



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i5/16715>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i5/16715

**Received:** 16 March 2023, **Revised:** 18 April 2023, **Accepted:** 31 April 2023

**Published Online:** 12 May 2023

**In-Text Citation:** (Norly et al., 2023)

**To Cite this Article:** Norly, N. S. B., Razak, R. R. A., & Zakaria, M. H. (2023). The Relationship between Burnout and Quality of Life among Secondary School Teachers in Kuala Kangsar, Perak, Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(5), 2151 – 2163.

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Vol. 13, No. 5, 2023, Pg. 2151 – 2163

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[www.hrmar.com](http://www.hrmar.com)

ISSN: 2222-6990

## The Relationship between Burnout and Quality of Life among Secondary School Teachers in Kuala Kangsar, Perak, Malaysia

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between burnout and quality of life among secondary school teachers in Kuala Kangsar, Perak. There was a total of 56 respondents from 3 secondary schools in Kuala Kangsar participated voluntarily in this study. The data was collected through a set of a self-administered questionnaires. Two types of scales used in this study were the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to measure burnout and the WHOQOL-BREF to measure the quality of life. The results of this study revealed that emotional exhaustion was negatively correlated ( $r = -.561$ ) ( $p = .000$ ) with quality of life. Similarly, depersonalization also was negatively correlated ( $r = -.607$ ) ( $p = .000$ ) to quality of life. However, personal accomplishment was found to be positively correlated ( $r = .476$ ) ( $p = .000$ ) to the quality of life. The findings suggest that low emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and high personal accomplishment experienced by teachers may contribute to a better quality of life as a whole. Ministry of Education and school administrators should work together to exercise healthy working conditions in schools to ensure a quality life for teachers. It is recommended for future studies to determine the effects of every burnout dimension on every domain of quality of life in detail. Furthermore, future research could be expanded in various states in Malaysia with an increased sample size to provide a greater generalization and yield more reliable data.

**Keywords:** Burnout, Quality of Life, Secondary School Teachers, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization

### Introduction

Burnout can be defined as a psychological syndrome due to prolonged exposure to chronic emotional and interpersonal stress on the job (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). High job demands such as excessive workload, can put stress on the teacher eventually resulting in a higher level of burnout (Arvidsson et al., 2019). According to Amzat et al (2021) students' misbehavior, lack of parental support, occupational stress and negative emotion are the major factor in teachers experiencing burnout. Burnout among teachers may lead to a high turnover rate and

absenteeism, and low job performance (Thakur, 2018). They also show low morale, reduced self-esteem and are physically exhausted (Kumawat, 2020). The situation is very worrying as teacher burnout was also found severely impact not only the mental health of teachers but also the performance of schools and the outcomes of students (Amzat et al., 2021).

At the end of 2019, the world was shocked by the outbreak of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China, known as COVID-19. World Health Organization (WHO) later announced the novel coronavirus outbreak as a public health emergency as the number of cases recorded kept on rising as well as the number of fatalities due to the disease. This rapid transmission of the coronavirus has forced Malaysia to implement Movement Control Order (MCO) under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 and the Police Act 1967 to prevent the spreading of infections. This implementation has caused the closure of many sectors including the education sector. Due to the circumstances, learning methods have changed from face-to-face to Home-based Learning and Teaching (PdPR) or generally known as an online class. This transition has been significantly associated with teachers' levels of burnout (Sokal et al., 2020). Besides the increased workload due to the addition of new teaching methods, preparation for distanced learning and an increasing number of homework assignments to review experienced by teachers (Petrankova et al., 2021), they also have difficulties in adapting to new virtual learning which leads to burnout. This is because they are not used to technology and lack confidence in their skill in this field (Califf & Brooks, 2020). Moreover, shifting from face-to-face classes to online teaching also leads to changes in teachers' pedagogical, managerial, and social roles and practices that resulted in unstable identities such as how they see themselves, their belief, and their practices in the online condition (El-Sousi, 2022). These effects fall under the dimension of burnout which are exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal efficacy. Other than that, the burnout resulting from work changes during COVID-19 also negatively affects teachers' physical and psychological well-being (Minihan et al., 2022).

