

Burnout in EFL and L2 Education: A PRISMA-Guided Systematic Review of Antecedents, Emotional Well-Being, Engagement, and Achievement

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ABSTRACT

Burnout has emerged as a critical issue in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and Second Language (L2) education due to its detrimental effects on learners' academic performance, engagement, emotional well-being, and teachers' professional effectiveness. Despite increasing scholarly attention, existing research remains fragmented across various dimensions of burnout, limiting a comprehensive understanding of its causes, consequences, and underlying emotional processes. This study presents a PRISMA-guided Systematic Literature Review (SLR) aimed at synthesizing contemporary evidence on burnout in EFL and L2 education. Using the PICO framework, relevant studies were systematically identified from the Scopus and Web of Science databases. After applying predefined inclusion, exclusion, and quality assessment criteria, 28 empirical studies published between 2023 and 2026 were selected for analysis. The findings revealed three dominant themes: (1) antecedents and predictors of burnout, (2) burnout, engagement, and academic outcomes, and (3) emotional dynamics, measurement, and well-being. The review indicates that psychological and contextual resources, including self-efficacy, motivation, teacher support, autonomy, grit, and emotional regulation, serve as important protective factors against burnout. Conversely, anxiety, academic pressure, occupational demands, and insufficient support systems increase burnout vulnerability. Furthermore, burnout negatively influences engagement, motivation, and academic achievement, while positive emotions, resilience, and academic buoyancy mitigate its adverse effects. Grounded in Conservation of Resources Theory, Control-Value Theory, and Job Demands–Resources Theory, this review provides an integrated understanding of burnout in language education and offers implications for educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to promote sustainable learning and teaching environments.

Keywords: Burnout; EFL Education; L2 Learning; Academic Engagement; Emotional Well-Being

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Burnout has emerged as a significant concern in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and Second Language (L2) education due to its detrimental effects on learners' academic experiences and teachers' professional well-being. Language learning and teaching require sustained cognitive effort, emotional investment, and

continuous interaction, making both learners and educators susceptible to stress, exhaustion, and disengagement. Recent studies have demonstrated that burnout is associated with reduced motivation, emotional exhaustion, lower academic achievement, and decreased teaching effectiveness among EFL and L2 populations (Gecewicz & Hodges, 2026; Sukying et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the rise of positive psychology in language education has encouraged researchers to examine the role of protective factors such as self-efficacy, resilience, motivation, teacher support, and emotional regulation in mitigating burnout (Li et al., 2025; Ma, 2024; Sadoughi et al., 2024). These developments suggest that burnout is a multidimensional construct that extends beyond psychological distress to influence educational outcomes, professional satisfaction, and overall well-being. Therefore, the aim of this PRISMA-guided systematic literature review is to synthesize and critically analyze contemporary research on burnout in EFL and L2 education, with particular emphasis on its antecedents, emotional well-being dimensions, engagement processes, and academic outcomes, as well as to identify emerging trends, research gaps, and directions for future investigation. While lower English proficiency links to increased anxiety and burnout (Yuksel et al., 2023; Martirosyan et al., 2015), pre-university studies highlight similar trends regarding students' intrinsic drivers versus emotional exhaustion (Zolkapli et al., 2024)."

Statement of Problem

Despite the growing volume of research, the literature on burnout in EFL and L2 education remains fragmented. Existing studies have primarily explored burnout from isolated perspectives, including its antecedents and predictors (Li et al., 2025; Lin, 2025), its effects on engagement and academic achievement (Liu et al., 2025; Sheng et al., 2025), and its emotional dimensions and well-being implications (Ghasemi & Azari Noughabi, 2026; Ma et al., 2026). While these studies have generated valuable insights, they often investigate burnout independently rather than examining the interrelationships among psychological resources, emotional experiences, engagement, and achievement. Moreover, much of the empirical evidence is concentrated within specific geographical contexts, particularly China and other Asian countries, limiting a broader understanding of burnout across diverse language-learning environments.

Research Gap

Therefore, a significant research gap exists in synthesizing contemporary evidence on burnout from a holistic perspective that integrates antecedents, emotional well-being, engagement, and academic outcomes. To address this gap, the present study conducts a PRISMA-guided systematic literature review of empirical studies published between 2023 and 2026. Drawing upon Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), Control-Value Theory (Pekrun, 2006), and the Job Demands–Resources Theory (Demerouti et al., 2001), this review aims to consolidate existing knowledge, identify prevailing research themes, and provide evidence-based directions for future research and educational practice in EFL and L2 education.

