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BURNOUT AMONG THE URBAN AND RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN MALAYSIA DURING THE MOVEMENT CONTROL ORDER

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Abstract

In the prolonged lockdown caused by the coronavirus epidemic, chronic exhaustion was seen in many academic workforces. This study aimed to evaluate and compare differences of burnout in the three components of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment—specifically, its relationship with the urban and rural areas of Malaysian secondary school teachers. The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey received equal responses from sixty-two (62) teachers from Malaysia's rural and urban locations (MBI-ES). The comparison data was evaluated using the t-test. Although secondary school teachers in urban parts of Malaysia were more likely to experience burnout than those in rural areas, the frequency of burnout among urban area teachers was comparable to that of teachers in rural Malaysia. The results also suggest that secondary school teachers' demographic lockdown needs were not considered. Future research should identify the need for practical approaches to treating secondary school teacher burnout in urban and rural settings, respectively.

Keywords*:* burnout, teachers in the urban and rural areas, movement order control (MCO)

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INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian government issued the Movement Control Order (MCO) in March 2020, requiring all public and private educational institutions to close due to an overall spike in new cases (Tang, 2020). Following the epidemic, approximately 70% of participants, according to an earlier study by the School Education Gateway (2020), used virtual platforms in teaching for the first time. All teachers must change their teaching strategies due to the school's closing, increasing their pressure, stress levels, and danger of burnout (Dela and Andrian, 2020). Before the epidemic, Malaysian teachers were accustomed to handling conflict (Punia and Kamboj, 2013), but the quick switch to remote learning has made teaching incredibly difficult.

Burnout is a psychological condition brought on by ongoing stress that impacts people's feelings, mental health, and physical behaviour (The World Health Organisation, 2019). Burnout is more common among those whose jobs require communication with a client or a third party (Balan et al., 2020). This job includes teachers, who are expected to devote time to instructional activities such as lesson planning, classroom teaching, homework grading, and extracurricular activities like attending or facilitating professional development activities and engaging parents and the community. Additionally, teachers are expected to perform administrative tasks linked to teaching and learning, such as writing student report cards and keeping track of students' class attendance.

Indeed, compared to other professions, teachers are more likely to experience burnout. According to research, switching from in-person to online training is teachers' most significant source of stress (Ozamiz et al.,2020; Jakubowski and Sitko-Dominiok, 2021). They frequently encountered unanticipated pickle situations and dealt with various challenges related to having access to considerable resources and learning how to use new web gadgets or tools (European Commission, 2020; Palareti, 2020). Due to the stress caused by instructors' need to rapidly alter their plans for teaching the new standards while obtaining insufficient preparation, these obstacles appeared simultaneously as teacher burnout (König, Jäger-Biela, and Glutsch, 2020). According to Muirhead (2000), online learning is an added responsibility.

Due to a dearth of research on burnout conducted in Malaysia, particularly in the context of home-based teaching and learning, the purpose of this study is to bridge the gap in the previous research on teacher burnout by determining the level of burnout among secondary school teachers in terms of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Additionally, the study compared the discrepancies between urban and rural areas regarding the three components of burnout. The investigation's inquiries are as follows:

1. What is the frequency of burnout among secondary school teachers in urban and rural areas?
2. What are the differences between urban and rural areas of Malaysian teachers in emotional exhaustion of burnout?
3. What are the differences between urban and rural areas of Malaysian teachers in the depersonalisation of burnout?

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4. What are the differences between urban and rural areas of Malaysian teachers in the personal emotional accomplishment of burnout?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