In September 2021, Education Minister, Radzi Jidin announced the reopening of schools in stages starting from October 3, 2021, as Malaysia was transitioning towards the endemic phase. Thus, learning and teaching activities begin to shift back into face-to-face classes in stages. The reopening of schools was initially using a weekly rotation method with students' attendance capacity of 50% to limit the number of students in classes and reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Malaysia begins the transition phase to endemic later on 1 April 2022. Endemic can be described as a constant presence and/or usual prevalence of a disease or infectious agent in a population within a geographic area (Centers of Disease Control and Prevention). Hence, Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah reminded the community to learn to live with COVID-19 while practicing public health measures in order to protect themselves, their families and the community.

Burnout is a prevalent issue among secondary school teachers in Malaysia and has negative impacts on their quality of life and the education of their students. This study aims to address the lack of research on burnout among secondary school teachers in Kuala Kangsar, Perak, which is an important area to study. Addressing burnout among teachers can improve teacher retention rates and enhance the quality of education in Malaysia.

This study can provide insights into the prevalence and contributing factors to burnout among secondary school teachers in Kuala Kangsar, Perak, which can inform interventions to address this issue. The study can contribute to the broader literature on burnout among teachers, particularly in the Malaysian context. The findings of this study can have implications for

teacher training and support programs in Malaysia, as well as policy decisions related to education and teacher well-being.

There are numerous studies done on burnout among teachers before and during the pandemic of COVID-19. In Malaysia, most of the studies in Malaysia are done before the outbreak of COVID-19. This implies that burnout has been a phenomenon among teachers in Malaysia for a long time and things get worst during the era of COVID-19. This is due to the overwhelming demands from students, parents, the government, and school administrators during the difficult time (Ong & Khan, 2022).

### Conceptual Framework

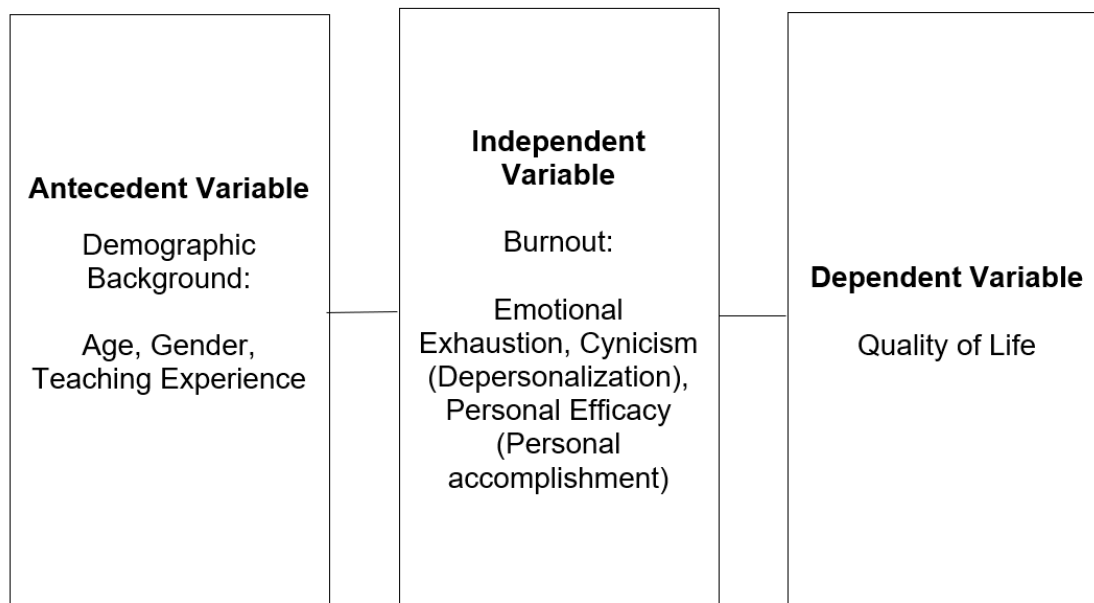


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

### Research Objective

This study seeks to identify the relationship between burnout and quality of life among teachers in Kuala Kangsar, Perak, Malaysia. The level of burnout experienced by the teachers, as well as their quality of life, will be measured to determine the connection between these two variables. The significance of this study is to help teachers evaluate the quality of their lives by observing the level of burnout they experience. It may also help schools create a healthy working environment to prevent burnout, which ultimately affects the quality of life of teachers.