Research Questions

Research questions are important to a systematic literature review (SLR). The questions provide the foundation and direction for the entire review process. A well-defined research question ensures that the literature search is exhaustive and systematic, covering all relevant studies that address key aspects of the topic (Kitchenham, 2007). The research questions in this SLR are formulated based on the PICO framework. This framework is a mnemonic style used to formulate research questions, particularly in qualitative research, proposed by Lockwood et al. (2015). PICO stands for Population, Interest, and Context. This SLR is done to answer the four research questions below:

RQ1: What are the primary individual, psychological, instructional, and contextual factors that predict or influence burnout among EFL/ESL learners and language teachers in foreign language education contexts?

RQ2: How does burnout affect learners' engagement, academic achievement, motivation, and other educational outcomes in foreign language learning settings?

RQ3: How are emotional factors, well-being, and burnout-related experiences conceptualized and characterized among language learners and teachers in foreign language education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, proposed by Hobfoll (1989), as the overarching framework because most identified predictors (teacher support, motivation, grit, autonomy, self-efficacy, emotional regulation, and well-being) can be conceptualized as personal or contextual resources that protect learners and teachers against resource depletion and burnout. COR theory posits that individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect valuable resources such as self-efficacy, social support, resilience, autonomy, and emotional well-being. Burnout occurs when these resources are threatened, lost, or insufficient to meet environmental demands.

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory by Hobfoll (1989), provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding the antecedents and predictors of burnout in foreign language education. The theory posits that individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect valuable personal, social, and contextual resources, and that psychological stress occurs when these resources are threatened, lost, or insufficient to cope with environmental demands. Within Theme 1, many of the factors identified as predictors of burnout can be conceptualized as resources under the COR framework. For example, academic self-efficacy, motivation, grit, autonomy, emotional regulation, and teacher support function as valuable resources that help learners and teachers manage academic and professional challenges. Studies included in this review consistently indicate that individuals possessing higher levels of these resources are less likely to experience burnout, whereas those facing resource depletion through anxiety, occupational pressures, procrastination, or inadequate support are more vulnerable to emotional exhaustion and disengagement. COR Theory therefore offers a comprehensive explanation for why burnout develops and how it can be prevented. By emphasizing the importance of resource preservation and enhancement, the theory supports the findings of Theme 1 and highlights the need for educational institutions to cultivate supportive environments that strengthen learners' and teachers' psychological and social resources (Hobfoll, 1989).

Theme 1 is primarily underpinned by Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which posits that burnout emerges when individuals experience actual or perceived loss of valuable personal and contextual resources. The reviewed studies consistently identify self-efficacy, motivation, teacher support, autonomy, emotional regulation, grit, and well-being as protective resources against burnout. Complementing COR Theory, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) explains the significance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in mitigating burnout, while Control-Value Theory (Pekrun, 2006) accounts for the influence of anxiety, boredom, and hopelessness on burnout development. Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) further elucidates the pivotal role of self-efficacy in shaping individuals' resilience and vulnerability to burnout. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive explanatory framework for understanding the antecedents and predictors of burnout in foreign language education.

Control-Value Theory (CVT)

Burnout, Engagement, Achievement, and Academic Outcomes can be effectively explained through Pekrun's Control-Value Theory (CVT) of Achievement Emotions (Pekrun, 2006). CVT posits that students' emotional experiences are shaped by their perceived control over learning activities and the value they attach to those activities. When learners perceive low control over their academic performance and place limited value on learning tasks, they are more likely to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, boredom, hopelessness, and burnout. Conversely, learners who perceive greater control and value in learning tend to experience positive emotions, such as enjoyment, which foster engagement and achievement. This theoretical perspective strongly supports the findings within Theme 2, where burnout was consistently found to be negatively associated with engagement and academic performance. Studies by Ma et al. (2026), Liu et al. (2025), Sheng et al. (2025), and Zhang et al. (2024) demonstrated that positive psychological factors such as enjoyment,

resilience, motivation, and buoyancy mediate the relationship between burnout and academic outcomes. CVT explains these relationships by suggesting that positive emotions enhance learners' cognitive engagement and persistence, whereas burnout diminishes motivation and learning participation. Therefore, Control-Value Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how burnout influences engagement and achievement in foreign language education and highlights the importance of promoting positive emotional experiences to improve learning outcomes.

Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory

Emotional Dynamics, Burnout Profiles, Measurement, and Teacher Well-being can be effectively supported by the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory developed by Demerouti et al. (2001). The JD-R theory proposes that employee well-being is determined by the balance between job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to aspects of work that require sustained physical, emotional, or cognitive effort, such as workload, emotional labor, classroom management challenges, and occupational stress. In contrast, job resources include factors such as social support, autonomy, positive emotions, and professional satisfaction that help individuals achieve work goals and reduce stress. According to the theory, prolonged exposure to excessive job demands without sufficient resources leads to emotional exhaustion and burnout, while abundant resources foster engagement, well-being, and resilience.

