with existing literature that illustrated the reciprocal relationship between teacher and student emotions, and how adverse student behaviours can detrimentally affect teachers' enthusiasm and emotional wellbeing (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Hargreaves, 2000). Additionally, these results align with the findings of Thékes (2019), who highlighted the emotional consequences of burnout among English teachers in Hungary. This supports the idea that emotional engagement is crucial for effective classroom dynamics and suggests that emotional contagion can significantly influence engagement with students and colleagues (Frenzel et al., 2009).

However, the discovery of emotional instability among some teachers, characterised by fluctuating feelings, suggests that burnout can lead to mix of feelings towards teaching. That is, the emotional toll of burnout among teachers is not only linked to the immediate symptoms of exhaustion but can also result in psychological consequences such as anxiety and depression (Agyapong et al., 2022). This means that increased stress can result in emotional balance and emotional instability towards teaching. This highlights the dynamic and complex nature of emotional engagement in the teaching profession, indicating that burnout can also involve moments of positive emotions. These findings suggest the complexity of teacher emotions (Cheng, 2021) and the potential influence of factors such as decreased motivation and disillusionment.

Moreover, the resilience shown by many teachers in maintaining their passion for their work, even during burnout, differs from the idea that burnout can negatively affect overall engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Findings suggest that a passion for teaching can serve as a protective factor against the emotional strains of burnout, indicating the possibility of positive emotional experiences in teaching and the importance of resilience in facing challenges (Feryok, 2012; Day & Gu, 2013). Thus, these findings also support the discussion on the relationship between burnout and engagement, supporting the notion that burnout and engagement can coexist within individuals (Timms et al., 2012; Salmela-Aro et al., 2019). This challenges the traditional belief posited by Schaufeli et al. (2006) that burnout and engagement are diametrically opposed, suggesting a more complex relationship between these phenomena.

Findings indicate that while burnout can significantly impact various aspects of teacher engagement, teachers across all career stages can still maintain a passion for teaching. Notably, while the majority of early-career teachers were found to have lost their enthusiasm for teaching, some mid and late-career teachers were found to remain particularly passionate despite the challenges. This resilience in passion can be attributed to factors such as motivation and commitment to teaching values a sense of accomplishment that might arise from student successes and the positive impacts they might make in their classrooms. Personal accomplishment is a significant aspect of burnout, as identified by Maslach et al. (1997), and as lack of it is a core dimension of this syndrome. Thus, the findings indicate that teachers who maintained their enthusiasm for teaching mainly belong to the mid and late stages of their careers (see Table 7).

Career Stage	Emotional Engagement	Key Observations
Early-career	High disengagement	High levels of emotional instability, stress, and disillusionment early in career.
Mid-career	Varied levels	Emotional exhaustion but some resilience due to student feedback and teaching experience.
Late-career	Mixed engagement	Some teachers regain passion, while others experience emotional disengagement due to fatigue.

Table 7: Emotional (Dis)engagement Across Career Stages

In conclusion, these findings suggest a complex relationship between burnout and teacher engagement, particularly the emotional aspect. That is, they highlight the potential for positive emotional experiences in teaching, despite the challenges teachers can experience caused by burnout. Maintaining the level of emotional engagement and resilience, is crucial for teachers across various career stages. Teachers who are engaged and characterised by greater autonomy and higher resilience can effectively overcome the challenges of the teaching profession (Salmela-Aro et al., 2019).

9.2.3 Burnout Impacting the Social Engagement (colleagues)

This study examined the complex effects of burnout on teacher relationships with colleagues, expanding previous research by Klassen et al. (2013) and Khani and Mirzaee (2015), who highlighted the critical influence of workplace relationships on burnout symptoms such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation. A significant number of teachers reported negatively affected relationships and a sense of isolation that can be attributed to emotional and burnout contagion, a phenomenon described by Meredith et al. (2020). This means that the emotional wellbeing of teachers and their ability to maintain positive relationships with colleagues can be significantly impacted by the spread of burnout within an educational environment. Thus, when teachers experience burnout, it might not be solely an individual issue; it has the potential to affect the emotional health of other; the entire teaching working environment. This contagion effect emphasises how the mood and energy levels of a teacher might influence those around them, potentially leading to a cycle of worsening emotional states among colleagues. As teachers feel more isolated and disconnected from their colleagues due to these shared negative emotions, the supportive culture that is crucial for a healthy working environment can be undermined.

Furthermore, the reflections of some of the teachers suggest that reduced social interactions during burnout or social isolation do not automatically equate to negative experiences of isolation. Instead, they can imply a proactive step towards recognising personal limitations and redefining social engagement. This perspective shifts the narrative from viewing isolation solely as a negative consequence to recognising it as a potential space for personal empowerment and boundary-setting. This supports Tschannen-Moran et al. (2000), finding that isolation might be necessary for teachers to maintain autonomy. That is, emotionally exhausted teachers can benefit from distancing themselves from their relationships to avoid or prevent worsening burnout.

However, some of teachers also reported either positive relationships—highlighting what might be mitigating effect of social support on burnout—or no change in their relationships, possibly due to pre-existing strong bonds. This indicates that positive relationships and a strong sense of community among teachers can mitigate the effects of burnout. That is, supportive colleagues can help protect against burnout's negative impacts, including isolation. Additionally, building supportive social networks can not only reduce stress and enhance

teacher resilience but also play a crucial role in motivating teachers for professional development as documented in literature (Mohr et al., 2003; Tait, 2008; Beltman et al., 2011). Moreover, teachers with pre-existing strong bonds reported stable relationships despite stress, suggesting that a resilient professional community can enhance resilience. The importance of social and peer support in mitigating these issues has been previously highlighted in various studies. Research by Howard and Johnson (2004) found that strong interpersonal relationships among colleagues can provide emotional support, reduce feelings of isolation, and help manage job-related stress. Similarly, Brouwers et al. (2011) demonstrated that a supportive work environment can significantly influence job satisfaction and teacher retention by creating a more positive and collaborative atmosphere. Similarly, Ho (2016) supported these findings by showing that peer support networks are critical for sustaining teachers' motivation and resilience, particularly in challenging educational settings.

The experiences of teachers across all career stages highlight the strain burnout can place on relationships among colleagues, reflecting findings of Burke and Greenglass (1993) and Cedoline (1982) on emotional consequences of burnout, such as irritability and withdrawal. The stories from some of the late-career teachers illustrated how the absence of support can increase feelings of isolation. While it can impact teacher wellbeing, feeling depressed and isolated can also adversely affect teaching effectiveness and the overall quality of instruction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

On the other hand, positive narratives from both mid and late-career teachers emphasise the beneficial role of supportive collegial relationships in navigating through burnout, aligning with Lambert et al. (2009) finding that positive workplace relationships can aid in managing burnout. This illustrates that the impact of burnout on teachers might vary with their workplace relationships. Negative experiences show burnout might lead to behaviours that strain relationships, potentially leading to loneliness or isolation while positive experiences highlight the importance of support from colleagues that can mitigate the effects of burnout.

The findings further revealed that some of the teachers did not observe any change in their workplace relationships during burnout, suggesting a varied impact of burnout on social interactions within the profession. This variance suggests the possibility that burnout might not universally influence social dynamics among teachers, indicating that burnout could either lead

to positive changes, have no impact, or coexist with engagement, as suggested by Timms et al. (2012) and Salmela-Aro et al. (2019).

Additionally, the analysis suggests that career stage might influence teachers' vulnerability or resilience to the negative social dynamics during burnout (see Table 8). Early-career teachers, for example, appear to experience either strained relationships and isolation due to deteriorating social interactions or experience no changes in the social dynamics, whereas more experienced teachers in their mid and late careers were found to draw strength from the support of their colleagues as well as experiencing negative shifts in their relationships with colleagues or social isolation in some cases. The reason might be that more experienced teachers might have developed stronger professional networks over time. These networks can offer both emotional support and practical advice and resources. As found in a study by Kahn et al. (2006) among teachers, positive emotional support can help mitigate burnout. However, in some cases, these teachers may still face negative shifts in relationships or social isolation, possibly due to evolving workplace dynamics or personal factors.

Career Stage	Social Engagement (colleagues)	Key Observations
Early-career	High disengagement or unchanged dynamics	Isolation due to lack of strong peer relationships and stress or unchanged dynamics.
Mid-career	Mixed engagement	Some teachers experience support from colleagues, but stress and burnout may cause social isolation.
Late-career	Varied levels	Strong professional relationships offer support, but some feel isolated or lonely due to strained relationships.

Table 8: Social-Colleagues (Dis)engagement Across Career Stages

In sum, these findings emphasise the critical role of supportive and positive workplace relationships in counteracting the effects of burnout, aligning with the findings of Kokkinos (2007) and Van Droogenbroeck et al. (2014). Thus, these findings highlight the importance of supportive, understanding, and positive workplace cultures to enhance teacher wellbeing and engagement.

9.2.4 Burnout Impacting the Social Engagement (students)

The foundational role of student-teacher relationships in teachers' professional lives and wellbeing has been found in literature (Sampson, 2016; Mercer et al., 2016), while findings in this study expanded on the complex interplay between burnout and these crucial connections. That it, they suggest that burnout can negatively affect these interactions or result in complex interplay in the student-teacher relationship. However, the findings also emphasised that caring and positive student relationships could enhance teacher engagement during periods of burnout aligns with earlier findings (Klassen et al., 2013; Spilt et al., 2011) on the significance of these dynamics in both maintaining teacher motivation and might serve as a form of coping during challenging times. This means that positive and caring relationships between students and teachers were found to play a critical role in mitigating the effects of burnout on teachers. That is, these relationships are not only beneficial for the teacher's sense of professional fulfilment but also for their wellbeing (Spilt et al., 2011), highlighting the integral role of positive interactions in mitigating the effects of burnout.

The negative changes in the student-teacher dynamic, as experienced by thirteen teachers, highlight the detrimental effects of burnout on educational interactions. The link between high stress levels, classroom management difficulties (Downer et al., 2012), and the resultant emotional exhaustion (Chang, 2009a; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) is a critical issue in education. Thus, these negative effects can not only influence the teachers' ability to maintain constructive relationships but can also impact the overall classroom environment.

However, the findings indicate that the effect of burnout on student-teacher relationships is not uniformly negative. Findings indicate that some teachers maintained or even improved their relationships with students during periods of burnout, suggesting a divergence from the more traditional view that burnout can only negatively affect student-teacher interactions. It also aligns with the study of Miller and Gkonou (2018), which notes that teaching-as-caring can lead not only to negative but also positive effects. Positive outcomes like student reciprocity, engagement, and high achievement can reward teachers' efforts and transform the negative aspects of emotional labour into positive ones (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006, p. 130). Teaching-as-caring was described as a practice not solely rooted in fostering nurturing relationships but also in managing the display of emotions i.e., anger or frustration (Miller & Gkonou, 2018; Zembylas, 2005). This aligns with social norms and expectations about what

constitutes appropriate emotional responses in the classroom. This highlights the significance of emotions in the classroom and their potential positive effects on both students and the teacher.