### Literature Review

Burnout terminology was initially introduced by Freudenberger (1974) as a term to describe staff in healthcare agencies who experienced exhaustion, disillusionment, and withdrawal (World Health Organization, 1998) At the same time, the term became the central research by Christina Maslach after it was mentioned by workers in healthcare and human service occupations in her research on how to cope with strong emotional arousal on the job (Maslach & Leiter, Understanding Burnout, 2017). Based on both situations, it is believed that 'burnout' originates from caregiving and service occupations which involve the relationship between provider and recipient. It is found that burnout is an individual problem and includes

individual relational transactions in the workplace (Maslach & Leiter, Chapter 43 - Burnout, 2016).

Malaysian Ministry of Health defined burnout as a term that refers to an emotional, mental and physical state of fatigue caused by prolonged and repetitive stress. Some of the symptoms of burnout are fatigue in every aspect of individual self, cynicism and loss of ability to achieve previous levels of work. Although it is not a disease, 'burnout' has been included in the category of factors that affect health or cause to seek health services (Hospital Ampang, 2021)

According to Senior Lecturer at Centre for Research in Psychology and Human Well-Being, Dr Abdul Rahman Ahmad Badayai and Hospital Canselor psychiatrist, Tuanku Muhriz Dr Eu Leng (2021) burnout refer to the emotional, physical and mental exhaustion due to excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when an individual feels emotionally weak and unable to meet demands on an ongoing basis.

In numerous cultural and educational contexts, teaching has been ranked as one of the most demanding jobs (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021) and one of the professional classes most susceptible to mental instability and exhaustion brought on by professional activities (Mota et al., 2021). Apart from their main responsibility of teaching, teachers are also faced with student misbehaviour, insufficient parental collaboration, occupational stress in the teaching environment, and negative emotions which leads to burnout (Amzat et al., 2021).

A lot of studies were done on burnout to analyze the factors that contribute to the syndrome. According to Roslan et al (2015) in their study about job demands and job resources in predicting burnout and work engagement among teachers in Negeri Sembilan, job demands have a positive relationship with burnout. The studies found that high job demands among teachers such as physical workload and students' misbehavior drained teachers' energy which leads to burnout. The study also revealed that low job resources such as lack of job control, insufficient access to information and low supervisory support also lead to burnout.

### Methodology

The correlational research design aims to determine the relationship between variables in which burnout and quality of life among secondary school teachers have a positive, negative or no correlation. Meanwhile, a descriptive research design aims to describe a phenomenon, situation, or population based on the information obtained from the respondents.

This study will use a quantitative approach that uses an online structured survey form as the method of data collection. This study is a cross-sectional study in which data on the variables is collected and observed from three schools in Kuala Kangsar: Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Clifford, Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Raja Perempuan Kelsom and Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sayong. These schools are chosen as the research location for this study because of the differences in terms of gender among the students and location of the school. SMK Raja Perempuan Kelsom is an all-girl school, SMK Clifford is an all-boy school while SMK Sayong is a mix gender school. The total population for this study is 200. The sample size of this study was obtained from the sample size formula by (Cochran, 1963).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + \frac{N(e)^2}{200}}$$

$$n = \frac{200}{1 + 200(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 100$$

From the calculation, the total sample size that will be used to represent the population is 100.

This study will use a non-probability voluntary response sampling method to determine the sample. An online survey questionnaire will be shared with the sample that consist of secondary school teachers who are willing to participate in this study. This study will use 2 instruments to measure the level of burnout and the quality of life of secondary school teachers. This study uses Maslach Burnout Inventory (BMI) designed by Maslach in 1986. The instrument contains 22 items comprising 3 dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and personal accomplishment. World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHOQOL) will be used to measure the quality of life among secondary teachers in SMK Clifford, SMK Raja Perempuan Kelsom and SMK Sayong.