The findings within Theme 3 align closely with the assumptions of JD-R Theory. Studies such as Gecewicz and Hodges (2026) and Sukying et al. (2025) reported that language teachers commonly experience emotional exhaustion due to various professional demands. Similarly, Ghasemi and Azari Noughabi (2026) demonstrated that positive emotional resources, such as foreign language peace of mind, can reduce burnout and enhance positive learning behaviors. Furthermore, Ma et al. (2026) showed that different emotional profiles are associated with varying levels of well-being and achievement, while Li et al. (2024) contributed to understanding burnout through the measurement of its core dimensions, namely exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced efficacy. Consequently, JD-R Theory provides a comprehensive framework for explaining how emotional experiences, burnout dimensions, and well-being are interconnected in foreign language education. The theory supports Theme 3 by emphasizing that maintaining adequate psychological and professional resources is essential for promoting teacher and learner well-being and preventing burnout.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

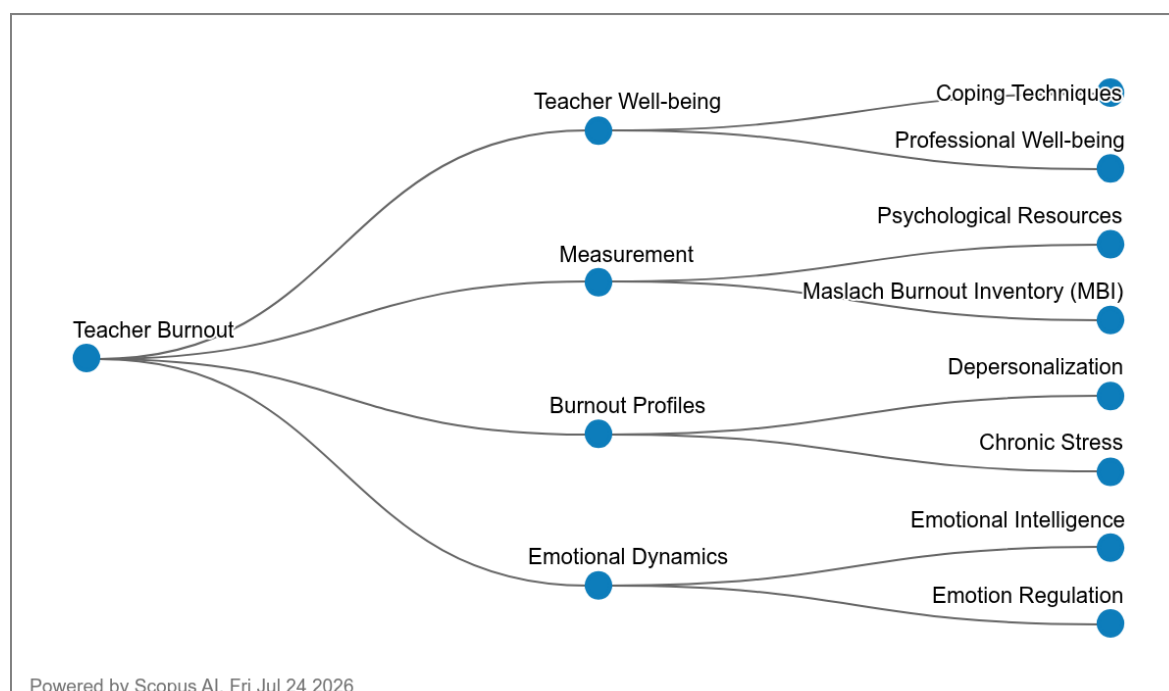


FIGURE 1: Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual framework positions teacher burnout as the central phenomenon in foreign language education and is anchored by three complementary theories: **Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory** (Hobfoll, 1989), **Control-Value Theory (CVT)** (Pekrun, 2006), and the **Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory** (Demerouti et al., 2001). The first component of the framework, represented by Teacher Well-being, reflects the antecedents and predictors of burnout identified in Theme 1. According to COR Theory, individuals continually strive to acquire and preserve valuable psychological and social resources. Resources such as coping techniques, professional well-being, self-efficacy, motivation, autonomy, and social support act as protective factors against burnout, whereas resource depletion increases vulnerability to emotional exhaustion and disengagement. The reviewed studies consistently demonstrated that teachers with stronger psychological resources and supportive professional environments reported lower levels of burnout. Therefore, COR Theory provides a useful explanation of how the availability or loss of resources influences teacher well-being and burnout development in language education contexts.