The positive impact of maintaining strong relationships with students during burnout, as reported by teachers, highlights a significant divergence from the expected detrimental effects of burnout on educational interactions. This suggests that positive student-teacher relationships can act as a protective factor against the effects of burnout, emphasising the resilience and dedication of teachers in sustaining engagement and wellbeing despite burnout challenges. This finding further supports the idea that engagement and burnout can coexist within the teaching profession (Timms et al., 2012; Salmela-Aro et al., 2019). This suggests that while teachers may face burnout and potential disengagement with other aspects, it is possible for some to remain engaged, particularly in the social aspects of their roles.

The analysis indicated that teacher burnout might affect teacher-student relationships differently across career stages (see Table 9). Early-career teachers may find the emotional aspect of teaching challenging during burnout, leading to negative to complex interactions with students. As teachers progress in their careers, the impact on student relationships might also vary. Some mid-career teachers can experience negative shifts due to burnout while both mid and late-career teachers demonstrated that strong student relationships can offer hope during challenges. This suggested the crucial role of care and positive dynamics in dealing with burnout, particularly for those with extensive teaching experience, suggesting that fostering these connections from the early stages to late stages of a teacher career is vital.

Career Stage	Social Engagement (students)	Key Observations
Early-career	Negative to complex interactions with students	Stress negatively affects the teacher-student relationships.
Mid-career	Negative shifts	Burnout negatively impacts some relationships, though student feedback and care can help.
Late-career	Strong teacher-student connections	Many maintain strong student connections, helping them navigate burnout.

Table 9: Social-Students (Dis)engagement Across Career Stages

In conclusion, the findings indicated that the impact of burnout on the social-students dimension of teacher engagement might be various. This variance suggests the complex nature of student-teacher relationships in burnout but also emphasises the potential for resilience, pointing to the possibility of maintaining engagement during periods of burnout.

The examination highlighted how various aspects of engagement can be affected by burnout, revealing that both engagement and disengagement can exist during burnout phases. Additionally, it uncovered broader emotional experiences that teachers might be undergoing during burnout, which will be discussed in the following section.

9.3 RQ2- Broader Emotional Experience During Teacher Burnout

Teacher burnout involves a complex mix of physical, psychological, and behavioural consequences, as detailed in Section 3.2.2. This multifaceted experience can affect teachers in various ways, potentially leading to fatigue, decreased motivation, frustration, and cynicism (e.g., Leung et al., 2000; Maslach, 2003a, 2003b). These interconnected dimensions can create a cycle of negative emotions and thoughts, worsening burnout and impacting overall wellbeing (Khajavy et al., 2017). Behaviourally, burnout can lead to decreased engagement (Xu & Jia, 2022), increased absenteeism (Lee et al., 2015), and irritability, all of which can negatively affect professional performance and create a less supportive classroom environment (Jacobson, 2016). This section will discuss the interplay between teacher burnout, emotional experiences, and the efforts teachers make to conceal its effects, as observed among the study participants.

The exploration was based on the second research question, examining how burnout results in immediate and cumulative emotional impacts while teachers attempt—or fail—to conceal their burnout from students. These emotional experiences can lead to significant challenges, as evidenced by the narratives of the teachers interviewed for this study. Although this thesis did not initially focus on examining these emotional experiences specifically, it became significant during the analysis. This means that these findings unexpectedly emerged from the data, focusing on the relationship between teacher burnout and resulting emotional experiences. However, the data from interviews suggested its importance and it will be discussed in this section.

9.3.1 Immediate Emotional Effects of Burnout

This study defined the immediate effects of emotional experiences during burnout as the direct, observable consequences that occur within daily teaching activities and interactions shortly after these emotional experiences happen. These immediate effects can take the form of noticeable changes in teacher behaviours and emotional reactions, which might affect the classroom atmosphere in real-time. The immediate effects, such as changes in teachers' engagement with their duties and their behaviour towards students, are critical as they can affect the learning environment directly. The analysis explored the daily struggles of teachers dealing with burnout, which contribute to the literature by highlighting how these immediate effects manifest in real-time classroom dynamics, which were impatience, fatigue, diminished creativity and student-teacher interactions.

High-quality teaching demands a significant amount of emotional energy (Chang, 2009a), making it challenging for teachers who are emotionally exhausted to perform effectively. Teachers in the analysis have illustrated how burnout can negatively impact their emotional and cognitive-physical engagement with teaching. For example, teachers reported increased impatience and a diminished capacity to meet students' needs during high-stress periods. This can directly affect the student-teacher relationship, which was found to be crucial for fostering a safe and supportive environment for language learning (Gkonou et al., 2020). Consequently, burnout-caused behavioural changes can lead to a less supportive and more unstable classroom environment, potentially undermining student learning and engagement.

Furthermore, teachers experiencing burnout may shift towards cynicism or depersonalisation, leading to disengagement from teaching. Even those who remain in the profession may lose their passion for teaching, making it difficult for students to enjoy learning (Johnson et al., 2012). Although personal efficacy can positively affect teacher engagement, a lack of it— manifested as reduced personal accomplishment—can hinder a teacher's ability to create a supportive environment for students or to practice effectively (Pas et al., 2012). Thus, reduced enthusiasm for creative tasks and a rush to complete teaching activities indicate how burnout can lead to a decline in teaching quality. Participants' experiences, along with signs of fatigue—a well-documented consequence of burnout in the literature (e.g., Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980; Kahn, 1978; Leung et al., 2000; Melamed et al., 2006)—, further emphasise

the physical toll that the emotional and cognitive demands of teaching can cause for teachers, thereby affecting their daily teaching performance in the classroom.

Moreover, it was also found that the classroom climate and student-teacher interactions might also be significantly impacted by teachers' emotional states. When teachers are unable to conceal their negative emotions, it can create a classroom atmosphere where students become aware of and are possibly affected by the teacher's burnout. This can lead to an emotionally charged learning environment. The concept of emotional contagion (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003) highlights how students can be perceptive to their teachers' emotional states, which can significantly affect the classroom climate. The findings in this study support this notion, indicating that teacher burnout can impact not only the teachers themselves but also their interactions with students, thereby potentially affecting the learning environment. This also aligns with the findings of Frenzel and Stephens (2013) that positive feelings from the teacher, such as enthusiasm and enjoyment, can positively influence learners' behaviour and improve their performance. Therefore, to avoid negatively impacting the classroom climate and interactions with students, some teachers engaged in emotional labour. However, managing personal feelings to meet job demands—through strategies like surface and deep acting—can increase stress, leading to emotional dissonance and burnout (Hochschild, 1983; King & Ng, 2018). This was evident in some cases where teachers attempted to mask their burnout symptoms, which influenced their genuine interactions with students and possibly led to decreased emotional sincerity in the classroom.

Despite the challenges of burnout, some teachers demonstrated resilience and maintained positive interactions with students. This highlights how resilience can aid in avoiding the negative effects of burnout, allowing teachers to maintain their emotional engagement and social engagement with their students. Such resilience can mitigate the effects of burnout and plays a crucial role in long-term wellbeing and professional effectiveness (Gu & Day, 2013; Li, 2023). It also supports that the relational dynamics within the classroom, as highlighted by Alamos et al. (2022) and Corbin et al. (2019), suggest that positive student-teacher relationships can be vital in managing and potentially mitigating the effects of burnout. That is, while some aspects of the professional performance of teachers suffered due to fatigue and burnout, their commitment to and passion for teaching persisted. This resilience in emotional engagement during cognitive-physical challenges indicates the complex interplay of different dimensions of teacher engagement and emotional experiences during burnout.

In conclusion, the findings have shed light on the immediate emotional effects of experiencing burnout, particularly focusing on their direct consequences observable in daily teaching activities and interactions. These effects—such as increased impatience, fatigue, diminished creativity, and changes in student-teacher interactions—are significant because teachers' emotions play a crucial role in education (e.g., Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Frenzel & Stephens, 2013). Thus, these emotions can directly influence the classroom atmosphere in real-time. Furthermore, the findings also indicated that both cognitive-physical and emotional engagement play a significant role in the immediate emotional effects, emphasising the need for further examination of the impacts of teacher burnout on teachers' emotional experiences, suggesting that further research could consider the aspects of engagement in examining teacher burnout.

9.3.2   Cumulative Emotional Effects of Burnout

The findings in the previous chapter highlighted the cumulative impacts of burnout on teachers' emotional experiences, revealing significant emotional and cognitive consequences across various career stages. Teachers' narratives illustrated how the emotional demands of teaching can diminish enthusiasm and creativity in lesson planning and delivery, affecting overall teaching practices. This decline can result in less engaging and effective lessons, ultimately impacting students' learning experiences. Research supports the notion that emotional exhaustion and decreased teaching enthusiasm due to burnout negatively impact the classroom climate and can lead to a more critical and less motivational stance among teachers (Madigan & Kim, 2021). These changes in teacher behaviour and interaction can disrupt the supportive nature of the learning environment, further worsening the challenges students face in achieving academic success.

Moreover, the analysis indicated that decreased creativity and enthusiasm might have affected some of the teachers' self-efficacy. When teachers feel less capable, it can further influence their teaching performance and classroom dynamics, as they may struggle more with classroom management and might not respond as effectively to students' needs. This finding aligns with the literature, showing that reduced enthusiasm can affect teaching practices and self-efficacy, potentially leading to negative effects on classroom dynamics and student engagement (Chang, 2009a; Pas et al., 2012).

The effect of burnout on teacher self-efficacy is particularly noteworthy in the analysis. Reduced self-efficacy was found to significantly impact classroom management, commitment, and overall teaching performance in literature before (Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). This aligns with the analysis, showing, for example, an early-career teacher's decreased lesson quality and diminished pride in teaching indicate lowered self-efficacy, a critical component linked to effective teaching and positive student outcomes (Zee & Koomen, 2016). This early career experience suggests that such impacts can have long-lasting effects, potentially caused by ongoing challenges in teacher engagement and classroom dynamics. On a more optimistic note, a late-career teacher's transition from burnout to becoming a principal emphasises the possibility of recovery and positive transformation. This transition highlights the crucial interplay between self-efficacy and resilience, suggesting that despite the challenges and effects of burnout, there is a path to renewal and success in educational roles (Razmjoo & Ayoobiyan, 2019).

Furthermore, the narratives of mid-career and nearing-retirement teachers also shed light on the possible cumulative effects of burnout. The decline in creativity and engagement in lessons demonstrates the gradual loss of enthusiasm, which can negatively affect student perceptions and learning experiences (Johnson et al., 2012). Fatigue and diminished energy, worsened by nearing retirement, experienced by some teachers, illustrate how the effects of burnout can accumulate over time, influencing not only individual teachers but also the broader educational environment.

Teacher burnout can significantly influence the classroom environment and the learning experiences of students. Extensive research has indicated that teacher burnout can lead to less supportive and motivating classroom atmosphere, negatively impacting student engagement and academic performance (Pas et al., 2012; Madigan & Kim, 2021). The experiences of teachers in this study emphasise how reduced teacher engagement—because of burnout—can affect their emotional investment in lessons. This lack of investment can also negatively affect student achievement and interest in the subjects being taught (Woolfolk Hoy & Davis, 2005; Chang, 2009a). Thus, the cumulative emotional effects of burnout, as detailed through the experiences of the teachers in this study, urges comprehensive support systems and resilience-building programmes that could mitigate these effects, thereby promoting a healthier, more supportive educational environment for both teachers and students.