The instrument contains four domains with 26 items to assess the quality of life which are physical, psychological, social relationship and environment domains. Cronbach alpha values for each of the four domain scores ranged from .66 to .84, demonstrating good internal consistency. The items are in five-point Likert-type inventory ranging from 1 to 5 that represents not at all to complete, very poor to very good, very dissatisfied to very satisfied, not at all to an extreme amount, not at all to extremely or never to always depending on the questions and statements.

To identify the relationship between burnout and quality of life among secondary school teachers in three selected schools in Kuala Kangsar, a structured online survey form method will be used to collect data from respondents. This study will use the *Statistical Product Service Solution* (SPSS) version 25.0 to process and analyze the data. The independent variables are burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment), meanwhile, the dependent variable is the quality of life.

## Findings and Discussion

Table 1

*Level of Burnout Dimensions*

	Emotional Exhaustion (EE)		Depersonalization (DP)		Personal Accomplishment (PA)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
<b>Low</b>	38	67.9	25	44.6	16	28.6
<b>Moderate</b>	14	25.0	17	30.4	19	33.9
<b>High</b>	4	7.1	14	25.0	21	37.5

The table above shows the summary of the level of burnout suffered by secondary school teachers in Kuala Kangsar, Perak. A person is said to have burnout when they experience a high level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and a low level of personal accomplishment. The study showed that 33.7% of the sample experienced high burnout in emotional exhaustion and 29.9% of the sample experienced high burnout in depersonalization. Moreover, the study also stated that more than half of the teachers suffered from burnout to a high degree in terms of personal accomplishment.

This study was conducted during the endemic phase of COVID-19 when the education sector started to get back to normal while the previous studies stated above were done during the pandemic of COVID-19. A lot of teachers struggled with workload and personal problems during the COVID-19 era which led to a high possibility to have burnout in general.

Table 2  
*Level of Quality of Life*

Quality of Life	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Statistics	
High	30	53.6	Mean	14.91
			Std. Deviation	1.92
Low	26	46.4	Minimum	11.09
			Maximum	18.32
Total	56	100.0		

Table 2 shows the level of quality of life that comprises four domains which are physical, psychological, social and environmental. Based on the table, 30 respondents (53.6%) reported a higher mean score that indicates a high quality of life. Meanwhile, the other 26 respondents (46.4%) reported a lower mean score that indicates a low quality of life. The minimum score is 11.09 and the maximum score is 18.32. The mean score of the quality of life is 14.91 ( $SD = 1.92$ ) which is the cut point to determine whether the respondents have a high or low quality of life.

This current study of quality of life among secondary school teachers in Kuala Kangsar, Perak were found to be slightly different from some previous study. This might be due to the diverse type of calculation or analysis done on WHOQOL-BREF. Most of the studies analyse the quality of life based on its domains, its correlation and factors affecting it. This current study resulted in 53.6% of respondents being found to be in high quality of life. A study by Koulierakis et al. (2018) shows that kindergarten teachers and childcare workers reported more than average quality of life according to WHOQOL-BREF dimensions except for the environment which was just average. Meanwhile, Fernandes & Rocha (2009) study concludes that physical and environmental domains of quality of life are the most affected among teachers. Contrary to the current study, Yang et al (2009) study found that the quality of life among teachers was lower than that among the Chinese general population.

Table 3  
*Correlation between Emotional Exhaustion and Quality of Life*

Variable	Quality of Life	
	r	p
Burnout (EE)	-.561	.000

Table 3 shows the correlation result of correlational analysis between emotional exhaustion and Quality of Life by using Person Correlation. The result shows that the correlation between emotional exhaustion and Quality of Life is  $r = -.561$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). The value of Pearson Correlation ( $r = -.561$ ) indicates that there is a negative relationship between the two variables. Meanwhile, the value of Sig. (2-tailed) ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicates that the relationship is significant. Therefore, the result has proven that there is a large strength and significant negative

relationship between these two variables. These findings explain that the higher the emotional exhaustion, the lower the quality of life.