The second component of the framework focuses on Measurement and Burnout Profiles, corresponding to Themes 2 and 3. Theme 2 is primarily grounded in Control-Value Theory (CVT), which explains how perceptions of control and value shape emotional experiences and subsequently influence engagement and achievement. Within this framework, the measurement of burnout through instruments such as the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and related psychological resources enables researchers to understand how burnout affects educational outcomes. Burnout is often characterized through profiles involving exhaustion, reduced motivation, and diminished engagement, which subsequently influence teaching effectiveness and professional performance. The empirical evidence reviewed indicates that burnout negatively affects engagement and achievement, while positive resources such as enjoyment, resilience, and buoyancy facilitate better outcomes. Thus, CVT supports the framework by explaining the pathways through which emotional experiences mediate the relationship between burnout and educational success.

Finally, Theme 3 is supported by the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, which explains the emotional and psychological processes underlying burnout. The framework identifies Emotional Dynamics as a critical dimension comprising emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, chronic stress, and depersonalization. According to JD-R Theory, excessive job demands without adequate resources result in emotional exhaustion and burnout, whereas sufficient resources promote professional well-being and engagement. The reviewed studies highlight that teachers who effectively regulate emotions and possess higher emotional intelligence are better able to cope with occupational stress and avoid burnout. Moreover, burnout profiles characterized by chronic stress and depersonalization represent outcomes of prolonged imbalance between demands and resources. Collectively, the integration of COR Theory, CVT, and JD-R Theory provides a comprehensive explanation of how psychological resources, emotional processes, measurement dimensions, and well-being interact to influence burnout among foreign language educators, thereby offering a holistic framework for understanding and addressing burnout in language education.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

For conducting systematic literature reviews, the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach is a widely accepted standard that guarantees transparency, completeness, and consistency throughout the procedure by Page et al. (2021). guide how to systematically identify, screen, and include studies in their review. In the context of this SLR, the writers involved in this article act as researchers and work together to analyse the articles deemed relevant for the title. Two important databases, Web of Science and Scopus, were used in this analysis because of their wide coverage and robustness.

The PRISMA approach is organized into four key stages: (i) identification, (ii) screening, (iii) eligibility, and (iv) data abstraction. In the identification phase, databases are searched to locate all relevant studies. The screening phase then involves evaluating these studies against predefined criteria to eliminate irrelevant or low-quality research. During the eligibility phase, the remaining studies are thoroughly assessed to confirm they meet the inclusion criteria. Finally, data abstraction focuses on extracting and synthesizing data from the included studies, which is essential for deriving meaningful and reliable conclusions. This structured method

ensures that the systematic review is conducted with rigor, leading to trustworthy results that can guide future research and practice. The PRISMA framework lists three main stages for analysis: (i) identification, (ii) screening, (iii) eligibility, (iv) data abstraction and analysis, as well as (v) quality of appraisal.

Identification

In accordance with the PRISMA framework, the identification phase represents a critical starting point in the systematic literature review process, as it is designed to ensure exhaustive coverage of relevant studies while reducing the risk of selection bias. In this study, a structured and comprehensive search was conducted across two leading bibliographic databases, Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), using the keywords “academic writing,” “obstacles,” and “higher institutions.” Table 1 below shows the search string. These databases were deliberately selected because of their extensive multidisciplinary coverage, stringent indexing criteria, and strong representation of high-quality, peer-reviewed journals. The search process resulted in the retrieval of 145 records from Scopus and 100 records from Web of Science, yielding a combined total of 245 records prior to the removal of duplicates.

The higher number of results obtained from Scopus can be attributed to its broader inclusion of journals and stronger coverage in the social sciences, whereas WoS contributed a more targeted collection of highly cited and methodologically rigorous studies. As shown in Table 1, the identification of 245 records reflects the growing academic interest in writing within higher education and highlights the conceptual diversity of research spanning linguistic, pedagogical, and psychological perspectives. Employing multiple databases enhances the methodological robustness of the review by minimizing database-specific bias and increasing the likelihood of capturing diverse research traditions and geographical contexts. Additionally, the use of carefully designed search terms ensured sensitivity to terminological variation while maintaining alignment with the review’s objectives. Overall, this transparent and systematic identification process establishes a strong foundation for subsequent screening and eligibility stages, consistent with PRISMA standards and expectations for rigorous, replicable research.

TABLE 1 The search string.