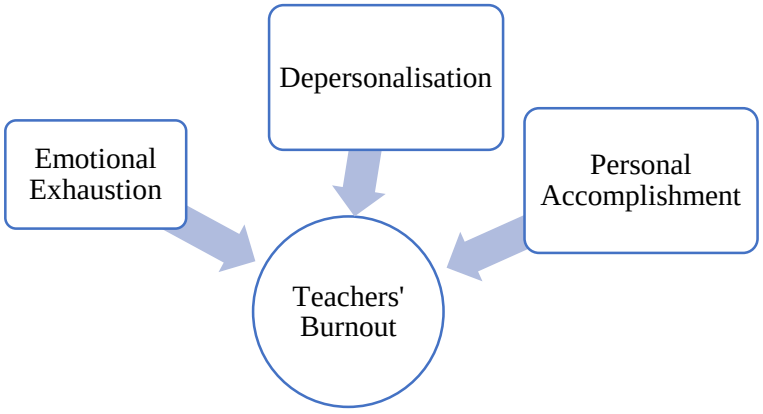

Figure 1: The three components of burnout based on the Maslach & Jackson theory

Maslach and Jackson (1981) stated that people who suffer burnout could be classified into three categories: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is the condition of having depleted emotional resources. For instance, teachers suffering from emotional exhaustion may assert that they have given their children their best and have nothing left to contribute. Depersonalisation is the lethargic emotion brought on by a build-up of professional stress. When people suffer from depersonalisation, they are surrounded by a gloomy, chilly demeanour and distant behaviour toward clients who attempt to deal with them. They are intentionally separating themselves from them (Maslach, 2001). Individuals who deem their work performance to be unfavourable assess themselves negatively in terms of their accomplishments. Teachers with diminished personal accomplishments no longer have the desire to contribute to their pupils' growth.

A person's physical state, such as headaches, fatigue, stomach problems, ulcers, an elevated heart rate, breathing difficulties, and neurological diseases, can indicate burnout (Talmor et al., 2005; Black, 2003). Among the psychological disorders are fury, sorrow, perpetual tension, bewilderment, hesitation, chronic concern, a long-lasting sense of inadequacy, and disgusting behaviour (Naylor, 2001; Sari, 2004; Talmor et al.,2005; Wood, 2002). In addition to lethargy, sleep disturbances, and cerebral impairment, burnout is also characterised by sluggishness (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003).

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METHODS

This study utilised the 22 Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey (MBI-ES) questionnaire to assess burnout and identify discrepancies in the three burnout components among secondary school teachers in urban and rural locations. "0" indicates never, "1" indicates a few times a year, "2" indicates less than once a month, "3" indicates a few times a month, "4" indicates once a week, and "5" indicates a few times a week, and "6" indicates every day (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Next, Descriptive Analysis was employed to assess the amount of burnout based on sociodemographic variables. Then the Independent Sample T-test was performed to establish the correlations between teachers and burnout components. The data was finally collected by utilising a Google survey.

RESULTS

Table 1: Level of Teachers' Burnout in The Urban Area

Burnout					
		Frequency (f)	**Per cent (%)**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	low level	11	35.5	35.5	35.5
	moderate level	7	22.6	22.6	58.1
	high level	13	41.9	41.9	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Level of Teachers' Burnout in The Rural Area

Burnout					
		Frequency (f)	**Per cent (%)**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	low level	12	38.7	38.7	38.7
	moderate level	11	35.5	74.2	74.2
	high level	8	25.8	25.8	100
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

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Tables one and two present teachers' burnout in rural and urban secondary schools. The urban population had the highest percentage of burnout (41.9 per cent). In contrast, table 2 displays a lower proportion (25.8 per cent), demonstrating secondary school teachers in urban regions are experiencing burnout than their rural counterparts.

Table 3: Comparisons of the Three Dimensions of Burnout Based on School Areas

	Area	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	Rural	31	25.9677	6.13451	1.10179
	Urban	31	28.3548	11.67490	2.09687
Depersonalisation (DP)	Rural	31	13.1290	4.63855	.83311
	Urban	31	13.8710	5.93151	1.06533
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	Rural	31	24.7419	7.97065	1.43157
	Urban	31	25.8710	5.13642	.92253

Table 3 presents an independent sample t-test to compare the rural and urban areas with the components of burnout. Based on Maslach, Jackson, and Leither's (1997) parameter, an individual is judged to have experienced significant burnout when the ranges for emotional tiredness and depersonalisation are larger than twenty-seven (27) and thirteen (13), respectively. Similarly, an individual's accomplishment is deemed significant when the sum is less than thirty-one (31). A moderate level of burnout is between seventeen (17) and twenty-six (26) for emotional exhaustion and between thirty-two (32) and thirty-eight (38) for depersonalisation. The amount of burnout is judged mild if the value of emotional exhaustion is sixteen (16) or less, depersonalisation is six (6) or less, and the importance of personal accomplishment is thirty-nine (39) or more.

The emotional exhaustion of school teachers in urban and rural areas is moderate, in the range of 25 to 28. Meanwhile, the level of depersonalisation and personal accomplishment for both urban (x=13.9) and rural (x=13.1) are high. Teachers in the urban areas showed a slightly higher mean score (x=28.3) on personal accomplishment than rural schoolteachers. The three dimensions of burnout indicate that teachers in rural or urban areas are experiencing an identical amount of burnout.