Table 4

*Correlation between Depersonalization and Quality of Life*

Variable	Quality of Life	
	r	p
Burnout (DP)	-.607	.000

Table 4 shows the correlation result of correlational analysis between depersonalization and Quality of Life by using Person Correlation. The result shows that the correlation between Depersonalization and Quality of Life is  $r = -.607$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). The value of Pearson Correlation ( $r = -.607$ ) indicates that there is a negative relationship between the two variables. Meanwhile, the value of Sig. (2-tailed) ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicates that the relationship is significant. These findings explain that the higher the depersonalization, the lower the quality of life. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5

*Correlation between Personal Accomplishment and Quality of Life*

Variable	Quality of Life	
	r	p
Burnout (PA)	.476	.000

Table 5 shows the correlation result of correlational analysis between Personal Accomplishment and Quality of Life by using Person Correlation. The result shows that the correlation between personal accomplishment and Quality of Life is  $r = .476$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). The value of Pearson Correlation ( $r = .476$ ) indicates that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. Meanwhile, the value of Sig. (2-tailed) ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicates that the relationship is significant. These findings explain that the higher the personal accomplishment, the higher the quality of life. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Summary**

Based on the study, there was a total of 56 teachers who responded to the study. The findings of the study revealed that, on average, secondary school teachers in Kuala Kangsar, Perak experienced a low level of emotional exhaustion of burnout, and a moderate level of depersonalization and personal accomplishment of burnout. The study also stated that more than half of the secondary school teachers in Kuala Kangsar, Perak reported high quality of life. This study found that the level of burnout on average is low in terms of emotional exhaustion while moderate in depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Most secondary school teachers are at a low level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and a high level of personal accomplishment.

However, there are still some of them experiencing burnout at a high level in every dimension. This implies that there are some teachers who feel exhausted physically and emotionally, indifferent, or apathetic response to their professional obligations, and feelings of failure and incompetence (Sánchez-Pujalte et al., 2021). Therefore, it is suggested for teachers to improve their condition by seeking support from co-workers, friends or loved ones. Teachers also are recommended to reach out to any employee assistance program to help them cope



with burnout. Furthermore, regular exercise and relaxing activity able to help teachers to better deal with stress which is one of the factors of burnout. Appropriate support and healthier management of teachers' emotional conditions might help them to handle their burnout and eventually improve teachers' performance. Thus, to keep a higher quality of life, the ministry of education is recommended to present a program that treats burnout indirectly by concentrating on methods for reducing stress or exhaustion.

Nonetheless, there is a large strength and a significant negative relationship found between Depersonalization and Quality of Life. This implies that the quality-of-life declines as teachers' negative attitudes, feeling of hostility and excessive detachment from a job increase. Negative emotions like dissatisfaction and wrath might result from administrators' unethical treatment of teachers leading to depersonalization (Levent & Keser, 2016). Therefore, to improve the quality of life among teachers, school administrators are advised to not burden teachers with overloaded teaching hours inside or outside of the school context. It might also be helpful for school administrations to provide psychological counselling for teachers to reduce their negative perception of work. Next, personal achievement and quality of life have medium strength and significant positive relationships. This suggests that the quality of life increases with personal achievement. It appears from the result that teachers' quality of life is elevated when they have a sense of personal fulfilment coming with self-esteem, high competency, productivity, and confidence at work (Sánchez-Pujalte et al., 2021).

### **Conclusion**

The results of the study which aimed to determine the relationship between burnout and quality of life have proven that there are still a number of teachers who experience burnout in terms of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment although the number is not very high. Findings indicate that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and poor personal accomplishment experienced by teachers negatively affect their quality of life. Schools can actively contribute to helping to decrease burnout by acknowledging that teachers have a variety of additional demands and responsibilities on their time. In conclusion, it cannot be denied that the task of being a teacher is very challenging and demanding.

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