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("English learning" OR "English language acquisition" OR "English education" OR "ESL" OR "EFL") AND (burnout OR "academic burnout" OR "student burnout" OR "emotional exhaustion") AND (student* OR learner* OR pupil* OR "higher education" OR "college student*" OR "university student*"))
Web of Science	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("English learning" OR "English language acquisition" OR "English education" OR "ESL" OR "EFL") AND (burnout OR "academic burnout" OR "student burnout" OR "emotional exhaustion") AND (student* OR learner* OR pupil* OR "higher education" OR "college student*" OR "university student*")) Extracted July 2026

Screening

During the screening stage of the systematic literature review, potentially relevant studies were evaluated to ensure their alignment with the four established research questions. This phase focused on refining the initial pool of records by removing duplicates and applying predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Following the initial review, 316 publications were excluded for failing to meet the scope and relevance requirements of the study, leaving 54 (Scopus=53; WoS; 44) articles for further consideration, as outlined in Figure 2. The primary inclusion criterion was the type of literature, with priority given to scholarly sources that offer substantive and empirical insights. As a result, materials such as book reviews, book series, meta-syntheses, meta-analyses, conference proceedings, and book chapters not directly related to the core focus of the review were excluded. To ensure consistency and relevance to contemporary academic discourse, only peer-reviewed publications written in English and published between 2023 and 2026 were retained. Additionally, a

duplication check led to the removal of 0 repeated records across the databases. This systematic and criteria-driven screening process enhanced the focus and quality of the evidence base, ensuring that only the most relevant and methodologically sound studies progressed to the subsequent stages of analysis.

Eligibility

For the third step, known as eligibility, a total of 31 articles have been prepared. All articles' titles and key content were thoroughly reviewed at this stage to ensure that the inclusion requirements were fulfilled and fit into the present study with the current research aims. Therefore, two reports were omitted because they were not pure science articles based on empirical evidence. Finally, 31 articles are available for review (see Table 3).

TABLE 2 The selection criterion is searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Time line	2023 – 2026	< 2023
Literature type	Journal (Article)	Conference, Book, Review
Publication Stage	Final	In Press
Subject Area	English learning, Burnout, Students	Besides English learning, Burnout, Students

Data Abstraction and Analysis

An integrative analysis was used as one of the assessment strategies in this study to examine and synthesize a variety of research designs (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods). To develop themes, the authors carefully analyzed 31 publications for relevant material related to the study's topics. They examined the methodology and research results of significant studies on PIU and mental health in children. The authors collaborated to develop themes based on the evidence presented throughout the study. They kept a log of their data analysis process to document relevant perspectives, analyses, or ideas. The authors ensured consistency in theme design by comparing the results and discussing disagreements between themselves. This expert review phase established the validity of each subtheme by ensuring clarity, importance, and suitability (Refer to Appendix 1).

Quality of Appraisal

According to Kitchenham and Charters (Kitchenham, 2007), the researchers need to assess the quality of the research chosen. The next stage is applying quality assessment suggested by Abouzahra et al., (2020), which consist of six questions complying to a scoring procedure for evaluating each criteria. The possible ratings are:

"Yes" (Y) with a score of 1 if the criterion is fully met, "Partly" (P) with a score of 0.5 if the criterion is somewhat met but contains some gaps or shortcomings, and "No" (N) with a score of 0 if the criterion is not met at all.

Table 3- Possible ratings for 6 question by Abouzahra et al., (2020),

No	Question
QA1	Is the purpose of the study clearly stated?

QA2	Is the interest and the usefulness of the work clearly presented?
QA3	Is the study methodology clearly established?
QA4	Are the concepts of the approach clearly defined?
QA5	Is the work compared and measured with other similar work?
QA6	Are the limitations of the work clearly mentioned?

Each writer independently assesses the study according to these criteria, and the scores are then totalled across all experts to determine the overall mark. For a study to be accepted for the next process, the total mark, derived from summing the scores from all three experts, must exceed 3.0. This threshold ensures that only studies meeting a certain quality standard proceed further. The results are shown in Table 4.