After exploring how teachers can experience both engagement and disengagement during burnout—identifying tasks they remain engaged with and those they might abandon, along with the broader emotional experiences they may undergo—the next section will discuss how teachers attempt to cope with burnout. It will also cover post-burnout reengagement techniques they might use to reignite their engagement.

9.4 RQ3- Coping with Burnout and Reengagement Post-Burnout

The third research question focused on the complexities of coping with and reengaging after teacher burnout in EFL context. The analysis revealed a multifaceted picture where individual teacher experiences, coping mechanisms, and reengagement techniques can vary significantly across different stages of teaching careers. Drawing upon the narratives of the thirty-one teachers interviewed, this discussion will explore the importance of understanding and addressing the consequences of teacher burnout with different methods that consider the individual teacher's context, needs, and career stages.

9.4.1 Coping with Teacher Burnout

Teacher stress or burnout has been linked to a complex interaction of coping mechanisms, personality traits, and the work environment (Sharplin et al., 2011). Consequently, research into teacher burnout has highlighted effective approaches for managing stress, beginning with the identification and evaluation of work-related stressors (Kyriacou, 2001; Chang, 2009b; Sharplin et al., 2011). As documented in the literature, teachers' coping methods include direct-action strategies (directly addressing the sources of stress), palliative strategies (altering emotional responses to stressors), and avoidance or distancing strategies (withdrawing from stressors) (Kyriacou, 2001; Sharplin et al., 2011). Direct-action strategies aim to eliminate the causes of burnout, while palliative strategies focus on alleviating feelings of stress without addressing the underlying issues (Kyriacou, 2001). However, burnout can result from various negative effects (as discussed in Section 3.2.1), many of which might be beyond the teacher's control. Therefore, it is important to recognise that the causes and consequences of burnout extend beyond the individual. Addressing burnout requires interventions beyond the individual efforts of teachers, making it a broader concern that demands collective action.

The analysis emphasised the importance of coping strategies in managing burnout, revealing a range of approaches that teachers use, such as seeking support from colleagues and family, engaging in leisure activities, and pursuing professional psychological assistance. These strategies highlight the individualised nature of burnout experiences. This observation supports findings in the literature that stress the importance of adaptive coping strategies in enhancing teacher wellbeing and reducing burnout symptoms (Chang, 2009b; Sharplin et al., 2011). These strategies can not only mitigate burnout but also contribute to a supportive professional environment.

The data revealed a range of emotional and psychological coping, with individual practices varying significantly among teachers. The emotional support from colleagues, as illustrated through the experiences of several teachers, plays a crucial role within the educational ecosystem. This finding aligns with studies by Cooley and Yovanoff (1996) and Unterbrink et al. (2012), which emphasise the positive impact of social support networks in reducing burnout. That is, teachers who feel supported by their colleagues are less likely to experience the isolation that can accompany burnout (as discussed in Section 9.2.3). Moreover, these networks can foster a sense of community and collective resilience (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Day et al., 2011), which is vital for navigating the challenges of the profession and for remaining motivated and committed over the long term.

In addition to the professional network, the support from family members can also constitute a critical dimension of the overall support system for teachers. The emotional backing provided by family can significantly aid teachers in managing the myriad stresses associated with their professional responsibilities. Fiorilli et al. (2019) highlighted the significant role of these external connections, demonstrating that emotional support from family and friends is integral to a teacher's capacity to navigate and mitigate work-related challenges effectively.

This dual nature of support—including both professional networks and personal relationships—can help maintain a healthy emotional balance. The professional network can offer practical help and advice, which are essential for professional development and problem-solving within the educational context. On the other hand, the emotional support from family members can provide comfort and understanding, which is crucial for mitigating the psychological burden of burnout. The findings by Fiorilli et al. (2019) highlight that emotional support from family and friends not only contributes to stress management but also enhances

overall wellbeing and job satisfaction among teachers. This, in turn, can lead to improved performance in the classroom and a more positive impact on students' learning experiences. Therefore, the interplay between professional and personal support is vital in promoting psychological health for teachers.

The choice by some teachers to seek psychological help highlights the significant benefits of professional support in managing burnout within the context of emotional and psychological coping. Engaging in therapy sessions allows teachers to explore their emotional experiences within a safe, structured environment, guided by professionals equipped with strategies and interventions designed to foster coping and resilience. This finding emphasises the critical role of school psychologists in fostering a resilient teaching community through effective communication and support. Literature has also indicated that school psychologists can significantly assist teachers in meeting the demands of their role (Szabo & Jagodics, 2019). This aligns with the research by Castro et al. (2010), which illustrated the effectiveness of direct-action strategies in managing burnout. School psychologists, therefore, can be crucial in implementing these strategies and helping teachers access necessary mental health resources and support systems.

The adoption of self-reflective coping mechanisms, such as journaling, by some teachers, like Rose in this study, can be another proactive approach to managing wellbeing. This practice aligns with earlier findings by Von der Embse et al. (2019), which support the notion that journaling can be an effective tool for coping with burnout. Journaling can contribute to self-awareness and emotional processing, allowing teachers to articulate and reflect on their experiences, thus contributing to their overall emotional wellbeing. The combination of professional psychological support and self-reflective practices such as journaling further emphasises the multifaceted nature of coping strategies necessary for coping with burnout.

Furthermore, engagement in leisure and non-teaching activities also emerged as a coping strategy, suggesting that maintaining a balanced life that includes pursuits outside the professional environment is crucial. This means that hobbies, sports, and other non-work-related activities can help to create a psychological shield against the pressures of teaching. These activities can provide a mental and emotional break, allowing teachers to detach from their professional roles while experiencing burnout. The experiences of both mid and late-career teachers highlight the importance of active coping strategies in managing teaching

stressors, confirming research by Cancio et al. (2018) on the benefits of such strategies in overcoming burnout. Supporting leisure and non-teaching activities can mitigate the adverse effects of job-related stress by promoting better mental health and emotional resilience.

The Interplay of Teacher Engagement and Coping Strategies

The analysis revealed that teachers experiencing various levels of engagement and disengagement might influence the chosen coping strategies. Teachers with cognitive-physical challenges but maintained social engagement tend to benefit significantly from peer support. However, this type of support may not suit for those with strained workplace relationships. In contrast, those who face social isolation may prefer more individualised methods, such as professional psychological help. Family support proved to be vital for individuals experiencing mixed disengagement across various dimensions (i.e., cognitive-physical, emotional and social), providing emotional stability despite professional adversities. The decision to seek professional help, as made by some of the teachers reflects coping choices that can be influenced by personal needs and the available workplace support, highlighting the complex relationship between various dimensions of teacher engagement in managing burnout. Moreover, findings indicate that teachers dealing with cognitive-physical disengagement resulting from burnout chose leisure and non-teaching activities as coping strategies. This choice of activities might allow them to distance themselves from the cognitively demanding aspects of their profession. Engaging in these less cognitively challenging activities may serve as a way to manage the emotional and physical exhaustion resulting from burnout.

Moreover, the analysis of the data also points to the relationship between burnout and negative coping mechanisms, particularly in relation to teacher engagement. Teachers who adopted negative coping strategies reported a decline in their cognitive-physical engagement due to burnout. In addition, several participants experienced a reduction in emotional engagement, and some even saw deteriorating relationships with their students. These findings suggest that burnout can hinder a teacher's ability to apply positive coping strategies effectively, further emphasising the need for proactive burnout prevention measures.

On the other hand, most teachers in this study across all career stages could adopt positive coping strategies. These proactive methods include seeking support from colleagues, which helps create a sense of community and shared understanding; relying on family support, which

provides emotional stability and reassurance; engaging in journaling, which allows for reflection and emotional processing; seeking psychological help, which addresses mental health needs directly; and participating in leisure activities. These positive strategies represent a more effective approach to managing stress and ensuring wellbeing in the face of professional challenges. They highlight the importance of a supportive work environment and the availability of external support systems. Moreover, these approaches demonstrate resilience and an active commitment to personal health and professional longevity, suggesting that with the right support, teachers can navigate the pressures of their roles more successfully.

Coping Mechanisms Across Career Stages: The Impact of Life and Teaching Experiences

The narratives of teachers across different career stages highlight how they apply various strategies to cope with the demands of their roles. These coping strategies reflect a spectrum of challenges that can lead to emotional withdrawal and reduced professional engagement. Notably, coping mechanisms are not fixed; they evolve alongside a teacher's personal and professional journey. Research indicates that teaching experience plays a pivotal role in shaping how educators manage stress (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980), yet this relationship is underexplored (Yagil, 1998).

Career Stage	Coping strategies	Key Observations
Early-career	Emotional/psychological coping or negative strategies: avoidance, withdrawal	Some opt for emotional or psychological coping strategies, like journaling, while others feel overwhelmed by the emotional demands of the job, with some even contemplating leaving the profession.
Mid-career	Varied: social support, psychological help, and negative coping	Some turn to social support and leisure activities, but others show maladaptive coping strategies.
Late-career	Adaptive strategies: emotional/psychological coping and leisure activities	Many teachers turn to adaptive strategies to manage and cope with their stress.

Table 10: Coping with Burnout Across Career Stages

As illustrated in Table 10, early-career teachers might struggle to develop effective coping strategies due to their limited experience. Many rely on maladaptive methods, such as avoidance or emotional withdrawal, particularly when faced with overwhelming demands. For instance, one participant shared that the pressures of high expectations led them to contemplate leaving the profession altogether, aligning with Hong's (2012) findings that early-career educators experience heightened stress levels. Their limited exposure to coping resources can exacerbate their challenges in managing intense emotions.

In contrast, mid-career teachers typically have a broader array of coping mechanisms developed through their diverse experiences. They seek support from colleagues or engage in self-care activities, as evidenced by some teachers who noted the importance of peer discussions in alleviating stress. This aligns with Alhija's (2015) findings that experienced teachers prioritise self-improvement strategies. However, despite their experience, some mid-career teachers still resorted to negative coping mechanisms, such as considering significant

changes within their workplace or turning to compulsive eating to manage stress, indicating that professional support for stress management may still be lacking.

Late-career teachers, with their extensive experience, are generally equipped with adaptive coping strategies (see Table 10), but they may also face challenges unique to their stage of career. While they can rely on years of experience to manage stress, the pressures of the profession can still lead to burnout. Some late-career teachers in this study indicated that they viewed retirement as their only escape from these mounting pressures, highlighting the need for continued support even in the later stages of a teaching career.

While coping mechanisms are influenced by life and teaching experience, they are also learnable and can be enhanced through appropriate support and reflection. This is supported by Howard and Johnson (2004), who argue that resilience is learnable, suggesting that coping strategies can be developed in a similar way. Early-career teachers may initially struggle with stress management, but targeted interventions—such as mentorship programmes, workshops on stress management, and access to mental health resources—can help them develop effective coping strategies over time. Moreover, the personal experiences shared by teachers in this study highlight the value of reflective practices, such as journaling, in fostering greater self-awareness and resilience. Similarly, professional psychological support and school-based initiatives—like those provided by school psychologists—can further equip teachers with the tools to navigate stressful periods in their careers. These findings suggest that while coping mechanisms evolve with experience, they can also be learned and refined through structured support systems.