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Table 4: Comparisons of the Burnout Based on School Areas: Independent t-test

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
(PA)	Equal variances assumed	14.219	.000	-1.008	60	.318	-2.38710	2.36872	-7.12524	2.35104
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.008	45.392	.319	-2.38710	2.36872	-7.15680	2.38261
(DP)	Equal variances assumed	1.636	.206	-.549	60	.585	-.74194	1.35240	-3.44715	1.96328
	Equal variances not assumed			-.549	56.705	.585	-.74194	1.35240	-3.45038	1.96651
(EE)	Equal variances assumed	5.615	.021	-.663	60	.510	-1.12903	1.70307	-4.53568	2.27762
	Equal variances not assumed			-.663	51.252	.510	-1.12903	1.70307	-4.54768	2.28962

Table 4 assesses whether there are significant variations in teacher burnout between urban and rural schoolteachers; the researchers analysed the collected data using an independent sample t-test. Based on the results, the Sig (2-tailed) value for personal accomplishment is 0.32, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, secondary school teachers in urban and rural areas have no significant disparities in personal accomplishment. Meanwhile, the Sig (2-tailed) value for depersonalisation is 0.59, indicating no substantial differences in depersonalisation among urban and rural secondary school teachers. As for emotional exhaustion, the Sig (2-tailed) is 0.51, which is significantly greater than 0.05. Thus, no statistically significant differences in emotional exhaustion between urban and rural teachers.

DISCUSSIONS

In general, it is feasible to conclude that urban instructors were slightly more burned out than their rural counterparts. This may be related to teachers' sudden shift in teaching mode, as teachers in urban areas lack a tranquil and conducive home atmosphere for high-quality online sessions. This study is consistent with previous research on teacher burnout (Zhang et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2020; Canitio & Gasparella, 2021). For example, Zhang et al. (2020) 's study emphasises the difficulties of uncertainty and dispute on "what to teach, how to educate, the burden of teachers and students, the teaching environment, and the implications of education equality", all of which contribute to fatigue among educators. Moreover, Canitio& Gasparella (2021) emphasised that the interior noise pollution that interfered with the teaching process in

online classrooms added to the tension of teachers who had agreed to remain at home during the early stages of the Covid-19 epidemic. However, if they continue for an extended period, these accumulating factors lead to teacher burnout (Alarcon, 2011). In addition, Leitman et al. (1995) pinpointed that NGOs provide professional recognition and social support to rural schools and teachers.

As for rural schoolteachers, disobedient students, limited time, and bad working conditions can be significant sources of stress (Millicent and Joanne, 1999), contributing to personal accomplishment burnout. During the Covid-19 outage, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) discovered that fewer than half of rural households have access to a stable internet connection. After a few decades, the National Union Teaching Profession (2022) said that teachers are still hampered by a shortage of teaching tools such as stationery, reference books, and adequate technology. Particularly with the existing education system's one-size-fits-all rules, rural teaching and learning sessions became difficult as they could not achieve educational goals. Moreover, weather variability and blackouts will affect the internet. Teachers may conduct lessons online or offline, but students must complete assignments within the allotted class time. Due to internet issues, students may submit their assignments late at night or on weekends, requiring teachers to work outside regular hours.

Nonetheless, the data revealed that the rate of teacher burnout in urban and rural locations was comparable. Such similarities include the tremendous effort placed on educators during online classes and the time spent on responsibilities exceeding the authorised working hours. While transitioning to the new norms of online education or hybrid learning, this study also identified the burnout that urban and rural teachers experience. The study opined that detailed instructors' needs based on demographic are necessary.

CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this study was to compare urban and rural Malaysia during the Covid-19 shutdown to evaluate teacher burnout. Significant numbers of instructors displayed signs of burnout in both urban and rural areas. Burnout was associated with the switch of teaching mode, and variations in burnout were linked to decision freedom. The results demonstrate the need for action at the individual and institutional levels.

The study encountered several shortcomings. One of the limitations is the dearth of contact information and the difficulty of reaching participants during Malaysia's movement control order (MCO). Nonetheless, this pilot study highlights the need to combat teacher burnout by examining the personal needs of educators in rural and urban areas.

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