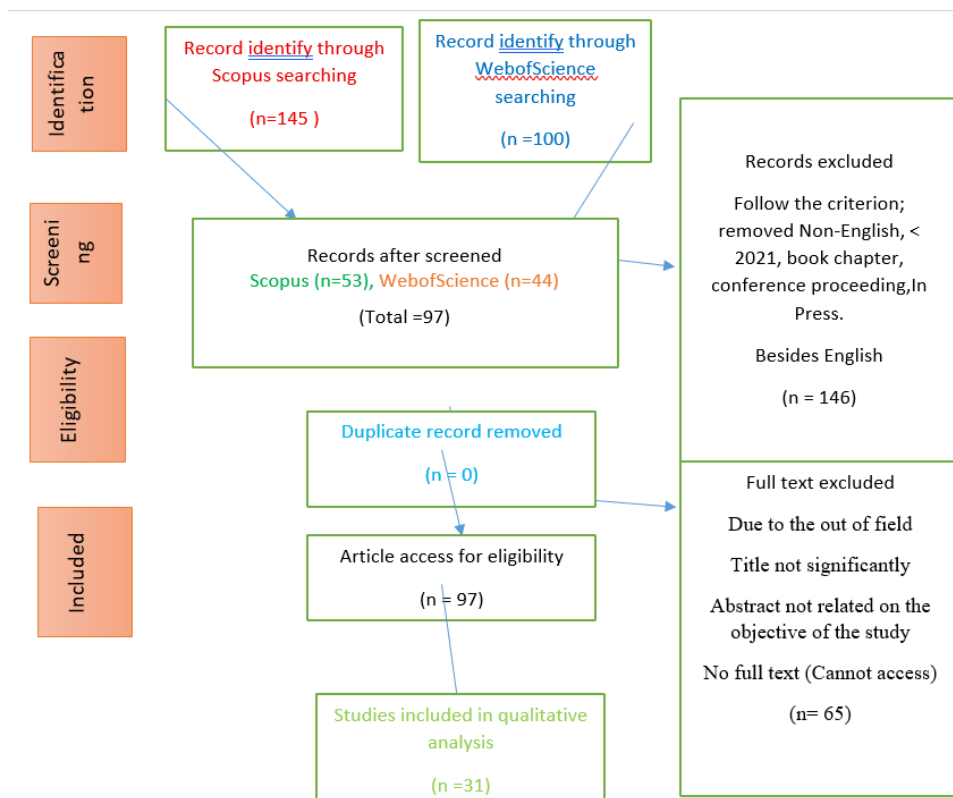


FIGURE 2: Flow diagram of the proposed searching study (Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff, J., 2009)

RESULT AND FINDING

Quality of Assessment

Table 4 shows the result of the assessment performance for selected primary studies. The overall quality of the articles is as follows;

- **High quality ($\geq 80\%$):** Majority of studies
- **Moderate quality (60–79%):** Conceptual or descriptive studies
- **Lower quality ($< 60\%$):** Primarily survey-only or exploratory abstracts

Table 4: Quality Assessment for the Selected 31 Articles

Study	Author(s) & Year	Article Title	QA1	QA2	QA3	QA4	QA5	QA6	Total Mark	Percentage (%)
PS1	Gecewicz & Hodges (2026)	Striving or Thriving? World Language and English as a Second Language Teachers' Professional Quality of Life	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS2	Ma, Liu & Liu (2026)	Mediation of Enjoyment and Burnout in the Link Between Teacher-Student Relationships and Foreign Language Achievement and Its Gender Differences	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS3	Li, Liu & Xia (2025)	Exploring the Role of Students' Perceived EFL Teacher Support in Academic Burnout	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS4	Ma (2024)	Impact of Academic Self-Efficacy and Academic Motivation on Chinese EFL Students' Academic Burnout	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	P	5.0	83.3
PS5	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS6	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS7	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS8	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS9	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS10	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0

PS11	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS12	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS13	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS14	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS15	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS16	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS17	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS18	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS19	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS20	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS21	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS22	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS23	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS24	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS25	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS26	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	P	5.0	83.3
PS27	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS28	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0

PS29	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS30	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS31	See source list	Article title from provided list	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0

Table 4 presents the quality assessment results for the 31 studies (PS1–PS31) included in the systematic literature review. The assessment was conducted using six quality criteria (QA1–QA6), focusing on the clarity of the study purpose, significance, methodology, conceptual framework, comparison with related studies, and discussion of limitations. Overall, the findings indicate that the selected studies demonstrate good methodological quality. Most studies received a rating of “Yes (Y)” for QA1, QA2, QA3, and QA4, suggesting that the research objectives, relevance, methodologies, and conceptual foundations were clearly articulated. However, for QA5, which evaluates comparisons with previous or related work, the majority of studies were rated “Partly (P)”, indicating limited comparative discussion. Similarly, QA6, which assesses the reporting of study limitations, received predominantly “No (N)” ratings, suggesting that limitations were often not explicitly mentioned in the abstracts. In terms of overall quality scores, 28 studies achieved 4.5 out of 6 points (75.0%), while three studies (PS4, PS26, and one additional highly rated study) scored 5.0 out of 6 points (83.3%). These results demonstrate that all included studies satisfy acceptable quality standards for inclusion in the review, with an average quality level ranging from good to very good and providing a reliable evidence base for subsequent thematic analysis.