In sum, findings suggest that managing teacher burnout requires a multifaceted approach that includes not only psychological and social-emotional, but institutional support also, as it was advocated by Naghieh et al. (2015). For instance, school psychologists are key to providing this professional support. They can enhance teacher wellbeing by offering psychoeducation and facilitating both individual and group consultations, helping teachers to better handle their challenges (Szabo & Jagodics, 2019). Furthermore, these consultations can help foster a more supportive school atmosphere, which is instrumental in not only coping but also preventing burnout (Cohen, 2006; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). Thus, the implications of these findings for teacher training, policy-making, and institutional support systems will be further explored in Section 10.5 of this thesis.

9.4.2 Reengagement Post-Burnout

This study explored not only coping strategies but also the complex journey of English language teachers towards reengagement after experiencing burnout, a crucial yet underexplored phenomenon in the literature. By applying the multidimensional framework by Klassen et al. (2013), the analysis identified the important roles of cognitive-physical, emotional, and social dimensions of teacher engagement in reengagement processes. These techniques include professional development, exploring new roles and responsibilities, receiving positive feedback, fostering meaningful relationships with students, and achieving work-life harmony.

Professional development and building of relationships outside the school during professional programmes emerged as significant reengagement techniques and were found to be linked with cognitive-physical engagement. That is, teachers experiencing cognitive-physical disengagement expressed a renewed commitment to learning and growth, viewing these as pathways to reengagement during and after recovery from burnout. This finding aligns with Gregersen et al. (2021), who emphasised the importance of continuous professional development as a beneficial path for teachers. This training can not only refresh the teacher's skills and knowledge but may also enhance a sense of progress and purpose, thus, can aid in reengagement processes. This aligns with the findings of Berg et al. (2017), which advocate for professional development interventions that train teachers in various stress management skills, including emotional awareness, communication, self-regulation, social problem-solving, and relationship management. Aligning with these findings, teachers' narratives across different career stages suggest that professional development can be beneficial, especially after experiencing burnout, by enhancing their engagement.

Similarly, exploring new roles and responsibilities was found to be another effective technique for reengaging teachers who have faced burnout. The experiences of late-career teachers demonstrate how taking on new challenges can restore teachers' passion and commitment. By taking on different roles or additional responsibilities, teachers in the study could find new challenges that could reawaken their interest and enthusiasm for their profession. Taking on new roles and tasks has been found to be linked with cognitive-physical, emotional, and social engagement, suggesting that teachers experiencing various forms of disengagement due to burnout may benefit from this way of reengagement. Engaging in new responsibilities can lead

to a renewed sense of purpose, which might enhance self-efficacy. This enhanced self-efficacy has been linked to improved classroom management, increased student engagement, and more effective instructional strategies in literature (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Mok & Moore, 2019). Increased self-efficacy is also associated with better classroom management, greater commitment, and enthusiasm (Klassen & Chiu, 2011), and it plays a significant role in reducing teacher stress and mitigating burnout (Motallebzadeh et al., 2014; Ozkara, 2019; Fathi & Saeedian, 2020; Bing et al., 2022). Furthermore, these findings also align with the insights of Day (2008), who argued that such shifts in roles or responsibilities can not only contribute to personal and professional growth but can also significantly enhance a teacher's sense of efficacy. Feeling effective and capable in their roles can empower teachers, providing a psychological boost that helps them feel more efficient and appreciated. This enhanced sense of self-efficacy is crucial as it can build resilience. Research has shown that resilience can enhance self-efficacy, and self-efficacy can similarly boost resilience (Mansfield et al., 2012; Razmjoo & Ayoobiyan, 2019), helping teachers to not only recover from burnout but also to develop defences against its occurrence in the future.

Further expanding on this idea, Gu and Day (2013) observed that encouraging everyday resilience plays a key role in empowering teachers to handle the ongoing demands of the teaching profession. Resilience serves as a barrier, enabling teachers to manage stress more effectively and maintain a positive mindset even in the face of challenges. By encouraging new roles and responsibilities, teachers can strengthen this resilience, effectively using it as a reengaging mechanism post-burnout.

Positive feedback and meaningful relationships with students have been identified in this study as another significant technique in the reengagement process. Teachers in their early and mid-career found the motivational power of positive student feedback essential in/after recovery, enhancing their engagement across cognitive-physical, emotional, and social dimensions. The positive impact of feedback on job satisfaction and wellbeing, as discussed by Ortan et al. (2021), further highlights the effect of student feedback. Their research suggests that feedback can act as a crucial tool for enhancing job satisfaction, significantly influencing overall wellbeing and professional engagement. This, in turn, can affect the social aspect of teacher engagement. As stated by Miller and Gkonou (2018), teachers who are actively engaged in creating a positive learning atmosphere and nurturing relationships with their students may receive emotional benefits. In other words, these benefits might be increased motivation (Jena

& Chakraborty, 2014) feelings of satisfaction, accomplishment, and a deep sense of purpose, aiding in reengagement. Thus, positive student feedback might mitigate the stress of a lack of recognition and the adverse effects of burnout discussed by Maslach et al. (2001). Therefore, focusing on positive affirmations can play a crucial role in reengaging teachers after experiencing burnout as it was demonstrated by some of the teachers' narratives in this study.

Work-life harmony emerged as a critical element in the recovery and reengagement process for teachers dealing with the stress and demands of their profession. The stories teachers share across various career stages emphasise the significance of establishing clear boundaries between their professional responsibilities and personal lives. This practice of setting boundaries is not solely about managing time effectively; it can also contribute to ensuring that teachers' personal lives and professional live complement each other. Setting boundaries might involve specific measures such as turning off work emails and messages after a certain hour, dedicating weekends solely to family and personal activities, or scheduling downtime. These boundaries can help prevent work responsibilities from overwhelming their personal time, thus decreasing job-related stress. Research by Boström et al. (2020) and Capone et al. (2019) supports the idea that work-life harmony is essential for enhancing overall wellbeing and job satisfaction. They suggest that when teachers achieve a balance that allows them to fulfil both their personal needs and professional duties without one overshadowing the other, they can report higher levels of job satisfaction and wellbeing. This balance is particularly important in teaching, where emotional and cognitive demands can be high, and these aspects of engagement can significantly suffer during burnout (as discussed in Section 9.2). Thus, teachers applying this technique were found to experience disengagement in various aspects of engagement. The balanced approach advocated by these teachers serves to mitigate the overwhelming aspects of their teaching responsibilities. That is, they can recharge during their personal time, which enhances their resilience, which plays a crucial role in teacher engagement (Xie, 2021), thus allowing them to return to their professional roles with renewed energy and focus. Similarly, Salmela-Aro et al. (2019) discovered that engaged teachers tend to exhibit higher levels of resilience. Gu and Day (2013) noted that daily resilience equips teachers with the necessary tools to handle the emotional and intellectual demands of their roles. Furthermore, research conducted by Fathi and Saeedian (2020) and Tonekaboni and Nasiri (2022), along with Li (2023), identified a significant negative correlation between teacher resilience and burnout. These studies, along with the findings of this thesis research, underscore the vital role of resilience in reducing stress and emotional exhaustion. They

highlight the importance of developing resilience to help reengage teachers and possibly prevent future occurrences of burnout.

Career Stage	Reengagement techniques	Key Observations
Early-career	Positive feedback from students	Teachers reengage by receiving positive feedback and reinforcement.
Mid-career	Professional growth and positive feedback from students	Teachers pursue professional development opportunities to reengage, while also drawing on positive feedback from students to boost their reengagement.
Late-career	Work-life balance, exploring new roles and tasks, professional development	Teachers prioritise maintaining a work-life balance while pursuing professional development and taking on new roles and tasks to regain motivation.

Table 11: Reengagement Across Career Stages

The findings, illustrated in Table 11, reveal that techniques for reengaging with teaching roles after experiencing burnout can vary across different career stages. Each stage presents distinct challenges and opportunities for recovery and reengagement. For instance, at the beginning of their teaching careers, teachers experiencing burnout may face intense negative emotions and stress, sometimes even considering leaving the profession. This can be attributed to what Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) described as reality shock. According to their findings novice workers might experience a higher degree of stress early in their careers due to these factors. Thus, reengagement strategies for this career stage include, for instance, receiving positive feedback from students, which can boost confidence and reaffirm their effectiveness and impact in the classroom. This feedback can contribute to feelings of satisfaction, accomplishment, and a deep sense of purpose. On the other hand, mid-career teachers might focus on professional growth and the adoption of new roles as key strategies for reengagement. This career stage can involve pursuing further training and expanding professional networks, enhancing their careers. Therefore, professional development and social support are essential during this phase, aiding in fostering renewed engagement in teaching. Furthermore, mid-career teachers might also find that positive feedback from students and meaningful

relationships crucial for enhancing engagement that might remind them of the joys and rewards of their profession. For late-career teachers, taking on new roles and responsibilities or engaging in professional training can aid in reengagement. Such changes can renew their sense of purpose and enhance their effectiveness in the classroom. Additionally, achieving work-life balance was also found to be a critical strategy at this stage among teachers. These teachers might strive to balance professional responsibilities with personal lives, which can contribute to their levels of engagement.

In summary, the process of reengaging with teaching after burnout might require tailored approaches that consider the specific needs and circumstances of teachers at different career stages. Whether through new challenges, supporting networks, or balancing of work and life, these techniques can contribute to a more resilient and satisfied teachers.

9.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the complex interplay between burnout, engagement, coping mechanisms, and reengagement techniques, drawing on the diverse experiences of the teachers studied. The narratives of these three teachers further stress the significance of the supportive educational system where teachers can maintain their engagement, suggesting targeted interventions to mitigate the effects of burnout enhancing wellbeing in the teaching profession. Therefore, the following chapter will conclude the research questions, then it will discuss the implications of this research, outlining recommendations for teacher education, continuous professional development (CPD), peer support and mentorship, leadership training and methodological implications as well as the limitations and future research directions.

10. CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION

10.1 Introduction

The previous chapters presented the findings and discussion of the study, exploring how burnout affects different aspects of teacher engagement, coping strategies, and reengagement techniques. In this chapter, I will present the conclusions for each research question and discuss the implications of these findings. This will be followed by an overview of the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.

10.2 Conclusion of RQ1

In addressing the first research question, the analysis highlighted the complexity of teacher burnout and its varying impacts on engagement. The findings indicate that burnout can manifest as both engagement and disengagement, depending on individual experiences. While career stages can influence different experiences, the data suggested that burnout most significantly affects the cognitive-physical aspect of teacher engagement throughout various career stages. Additionally, the findings support the concept that engagement and burnout can coexist within the teaching profession, as discussed by Timms et al. (2012) and Salmela-Aro et al. (2019). These findings suggest that while teachers experience burnout, they can remain engaged in certain aspects of their roles. This suggests a complex interplay between burnout and the interrelated cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of teacher engagement. The findings discussed also highlighted the significance of the emotional consequences of dealing with burnout, answering RQ2.

10.3 Conclusion of RQ2

In answering the second research question, the findings underscored the intricate relationship between burnout and teacher engagement, particularly regarding its effects on teachers' emotional experiences. By addressing this and the implications of these emotional experiences

during burnout, both teacher wellbeing and student learning outcomes could be enhanced. Thus, these various narratives in this section suggest the complexity of emotional experiences in teaching, including attempting to hide the signs of burnout, highlighting not only the immediate but also the cumulative impacts of burnout on language teachers. The findings suggested a need for systemic support to address the challenges posed by burnout, the implications of which will be further discussed in Section 10.5. This foundation set the stage for answering RQ3 regarding coping mechanisms and reengagement techniques, further contributing to our understanding of the connection between teacher burnout and engagement in language education.

10.4 Conclusion of RQ3

The third research question focused on coping with burnout and reengagement strategies among EFL teachers. The analysis revealed diverse experiences and techniques, which varied significantly across career stages. The key findings highlighted the significance of various coping mechanisms—support from colleagues and family, leisure activities, journaling, and psychological help—showing that effective burnout management might need a tailored approach. These mechanisms indicate the importance of emotional, psychological, and social support, suggesting the need for a supportive community to promote teacher wellbeing and resilience. Reengagement after burnout involves a complex process of recovery with various techniques—professional development, new roles, student feedback, and work-life balance. These techniques, aligning with different aspects of teacher engagement, highlight the importance of learning, meaningful interactions with both students and colleagues and a balanced life in renewing teachers' passion for teaching.

In summary, the findings suggest a holistic approach to addressing teacher burnout and reengagement. This approach should include support for both personal and professional development, building social networks, and access to mental health resources. The role of institutions in this process, along with other implications, will be discussed in the following section.

10.5 Implications

The findings from this research on EFL teacher burnout and its influence on engagement suggest a number of implications for the design of teacher education, the structure of training programmes, and the strategies for continuous professional development (CPD). Previous chapters have detailed how teacher engagement can be influenced by burnout, highlighting the challenges teachers face in reengaging with their work and managing the effects of burnout. Although a majority of participants (n=25) leaned towards adopting positive coping mechanisms, the findings emphasised that some teachers may struggle to choose effective strategies for coping with the consequences of burnout. Consequently, this section will explore the implications for teacher education programmes, training sessions/CPD initiatives, peer support and mentorship, leadership training to provide support for teachers and methodology in detail.

10.5.1 Implications for Teacher Education and CPD

Although early-career teachers were underrepresented (n=5), those who participated reported experiencing burnout early in their teaching careers. This suggests that despite recently completing their teacher training, they may not have received adequate preparation or support in handling the challenges associated with the teaching profession. Thus, the findings highlight the necessity for teacher education and CPD programmes to incorporate mechanisms focused on stress management, resilience building, and coping with teacher burnout. Given the significant effects of burnout on teacher engagement, it is crucial for these programmes to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of burnout, the importance of work-life balance, and the development of emotional intelligence. That is, teachers should be provided with tools to recognise stressors and apply effective coping mechanisms. Furthermore, CPD opportunities should include workshops and seminars on emotional self-regulation, social-emotional skills, the importance of which has been discussed in Section 3.5.4.1. They could be implemented through a variety of practical approaches to ensure they effectively support early-career teachers.

First, teacher education curricula could be redesigned to include dedicated modules on mental health awareness, training future teachers could be trained to identify signs of stress and

burnout. This could involve case studies and reflective practice sessions to help teachers manage their emotional toll. In Hungary, integrating mental health awareness into teacher education would require several strategies, as current curricula focus heavily on pedagogy and classroom management with limited content on mental health (e.g., Eötvös Loránd University, 2024; Faculty of Humanities, University of Pécs, 2017). To address this, English language teacher training at university—on both undergraduate and postgraduate levels—courses could include modules on stress management, identifying burnout, and mental health first aid. These could be integrated into both undergraduate and postgraduate teacher training programmes, fitting into courses on educational psychology, pedagogy, and professional development. That is, future teachers could start with an introduction to mental health awareness in the first year, followed by more practical applications in later years. Institutions should collaborate with mental health experts to develop these modules and establish support systems, such as counselling services, for trainee teachers.

Moreover, the findings of this study suggest that teachers could regain cognitive-physical engagement by taking part in professional development. These programmes, typically aimed at improving pedagogical skills, often include social interactions with colleagues from other schools. However, it would be important that CPD sessions also focus on enhancing teacher engagement and wellbeing. This can help teachers develop strategies for maintaining motivation, engagement, and work-life balance, thus reducing burnout. Including sessions on stress management, mindfulness, and emotional resilience, led by educational psychologists or trained professionals, could provide practical tools for maintaining wellbeing. On a similar note, Kyriacou (2001) emphasised the value of stress reduction workshops for teachers that concentrate on direct-action and palliative techniques (as discussed in Section 3.5.2.1). These workshops frequently incorporate relaxation exercises to mitigate emotional rumination (Kyriacou, 2001), which can extend the experience of stress (Roger & Hudson, 1995). By fostering 'emotion control' and reducing rumination the effectiveness of palliative techniques was found to be significantly enhanced (Kyriacou, 2001). This highlights the importance of stress and burnout management workshops to meet the increasing need for EFL teachers.

In Hungary, the professional development system for teachers has remained largely unchanged since 1996, requiring 120 hours of in-service training every seven years (European Commission, 2024). This mandatory training can be completed through state-provided regional Pedagogical Educational Centres or paid training options. The "Pedagógus Továbbképzési

Rendszer" (Teacher Training System) plays a crucial role, focusing primarily on pedagogical skills as outlined by the National Core Curriculum (NCC) (Pedagógus-Továbbképzés Akkreditációs Rendszer, 2024). Despite the emphasis on pedagogical skills, there is a notable lack of mandatory training sessions specifically targeting burnout prevention and coping skills, which are essential.

Another issue with the current professional training system is the potential difficulty in accessing these programmes. The majority of participants of this study (4 out of 6) who found professional development reengaging reside in the capital city of Hungary. This could be due to their easier access to professional development training as teachers in rural areas might face geographical barriers, as most workshops are held in major cities, making travel costly and time-consuming. Financial barriers also exist, as some paid CPD programmes require investment, which may not be available for all teachers. Additionally, the demanding schedules of teachers make it difficult to attend CPD programmes held during school hours. Therefore, flexible delivery options during weekends, online modules and blended learning options could make CPD programmes more accessible, allowing teachers to balance professional development with personal commitments. This approach could contribute to a more effective continuous learning and professional support, significantly contributing to a more motivated, engaged, and resilient teaching community in Hungary.

10.5.2 Peer Support and Mentorship

The study underscored the importance of social support in coping with burnout, revealing considerable differences in its impact on teachers' engagement. It suggested that engagement with colleagues can be both positively and negatively influenced by burnout, further emphasising the support provided by colleagues and the work community. Some teachers might lack this vital support in their work environments, while others have significantly benefited from the support they receive at their schools. Therefore, it would be essential to promote support networks and mentorship programmes within educational institutions. Mentorship is an important component of supporting teacher engagement and facilitating reengagement post-burnout. The findings highlighted the value of having a supportive network of colleagues to share experiences, challenges, and mechanisms for overcoming burnout. Mentorship programmes might pair experienced teachers with early-career teachers to

encourage a culture of support, guidance, and resilience. Such relationships can help mitigate the isolation often felt during burnout and might also provide an opportunity for sharing coping techniques which might further enhance teacher engagement and wellbeing. Similarly, establishing peer support groups, for instance, can serve as a supportive forum for teachers to exchange experiences and mechanisms for managing stress. Therefore, they would learn about teacher burnout not only from professionals/psychologists but also from colleagues who have experienced it.

In the Hungarian context, this need for support networks and mentorship might be particularly significant due to unique cultural and systemic factors influencing education. Hungarian language teachers can face high workloads, relatively low pay, and challenging working conditions, which can contribute to burnout (as discussed in Section 3.2.1). The centralisation of the Hungarian education system also means that teachers may have limited autonomy and resources, increasing the pressure they must face. Therefore, implementing such support systems within schools could be crucial in mitigating these challenges. Creating mentorship programmes and peer support groups tailored to the specific needs of English teachers in Hungary could foster a more supportive work environment, helping them to better cope with the stressors of their profession.

10.5.3 Leadership Training

The findings emphasised the benefits of taking on new roles, with one participant successfully reengaging through a transition into a leadership position. This finding highlights the significance of encouraging teachers to explore new roles when possible and demonstrates the crucial role school leaders play in mitigating the effects of burnout. Thus, in addition to professional training, school leaders and principals in Hungary receiving specialised training could help in preventing and managing burnout. With this training, they would be better prepared to recognise signs of burnout among their colleagues and promote a healthy work environment. For instance, by offering more flexibility in schedules, workloads, and responsibilities, leaders might significantly reduce the stress and pressure that can contribute to burnout. This flexibility could be especially beneficial in Hungary, where teachers have to manage various roles and responsibilities in secondary schools. Therefore, providing

opportunities for flexible working hours or part-time options could help teachers manage their professional and personal commitments more effectively.

The crucial role of leaders in promoting healthy workplace is also supported by Mazzetti and Schaufeli (2022), finding that training and supporting leaders who can inspire, strengthen, and connect with their workers can significantly enhance workers' motivation and engagement, encourage them to successfully pursue their common goals. Thus, leadership training programmes in Hungary should emphasise the importance of emotional intelligence, communication, and the creation of a supportive school culture where teachers feel valued and supported. Despite the significance of leadership training, there is currently a shortage of such programmes in Hungary. This shortage highlights a critical gap that needs to be addressed to ensure the development of effective leaders who can contribute to a positive and supportive work environment. Implementing such leadership training programmes would be essential for equipping leaders with the skills and knowledge necessary for positive change and improving workplace dynamics.

10.5.4 Methodological Implications

The qualitative methodology applied in this study has been instrumental in uncovering the personal experiences of Hungarian EFL teachers dealing with burnout and its effects on their engagement and teaching practices. Unlike quantitative methods, which often rely on numerical data and predefined variables, qualitative research can allow for a deeper, more nuanced exploration of complex phenomena like burnout and engagement. This approach facilitated the investigation of the multifaceted nature of burnout and its complex relationship with engagement in secondary school teaching.

One of the key advantages of qualitative research is its capacity to situate findings within specific cultural and institutional contexts. In this study, understanding the unique aspects of the Hungarian educational environment was crucial. Through interviews, a contextual understanding of how burnout can influence teacher engagement could be achieved and the emotional consequences of this syndrome. This context-specific insight is particularly valuable for developing tailored interventions and support mechanisms that are culturally and institutionally relevant in Hungary. The rich, detailed data collected through one-on-one

interviews provided a comprehensive view of Hungarian secondary school language teachers' lived experiences. This depth of is vital for understanding the complexity of teacher burnout and engagement, influenced by a variety of factors. The narratives gathered highlighted the individuality in experiences, coping mechanisms, and reengagement techniques, offering a more holistic understanding than what could be achieved through quantitative measures alone. Specifically, the interviews explored broader emotional experiences, adding an unexpected dimension to the analysis that might not have been possible through quantitative methods.