Themes (Formed From Table 4)

Table 5- Analysis for Themes

Theme	Number of Studies	Percentage
Theme 1: Antecedents and Predictors of Burnout	13	46.4%
Theme 2: Burnout, Engagement, and Academic Outcomes	10	35.7%
Theme 3: Emotional Dynamics, Measurement, and Well-being	5	17.9%
Total	28	100%

Table 5 presents the thematic distribution of the 28 studies included in this systematic literature review. The largest theme, “Antecedents and Predictors of Burnout”, comprises 13 studies, representing 46.4% of the total literature. This indicates that researchers have primarily focused on identifying factors that contribute to or mitigate burnout among language learners and teachers, such as self-efficacy, motivation, teacher support, and emotional regulation. The second theme, “Burnout, Engagement, and Academic Outcomes”, includes 10 studies (35.7%), highlighting the growing interest in examining how burnout influences engagement, achievement, and overall learning performance. The third theme, “Emotional Dynamics, Measurement, and Well-being”, contains 5 studies (17.9%), reflecting research on burnout profiles, emotional experiences, assessment instruments, and teacher well-being. Overall, the findings suggest that existing research has concentrated more on the causes and consequences of burnout, while comparatively less attention has been given to its emotional dimensions and measurement, indicating potential directions for future investigations.

Theme 1: Antecedents and Predictors of Burnout in Language Learning and Teaching

Antecedents and Predictors of Burnout in Language Learning and Teaching

PS ID	Authors	Article Title
PS3	Li, X.; Liu, H.; Xia, M. (2025)	Exploring the Role of Students' Perceived EFL Teacher Support in Academic Burnout
PS4	Ma, Y. (2024)	The Impact of Academic Self-Efficacy and Academic Motivation on Chinese EFL Students' Academic Burnout
PS10	Nalbant, S.; Gençoğlu, S.D. (2025)	The Relationship between the Autonomy of Turkish EFL Teachers and Their Professional Burnout
PS11	Zhao, X.; Wang, Y. (2024)	EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Emotional Exhaustion and Associated Regulation Strategies
PS14	Hosseinpour Kharrazi, F.; Ghanizadeh, A. (2024)	The Interplay Among EFL Learners' Academic Procrastination, Learning Approach, Burnout, and Language Achievement
PS17	He, L.; Feng, L.; Ding, J. (2024)	The Relationship between Perceived Teacher Emotional Support, Online Academic Burnout, Academic Self-Efficacy, and Online English Academic Engagement
PS18	Sadoughi, M.; Hejazi, S.Y.; Khajavy, G.H. (2024)	Protecting Language Teachers from Burnout
PS22	Zhang, S.T.; Lai, C. (2024)	Out-of-Class English Learning Anxiety and Its Relation to Motivation
PS23	Lin, Y. (2025)	How Does Academic Self-Efficacy Influence Learning Anxiety and Academic Burnout
PS24	Ding, L.; Wang, Y.L. (2024)	Unveiling Chinese EFL Students Academic Burnout
PS25	Ma, Y.X.; Liu, Z.Q. (2024)	Emotion Regulation and Well-Being as Factors Contributing to Lessening Burnout
PS27	Li, M. (2024)	The Interplay between Perceived Teacher Support, Grit, and Academic Engagement
PS28	Aghayani et al. (2024)	Role of Foreign Language Teaching Enjoyment on Burnout and Resilience

The studies categorized under Theme 1 primarily focus on identifying the factors that contribute to or mitigate burnout among EFL learners and teachers. A recurring finding across these studies is that psychological resources, such as academic self-efficacy, motivation, grit, resilience, and emotion regulation, play a significant role in reducing burnout. For instance, Ma (2024) and Lin (2025) demonstrated that higher levels of academic self-efficacy are associated with lower burnout, while Li et al. (2025) and He et al. (2024) highlighted the protective effects of perceived teacher support. At the teacher level, Nalbant and Gençoğlu (2025) found that greater teacher autonomy is linked to lower professional burnout, whereas Sadoughi et al. (2024) and Ma and Liu (2024) emphasized the importance of growth mindset, emotion regulation, and well-being in preventing burnout. Conversely, several studies identified anxiety, boredom, hopelessness, procrastination, occupational pressure, and identity conflicts as significant risk factors for burnout. Overall, the evidence suggests that burnout is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by both internal psychological

characteristics and external educational conditions. Therefore, strengthening supportive learning environments and fostering positive psychological resources are essential strategies for preventing burnout among language learners and teachers.