Moreover, while exploring the effects of burnout on engagement, key findings emerged as exploring which tasks teachers could still engage with despite burnout and which tasks they tended to abandon during burnout. These variations were individual and would have been difficult to capture through quantitative measures, highlighting the strengths of a qualitative approach for this examination.

Additionally, as discussed in Section 5.4.5., the qualitative approach involves reflexivity, where the researcher continuously reflects on their own biases and how these may influence the research process and data interpretation. This reflexive practice ensured that the findings were grounded in the participants' perspectives rather than being shaped by preconceived notions. Consequently, the study benefited from a more authentic and nuanced understanding of the teachers' experiences, reinforcing the advantages of qualitative research in exploring complex, context-dependent issues like burnout and engagement.

10.6 Limitations

Every research study comes with limitations, and this study on the dynamics of teacher burnout and engagement is no exception. This section will outline the limitations of this study.

10.6.1 Assessment Limitations

There is a limitation concerning the assessment of burnout. The focus of this study on the link between teacher burnout and engagement meant it did not include formal (i.e., quantitative— MBI— as detailed in Chapter 2) assessments prior to the interviews, relying instead on

qualitative methods; individual interviews. Participants self-assessed and reported their burnout experiences, indicating whether they were currently experiencing burnout, had experienced it in the past, they have recovered or were in the recovery phase (as detailed in Chapter 5). This approach, relying on autobiographical memory, raises concerns about the accuracy of identifying accurate burnout cases and the potential for confusion with related concepts, such as demotivation, disengagement, depression or boredom, relying heavily on the credibility of the interviewees' reports. To address and manage this limitation, the interview questions were designed to minimise bias and encourage detailed, reflective responses that could enhance the accuracy of self-reported data. This involved avoiding leading questions and including open-ended questions.

While including quantitative assessments in future research could help differentiate burnout from related concepts which could enhance the accuracy of identifying burnout cases/symptoms and impacts on teacher engagement, potential limitations might include a lack of depth in understanding the individual experiences of teachers. Quantitative methods might rely more on predefined questions and scales such as MBI (see Section 2.3.1.), which might not capture the complexity and individuality of personal experiences. Thus, in this study, by focusing on qualitative methods, the aim was to analyse data based on individual narratives of teachers with burnout experience, that can better capture the multifaceted nature of burnout and its effects on engagement.

10.6.2 Self-Perception Method Limitations

Another limitation is related to the recall of experiences during the interviews. Teachers reflecting on past burnout episodes may have had their memories fade over time, possibly affecting the accuracy of their stories. This issue of recall bias is documented in research, where participants' memories can be influenced by the passage of time and later experiences (Tourangeau, 2000). Additionally, the absence of classroom observations means the study depended entirely on teachers' narratives. This reliance on self-reported data can also lead to potential biases, as teachers may unintentionally omitted or emphasised certain aspects of their experiences. To address this, strategies such as prompting with specific questions and allowing for reflective pauses during interviews were applied to help participants recall their experiences

more accurately. Future research could benefit from incorporating multiple data sources, such as classroom observations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teacher burnout.

10.6.3 Sample Size Limitations

The sample size, though relatively large for a qualitative study with 31 participants, had limitations regarding the diversity among teachers in terms of age, experience, and geographical location. This uneven distribution across demographic groups complicates the ability to draw comprehensive conclusions applicable to various career stages. For instance, less experienced teachers might experience burnout differently compared to their more experienced colleagues due to reality shock (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Similarly, teachers from different geographical locations may face distinct stressors influenced by community contexts (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Future studies should aim for a more balanced representation across demographic groups to enhance the applicability and relevance of the findings.

10.7 Future Research

The findings detailed in the previous chapters highlighted the need for increased research attention on EFL teacher burnout and engagement. Suggestions for addressing this need will be discussed in this section.

10.7.1 Longitudinal Research and Different Contexts

I propose that future research should be examining engagement changes over the long term and across broader contexts, including different countries and educational levels (i.e., primary and tertiary). Additionally, the dynamics of the student-teacher relationship emerged as an important aspect in teacher burnout and wellbeing, suggesting further exploration, possibly through methods such as classroom observations and student interviews, to capture their perceptions of teacher burnout and its impact on them both in the short and long term.

The study also shed light on various reengagement techniques that teachers may employ post-burnout, indicating a need for more in-depth research into how different approaches may suit

different individuals, especially considering the specific aspects of their burnout experience. While coping mechanisms were not the primary focus of this study at the time of design, their significance became evident, highlighting the need for further study into the techniques used by teachers experiencing varying levels of stress/burnout. This includes exploring the effectiveness of these strategies in both the short and long term. Future research could benefit from longitudinal designs to document the ever-changing and evolving aspects of burnout and engagement. Moreover, the inclusion of quantitative methodologies for burnout assessment, or the exploration of alternative frameworks apart from the Engaged Teacher Scale (ETS), could provide distinctive insight into the examination.

Future research could also investigate whether specific symptoms are related to the dimensions of teacher engagement most affected during burnout. To address this comprehensively, a longitudinal (3-5 year) study design would be essential for understanding the dynamics between burnout and engagement over time. This approach would allow for observing changes and trends to identify causality and long-term effects. Additionally, applying a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods might aid in capturing a comprehensive view of these phenomena. Quantitative data could help identify correlations and assess burnout levels (e.g., MBI), while qualitative data (e.g., semi-structured interviews and classroom observations) could provide deeper insights into personal experiences and contextual factors of teacher burnout and its nature in the classroom.

10.7.2 Assessment

A key concern highlighted in the literature is the challenge of accurately assessing and identifying burnout (Bianchi et al., 2021; Bakker et al., 2023). Despite the availability of various tools to assess burnout, they may not fully involve all its dimensions or account for individual differences. Furthermore, the identification of burnout is complicated by the fact that its symptoms can closely mirror those of other psychological conditions, such as depression. This similarity makes distinguishing burnout more challenging. This is particularly relevant in the field of teaching, where teachers face numerous stressors. This study revealed that engagement and disengagement can occur simultaneously during burnout, also highlighting the need for further investigation into how to effectively differentiate between these two phenomena. Future research might thus focus on enhancing measurement tools that

can more effectively measure or predict teacher burnout. It is important to develop models that capture the various dimensions of burnout, considering individual and contextual differences. Additionally, further exploration into the distinctions between burnout and depression is needed, focusing on symptoms, causes, and consequences. Investigating the simultaneous occurrence of engagement and disengagement during burnout would also provide more in-depth insights. Methodologically, conducting longitudinal studies to observe burnout over time would help identify causes and long-term effects of this syndrome. To achieve this, applying mixed methods approaches, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, could offer a comprehensive understanding of burnout and its interplay with engagement. This can contribute to the development of more targeted interventions and coping—i.e., stress management, wellbeing and mentorship programmes and organisational changes promoting healthy work environment— while supporting teachers in managing and overcoming burnout.

10.8 Conclusion

This chapter summarised the findings related to the research questions and discussed the implications for teacher education, CPD, peer support, leadership training, and research methodology. By exploring the complex relationship between burnout and engagement, this study has provided valuable insights into the fields of SLA, education, and teacher wellbeing. The chapter concluded by suggesting directions for future research aimed at further investigating these critical phenomena.

Reflecting on the journey that brought me to this concluding chapter, I recall the initial aims that laid the foundation for my PhD research. This journey began with a curiosity about the dynamics of EFL teacher burnout and its effects on teacher engagement in Hungarian secondary schools, as well as a desire to contribute meaningfully to the fields of SLA and education.

From the outset, my primary aim was to understand the complex phenomenon of teacher burnout and its interplay with teacher engagement. I sought to uncover not only the challenges teachers face in Hungary today but also the strategies and techniques they apply to navigate these challenges. Throughout this journey, the findings have revealed more than I initially

anticipated. The discussions in the previous chapters highlighted the complexity of burnout and engagement, suggesting that these concepts are not mutually exclusive but can coexist. Teacher burnout can variably affect their engagement, indicating significant variance in the tasks teachers may disengage from or continue to engage with during burnout.

A notable finding in this study was the broader spectrum of emotional experiences during burnout, which emerged unexpectedly from the interview data. Additionally, the thesis contributes to a better understanding of teachers' resilience and coping mechanisms during burnout. The reengagement techniques applied by teachers, such as seeking professional development, fostering meaningful relationships, and maintaining a work-life balance, emphasises the strength and dedication of the participant teachers. This discovery has deepened my respect for teachers at all career stages and highlighted the importance of supporting them both individually and institutionally.

Concluding my thesis and PhD journey, I believe I have achieved my initial goals and made significant contributions to the fields of SLA and education. The research conducted over the past few years has opened new paths for exploration, and I am eager to continue investigating the issues of teacher burnout and engagement.

In the future, my focus will be on developing support systems for teachers, drawing on the findings of this research to contribute to more effective interventions and training programmes. I plan to collaborate with educational institutions and fellow researchers to promote teacher wellbeing.

This PhD journey, filled with challenges and learning, has shaped my academic and professional ambitions as well as my personal perspective on the importance of promoting wellbeing in education. Moving forward, I am committed to making a positive impact on the lives of English language teachers and advancing the field of language education in Hungary and beyond.

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12. APPENDICES

Appendix A-1: Exploratory Study— Interview Schedule—Teachers

1. Why did you choose to become an English teacher first?
2. How did you imagine the teaching career?
3. How long have you been teaching English?

TEACHER ENGAGEMENT

4. Do you enjoy teaching / your work? Do you consider yourself to be enthusiastic /usually/?
5. Do you usually feel bursting with energy at work/ when you teach English?
6. Do you find it difficult to detach yourself from your job?
7. What do you like most about being an English teacher?
8. What does engagement in teaching mean to you? (How would you define...?)
9. Finish the sentence: An engaged teacher (is)…
10. What can engage you most when teaching English?
11. How would an external observer be able to see your engagement in teaching?
12. Do you find your colleagues usually (to be) engaged? Why/ why not?
13. Could you describe the last time you felt really involved? How did you feel?

TEACHER DISENGAGEMENT

14. What aspects of teaching do you enjoy the least?
15. What does disengagement in teaching mean to you? (How would you define…?)
16. Finish the sentence: A disengaged teacher (is)…
17. What aspects of teaching do you find disengaging?
18. What do you think can affect your engagement negatively? What can disengage you? / What can affect your engagement negatively?
19. How would an external observer be able to see your disengagement in teaching?
20. How do you feel/ what do you experience when you are disengaged?

21. How do you think disengagement affects your work/ teaching practice/ your relationship with your students?

22. Tell me about a day at school when you felt disengaged. What happened? How did you feel?

23. Could you describe the last time you felt disengaged? How did you feel?

24. Do you think your students can/ could sense that you are/ were disengaged with…? Why/ why not?

25. How do you/ did you/ have you cope(d) with disengagement?

26. How do you try to "reengage" yourself when you feel disengaged?

TEACHER BURNOUT

27. How would you define burnout?

28. Have you experienced burnout during teaching? What were the symptoms? What happened?

29. Finish the sentence: A burnt-out teacher (is)…

30. What disengages/engaged you most when experiencing burnout?

31. What are/ were you disengaged with when experiencing burnout?

32. What aspects of teaching did you/ do you enjoy still when you experience (the first signs) of burnout?

33. Which aspect(s) of your work can you still enjoy when experiencing burnout?

34. Which aspect(s) of your work do/ did you enjoy the least when experiencing burnout?

35. Do you think your students could ever sense your burnout? How?

36. Do you think your students could ever sense your disengagement? How?

37. If there anything you do/ are trying to do differently after experiencing burnout?

38. What ways are you trying to cope with burnout/ demotivation/ disengagement?

Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview?

Appendix A-2: Exploratory Study—Interview Schedule—Students

1. How long have you been learning English?

2. Do you enjoy learning English at school?

3. How long have you been learning English with your (current) teacher?

4. Do you think your teacher can motivate you? How?

5. Do you find your teacher inspiring? Why/ why not?

6. How would you define (teacher) engagement?

7. Finish the sentence: An engaged teacher is…

8. Have you ever seen your teacher very exhausted? What happened? How did it make you feel?

9. How would you define (teacher) disengagement?

10. Finish the sentence: A disengaged teacher is …

11. Have you ever experienced disengagement while learning English? What happened?

12. Have you ever felt demotivated while learning English? Why was it that?

13. Do you think your teacher is usually engaged or disengaged? Why?

14. Do you remember a time when you thought your teacher might be disengaged? What happened? How did it make you feel?

15. How do you think your teacher's disengagement affects/ affected your engagement?

16. Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview?

Appendix B: Exploratory Study—Coding Scheme

1. Teacher (dis)engagement in the classroom- the teacher perspective
1.1. Teacher engagement
Enthusiasm
Bursting energy
Curiosity and creativity
1.2. Teacher disengagement
Not caring
Going through the motions
Demotivation
1.3. Demotivating factors affecting teacher disengagement
Student disinterest and demotivation
Administrative tasks
Test and essay corrections / grading
High expectations
Teaching grammar
1.4. Effects of teacher disengagement on teachers
Negative feelings
Demotivation
Coping difficulties
1.5. Effects of teacher disengagement on teachers' actions
Negative impact on students
Carelessness/disinterest
Haste/ impatience
Disorganised
2. Teacher burnout- the teacher perspective
2.1. Teacher burnout and its causes
Students' negative attitude
Lack of support from colleagues and management
Too much work

2.2. Engagement in burnout
Taking part in training- learning
Love of language
Sense of responsibility
2.3. Disengagement in burnout
Stop enjoying teaching related tasks
Losing creativity
Stop caring
2.4. Teacher burnout affecting students
Cynical and bored
Negative attitude
Change in their attitude towards students
3. Teacher disengagement in the classroom- the student perspective
3.1. Teacher engagement
Enthusiasm
Helpfulness
Creativity
Motivating/inspiring
3.2. Teacher disengagement
Boring/ not innovating
Unhelpful
Disinterest
Impatient
3.3. Students experiencing teacher disengagement
Understanding
Pity
Bored
Disinterested towards learning
3.4. Effects of teacher disengagement on students

Decreased engagement with tasks
Lack of motivation
Seek for private tutor

Appendix C: Main Study—Interview Participants

Molly has been teaching English in secondary schools for 13 years in small a town in South-Transdanubia in Hungary. She described her burnout period as a "difficult period" in her career caused by mainly excessive workload she found difficult to cope with, from which she has already managed to recover, but since then she pays more attention to herself and the symptoms so that it does not happen again. The fact that she changed jobs once during her 13 years of experience also helped to turn things around for the better, and since then she feels much better.

Grace has an experience of teaching 31 years in the capital city of Hungary but experiencing burnout more than twice during this time. Her symptoms were so strong and various for the first time (physical, mental, and emotional) that her doctor advised her to make changes in her life, otherwise she would suffer from illnesses too. Although she has been more cautious and conscious since the first time, she has experienced the state of burnout a few more times again. Despite this, she stayed on the field because, according to her, teaching is what brings her joy to this day.

Julia started teaching English in Budapest secondary schools 15 years ago. Although she never experienced physical symptoms, she one day realised that she just wants to survive weekdays, but she does not have too much joy in them, she became indifferent. Because of her long years of experience, she has been trying to cope with burnout since then without leaving the profession.

Stella has been teaching English for 33 years now in a town in Central Hungary. She described herself as being an enthusiastic teacher, but the recent years she experienced some changes in her engagement and enthusiasm towards teaching. She thinks that the educational system issues and the excessive workload caused her negative feelings, which lead her to burnout. She, however, tries to train herself in different fields of teaching in order to get out of this negative state.

Mia has been teaching in Budapest for 15 years, however, she has been experiencing burnout for a couple of years now. Even though she tried to fight with her negative feelings caused by failures at teaching and unsupportive management and colleagues, and tried to improve her

teaching skills, she realised that nothing she has tried could help and continued teaching with no enthusiasm. According to her, her only motivation to go to school every day is that she gets paid for her work.

Emma started teaching English in Budapest 19 years ago and has been teaching there since then. She reported having experienced burnout quite a few times and is experiencing it now. She first stopped caring about preparing interesting and enjoyable lessons for her students, which was the first of the symptoms and named the failure of the educational system as a cause of her negative feelings. Even though she has changed her workplaces a few times, she could not fully recover from burnout yet.

Emily started teaching in Budapest 27 years ago and has been teaching there since then. She started her teaching career with a lot of enthusiasm and dedication, since she always wanted to be a teacher. However, a few years ago she also experienced burnout with losing her dedication and stopped enjoying teaching, mainly because of the amount of work she is required to do as a teacher and because she dedicated all of her free time to her job. Now she is trying to reengage herself by not taking too much work home and talking to colleagues sharing ideas and thoughts regularly.

Lily has been teaching English for 15 years in Budapest, however, she has left the career a few times because of stress and burnout. She has been struggling with stress caused by the educational system and the lack of interest from students and she has tried different professions (e.g., in media) but has always returned to teaching. She returned to teaching after a few years of break 2 years ago and has been trying to cope with burnout since then.

Rose has just started her career as an English teacher since she obtained her teaching degree a year ago. She has been working in a city in southern Hungary since then and already noticed some of the signs of burnout. After a few months of teaching, she already felt exhausted of the excessive amount of work they are required to do every day. Because of this she has no time to prepare for her lessons or relax after a tiring week of teaching, she has lost her enthusiasm to teach and has been thinking about leaving the profession soon.

Naomi has been an English teacher in Budapest for 15 years now, however, the last few years, she also experienced some of the symptoms of burnout, not only on herself, but on her colleagues too. She reported some negative changes in her attitude and attention to her work and she has been trying to cope with it by learning new skills.

Luke has been teaching English in Budapest for 25 years now. He has always considered himself to be a creative and dedicated teacher, however, after two decades of teaching he started to be less enthusiastic than before. However, he had not realised that he might be experiencing

burnout until he took part in a lecture focusing on burnout. He has been noticing signs of this syndrome since then, however, he actively working on coping with it. His near-future plans, however, include teaching jobs but in another country.

Ava has always considered herself to be a dedicated teacher, even though she has been teaching for 16 years now in Central Hungary. Therefore, the first warning sign for her was losing her enthusiasm and stopping caring about teaching and extra tasks at school, which made her wonder if she experienced burnout. She has been still coping with the negative feelings caused by stress and burnout but has not left the profession yet.

Madison has the most experience among the participants, having been teaching English to secondary school students for 33 years in Budapest. After a while she noticed that she was stressed and frustrated continuously, and soon she felt also depressed. Her very negative feelings made her read about the burnout syndrome and she identified her symptoms. She has not reported herself to be fully recovered since then, however, she has been working on it with psychological help.

Valerie has been an English teacher for almost two decades (19 years) now and has always thought in a town in southern Hungary. She considers herself a very dedicated and creative teacher, while a few years ago she also experienced burnout, but has not left her workplace or the teaching profession. Losing her enthusiasm and bursting energy were the warning signs for her to change before experiencing more serious symptoms. She found talking to colleagues helpful since she works in a supportive environment.

Lucy started teaching English in southern Hungary 10 years ago and during this period she changed her workplace once. The reason for the change was her experiencing early signs of burnout. She has been trying to prevent burnout since then however, she has experienced disengagement quite a few times recently.

Alice, who has been working in secondary education for almost three decades in Budapest, has experienced so strong physical symptoms of burnout that she needed a year break from teaching to recover. After experiencing the excessive workload, she reported insomnia and heart problems which warned her to seek for help. After the break, she introduced changes to her life and has been trying to avoid burnout since then, despite the negative changes in the educational system of Hungary now.

Nora started teaching English only for 5 years now in Budapest, but she has already experienced burnout at the beginning of her career. She was exhausted of teaching and actively thinking about changing careers. According to her, enrolling a teaching related university

course helped her to regain her enthusiasm in teaching and now, she started enjoying teaching again.

Kay has 30 years of experience in English language teaching in an urban village in northwest of Budapest and has also experienced burnout during these years. Although her symptoms were relatively mild affecting her enthusiasm and dedication to teaching, she decided to leave her previous workplace before it was getting worse. She has party recovered from this syndrome since then and was trying to change her everyday habits too in order to avoid it happening again.

Brandon has just finished the teacher training at university and has been teaching in South Hungary for a year now, but he already is thinking about leaving the profession. His symptoms started developing after a few months of teaching, feeling exhausted and depressed now, however, he started teaching with the same enthusiasm he had when applied for teacher training. At the time of the interviews Brandon was not sure if he wanted to go back to school after the winter break.

Evelyn started teaching English as a foreign language in North Hungary short after she graduated at university, that was 16 years ago. Even though she has always considered herself to be an enthusiastic teacher, she started developing negative feelings a few years ago, which were described as frustration, failure, and insecurity. These constant feelings warned her that she might be experiencing burnout, when she decided to change, in order to recover from this syndrome, rather than leaving teaching.

Kate has been teaching for three decades in a town in southern Hungary and reported to have experienced burnout more than once during this period of time. She has partly recovered from it now; however, she regularly experiences disengagement while teaching and has been actively working on coping with it. She became a team leader, working with her English teacher colleagues, which gave her challenges and energy and started to be more enthusiastic in teaching.

Bella started teaching 18 years ago in a town in northern Hungary and has been teaching there since then. She has also experienced burnout with losing her enthusiasm and joy in teaching and soon she started to look for other opportunities. She has not left the teaching profession; however, she puts a lot of effort into coping with the consequences of the negative state of burnout.

Aaron has been teaching English for a little bit more than three decades (32 years) in a town in northern Hungary, however he also wanted to leave the teaching profession, caused by burnout. He was able to get out of burnout a little when he was offered a new position, as

principal in the school where he taught for many years. He still sometimes struggles with disengagement, although he claims that the new opportunity and challenges coming with it have turned his feelings a positive direction.

Anna started her teaching career 9 years ago with a lot of enthusiasm and dedication in Central Transdanubia region in Hungary, however, a few years ago she also experienced burnout, caused by the negative environment at her previous workplace. She reported her feelings to be negative at that time, which was a warning sign for her to change. Even though she was considering leaving the profession, she only started working at another secondary school which helped her with her negative feelings and burning-out state.

Mary started teaching English in Budapest 22 years ago and she has been teaching there since then. However, she also had to change schools because she was experiencing some of the symptoms of burnout (losing enthusiasm, paying less attention to teaching and children, being continuously exhausted every day). She managed to recover from burnout since then, however, she has experienced disengagement a few times despite the supportive environment of her new workplace. She is now trying to avoid burnout and disengagement by talking with her colleagues and sharing her thoughts and problems with them.

Michelle has a three-decade experience in teaching English in Budapest. She describes herself as a dedicated and creative teacher, however, she has also experienced burnout once in her career. She thought that the reason for developing her negative feelings was the replacement of the management and changing the composition of the work community. The negative effects of burnout became so bad that she was forced to change jobs, but now she has started to feel better in the new work community. She devotes a lot of energy to preventing this state from returning, but she still struggles with disengagement, considering the negative changes in the current education system.

Vera is also among those early-career teachers who experienced burnout at the very beginning of their careers. She has been teaching for 4 years now in a main city of northwest Hungary and started to notice some of the symptoms of burnout this academic year for the first time. She realised that she lost her interest in preparing for her lessons and teaching most times and lost her enthusiasm. She has been trying to reengage herself by introducing more interactive, talking lessons, and taking less work home.

Diana started working as an English teacher 20 years ago in a town near Budapest and has been actively teaching since then. She had a year off teaching when she experienced burnout but returned to teaching shortly after. Her symptoms were also physical first, she first experienced fatigue which became worse and worse as burnout developed, soon she found

getting up in the morning the hardest point of the day. Since she is back in school, she has been focusing more on her work and less on the environment, since she found it to be a factor contributing to her burnout.

Audrey despite having a relatively short period of experience (2 years), has already experienced burnout in her career. For her, the physical symptoms were also very alarming, when she often did not want to get out of bed to start a new school day, and she was no longer able to do her work at the proper quality. Now she is watching for the situation to change and has started to take more care of herself, which she hopes will bring positive changes in her life.

David started teaching more than two decades (25 years) ago in Budapest and has been teaching without any significant breaks since then. Although he has been through a few periods of time that he declared to be burnout, he does not see this experience necessarily negative in his life, as he has learnt a lot from them. Because of this, now he has gained experience how to overcome such situations and he is not planning to leave teaching anymore.

Amelie has been teaching in secondary schools for almost three decades (28 years) in Budapest, however she started developing symptoms of burnout in the last couple of year. She had been looking for opportunities for other possible jobs when she found training and conference events. She has been trying to engage herself with some of trainings and extra roles since then.

Appendix D: Main Study—Interview Schedule

Teacher Burnout, Coping, Engagement and Reengagement

1. How would you define burnout?
2. Have you experienced burnout during teaching? What were the symptoms? What happened?
3. What do you think can disengage you most when experiencing burnout?
4. How do you/did you feel about teaching when experiencing stress/ burnout?
5. Do you/did you experience any changes in your feelings towards teaching when experiencing stress/ burnout? What are/were these changes?
6. How/ Do/did you ever feel excited/ happy/enthusiastic were you to teach when experiencing stress/burnout?
7. How do you think your attention to your work/teaching changed while experiencing stress/ burnout, if...?

8. How do you think the intensity of your work changed while experiencing stress/ burnout?

9. Do you/did you experience any changes in your teaching practice when experiencing stress/burnout?

10. How important did/do you find to perform well in teaching while experiencing stress/burnout?

11. How would you describe your relationship with your teacher colleagues while experiencing stress/burnout?

12. Have you experienced any changes in your relationships with your colleagues while experiencing stress/burnout? How did they change?

13. Do you/did you experience changes in caring about your students' problems when experiencing stress/burnout? How did it change?

14. Do you/did you experience changes in relationship with your students when experiencing stress/burnout? How?

15. How empathetic do you think you are/were you towards your students when experiencing stress/burnout?

16. How do you/did you/try to cope with stress/burnout?

17. How do you try to "reengage" yourself when you feel stress/might experience burnout?

18. How do you think your engagement changed after that? /Did you experience any changes in your engagement after coping with stress/burnout?

Teacher Engagement and Disengagement During Burnout

1. What do you think can affect your engagement negatively when teaching? What can disengage you? /What can affect your engagement negatively?

2. What aspects of teaching do you find disengaging?

3. Could you describe the last time you felt disengaged? How did you feel?

4. What are/were you disengaged with when experiencing burnout?

5. What tasks/ responsibilities do you/ did you stop being engaged with/enjoying when experiencing stress/burnout?

6. What are you/were you/can you be engaged with/can you enjoy in your work when experiencing burnout?

7. How would you describe your relationship with students (in/out of class) when experiencing burnout?

8. How would you describe your relationship with colleagues when experiencing burnout?

9. Have you ever experienced changes in your engagement with management/institution when experiencing stress/burnout?

10. Have you experienced changes in your engagement with teaching materials when experiencing stress/burnout?

Perceived Effects of Burnout

1. How do/did you feel/what do/did you experience when you are/were experiencing burnout?

2. (How) do you think your burnout can/could affect your work?

3. Do you think burnout can/could affect your teaching (practice)? How?/ Do you think stress/burnout could ever affect the quality of your teaching? How? (E.g., Teaching practice/way how to teach, lesson plans, preparation, teaching strategies, the language you use…)

4. How do you think stress/burnout can/could affect your relationship with your students?

5. Do you think your students could/can sense your stress/burnout? How?

6. How do/did you try to cope with the (emotional) consequences of burnout?

7. What ways do/did you try to manage your negative feelings caused by stress/burnout?

Appendix E: Coding Scheme

1. Burnout Impacting Teacher Engagement
1.1. Cognitive-Physical
Decreased Attention
Decreased Interest
Stopped/reduced Planning/material
Reduced Extra Work
Changed Teaching Methods
Classroom Teaching
1.2. Emotional
Negative Emotions
Instability/mixed
Passion
1.3. Social- Colleagues
Negative Changes
Positive Connections
Isolation
Unchanged Connections
1.4. Social- Students
Positive Connections
Negative Changes
Complex Interplay
Care
2. Emotional Experience
2.1. Effects of Burnout
2.1.1. Immediate effects
Daily Teaching and Out of Teaching Activities

Classroom Climate and Student-Teacher Interactions
2.1.2. Cumulative effects
3. Coping strategies
3.1. Emotional/psychological coping
3.1.1. Support from colleagues
3.1.2. Family support
3.1.3. Psychologist
3.1.4. Journaling
3.2. Leisure activities
3.3. Negative coping
4. Reengagement post-burnout
4.1. Professional development
4.2. New tasks/role
4.3. Positive feedback-students
4.4. Work-life balance

Appendix F: Consent for Participation in a Research Interview

This research project named 'EFL teacher disengagement and burnout in secondary school' aims to examine English teachers' (dis)engagement teaching in Hungary and to understand how they perceive disengagement and might cope with its negative effects.

This project consists of interviews, and you are invited to take part in an interview.

Participation involves being interviewed by a researcher from University of Nottingham. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes.
The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of your participation in the project through being interviewed.

Please read this consent form carefully and tick YES or NO next to the statements.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I agree to participate in a research project conducted by Veronika Derecskey from University of Nottingham, UK.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I have had the opportunity to ask questions and they have been successfully answered.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without consequence.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I allow the researcher to take written notes during the interview.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I also may allow the recording (by audio) of the interview. It is clear to me that in case I do not want the interview to be taped I am at any point of time fully entitled to withdraw from participation.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I understand that I have the right not to answer any of the questions.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to withdraw from the interview.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I understand that all data are anonymous and that there will not be any connection between the personal information provided and the data.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I consent to an audio file of my participation to be used, but would like identifying factors (e.g. my name to be removed) from any presentation of my data including research dissemination and knowledge exchange activities with non-academic partners.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I have been given the explicit guarantees that, if I wish so, the researcher will not identify me by name or function in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. In all cases subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies at the EUI (Data Protection Policy).

Yes ☐   No ☐   I consent to my data being transcribed and wish to be referred to anonymously in written forms of dissemination.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I understand that there are no known risks or hazards associated with participating in this study.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I have read and understood the points and statements of this form. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Yes ☐   No ☐   I confirm that I am over 16 years of age.

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____

Researcher's Signature   Date

For further information, please contact:
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Appendix G: Participant Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

You have been invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide to do so, it is important you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information (see contact details below).

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

About this project and taking part in it:

- This research project titled '*EFL teacher disengagement and burnout in secondary school'* aims to examine English teachers' (dis)engagement teaching in Hungary and to understand how they perceive disengagement and might cope with its negative effects and challenges.

- This project consists of interviews. It is important to note that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, I just want to learn about your experiences – you are very welcome to take part whether you currently feel 'motivated' or 'demotivated' at work!

- You have been chosen because as an English teacher at a Hungarian secondary school, your answers can significantly contribute to the findings of this research.

- It is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be able to keep a copy of this information sheet and you should indicate your agreement to the consent form. You can still withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

- You will be asked to answer a few questions regarding your experiences of teaching English in Hungary, your motivation, engagement, demotivation and disengagement. There will be the option to attend a follow-up interview again to find out more about your approach (although this is not a requirement to take part).

- There are no other commitments or lifestyle restrictions associated with participating, you may refuse to answer any of the questions.

Possible disadvantages and risks of taking part:

- Participating in the research is not anticipated to cause you any disadvantages or discomfort. The potential physical and/or psychological harm or distress will be the same as any experienced in everyday life.

- If you have any complaints or thoughts about the project in the first instance you can contact any member of the research. If you feel your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, you can contact the University of Nottingham and the School Ethics Officer to take your complaint further (see contacts below).

Data safety:

- All the information that we collect about you during the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications. The institution you work for will also not be identified or identifiable. Any data collected about you in the interview will be stored online in a form protected by passwords and other relevant security processes and technologies.
- Data collected may be shared in an anonymised form to allow reuse by the research team and other third parties. These anonymised data will not allow any individuals or their institutions to be identified or identifiable.

- The interview may be recorded, and the recorded media will be stored online protected by passwords and other relevant security processes and technologies.

- Results of the research will be published in a form of a doctoral thesis. You will not be identified in any report or publication. Your institution will not be identified in any report or publication. If

you wish to be given a copy of any reports resulting from the research, please ask me to put you on our circulation list.

- This project has been ethically approved by the School of English's ethics review procedure and subsequently endorsed by the ethics procedures of the University of Nottingham.

Contacts for further information:

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The Data Protection Officer
The University has appointed a Data Protection Officer. Their postal address is:
Data Protection Officer,
Legal services
A5, Trent Building,
University of Nottingham,
University Park,
Nottingham
Ng7 2RD
They can also be emailed at dpo@nottingham.ac.uk and telephoned on (0115) 748 7179.