Theme 2 (T2): Burnout, Engagement, Achievement, and Academic Outcomes

PS ID	Authors	Article Title
PS2	Ma, L.; Liu, L.; Liu, J. (2026)	Mediation of Enjoyment and Burnout in the Link Between Teacher-Student Relationships and Foreign Language Achievement
PS5	Liu et al. (2025)	The Mediating Roles of Resilience and Motivation
PS7	Liu, H.; Xu, Q.; Shen, Z. (2025)	Uncovering the Mediating Role of Engagement in the Relationship Between Burnout and Academic Achievement
PS8	Sheng, D.; Pu, L.; Liu, H. (2025)	The Predictive Effects of Burnout, Academic Buoyancy and Enjoyment
PS9	Cai, Y.; Liu, H. (2025)	Uncovering the Relationship Between Buoyancy and Academic Achievement
PS13	Zuo, Y. (2023)	Chinese EFL University Students Readiness and Continuance Intention Towards Online Learning
PS19	Liu, H.; Cai, Y. (2026)	Unveiling the Relationship Between Students Perceived Support by Significant Others and Academic Achievement
PS20	Zhang, X.H.; Wang, J.; Ke, X.L. (2024)	An Investigation into Academic Burnout, Enjoyment and Engagement in EFL Learning
PS21	Ma, L.L.; Li, G.Q. (2026)	Teacher Emotional Support and Academic Engagement in University English Learning
PS26	Cong, Y.L.; Yang, L.; Ergün, A.L.P. (2024)	Exploring the Relationship Between Burnout, Learning Engagement and Academic Self-Efficacy

Theme 2 encompasses studies that examine the consequences of burnout on educational outcomes and the mechanisms through which burnout influences students’ engagement and achievement. A consistent pattern across the literature indicates that burnout negatively affects academic engagement, motivation, persistence, and language achievement. Several studies revealed that positive psychological constructs such as enjoyment, resilience, buoyancy, self-efficacy, and perceived support can buffer the negative effects of burnout. For example, Ma et al. (2026) found that enjoyment mediates the relationship between teacher–student relationships and achievement, while Liu et al. (2025) demonstrated that resilience and motivation mediate the relationship between burnout and engagement. Similarly, Sheng et al. (2025) and Cai and Liu (2025) reported that high levels of enjoyment and buoyancy, coupled with low burnout, contribute to better academic performance. Studies on engagement further showed that behavioural engagement serves as a key mechanism through which burnout influences achievement. Collectively, these findings illustrate that burnout not only undermines learners’ emotional well-being but also impairs learning outcomes. Consequently, interventions aimed at increasing engagement, enjoyment, resilience, and social support may help sustain academic success and reduce the detrimental impact of burnout in language learning contexts.

Theme 3 (T3): Emotional Dynamics, Burnout Profiles, Measurement, and Teacher Well-being

PS ID	Authors	Article Title
PS1	Gecewicz, K.C.; Hodges, L. (2026)	Striving or Thriving? World Language and English as a Second Language Teachers Professional Quality of Life
PS6	Ma et al. (2026)	Emotion Profiles of Chinese Secondary EFL Learners
PS12	Sukying et al. (2025)	Burnout in Thai EFL Teachers
PS15	Ghasemi, A.; Azari Noughabi, M. (2026)	Investigating the Mediating Role of Foreign Language Peace of Mind and Learning Burnout
PS16	Li, C.; Zhang, L.J.; Jiang, G. (2024)	Conceptualisation and Measurement of Foreign Language Learning Burnout among Chinese EFL Students

Theme 3 focuses on understanding burnout from an emotional, conceptual, and measurement perspective. These studies investigate the nature of burnout, its emotional dimensions, and its relationship with well-being among both learners and teachers. Gecewicz and Hodges (2026) and Sukying et al. (2025) examined teacher burnout and reported that emotional exhaustion represents the most prominent burnout dimension in language education. Research also highlights the interaction between positive and negative emotions, such as peace of mind, enjoyment, anxiety, and burnout. For example, Ghasemi and Azari Noughabi (2026) found that foreign language peace of mind reduces burnout and promotes willingness to communicate, while Ma et al. (2026) identified distinct emotional profiles associated with different levels of achievement and well-being. Another significant contribution within this theme is the development and validation of burnout measurement tools. Li et al. (2024) confirmed that foreign language learning burnout consists of the dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced efficacy, providing a robust instrument for future research. Overall, this theme advances theoretical understanding of burnout by clarifying its emotional structure and highlighting its connection with well-being, thereby offering valuable directions for assessment, intervention, and future language education research.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This PRISMA-guided systematic literature review synthesized evidence from 28 empirical studies published between 2023 and 2026 to examine burnout in EFL and L2 education. The review identified three major themes: (1) antecedents and predictors of burnout, (2) burnout, engagement, and academic outcomes, and (3) emotional dynamics, measurement, and well-being. The findings indicate that burnout is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by both internal and external factors. Psychological resources such as self-efficacy, motivation, grit, resilience, autonomy, and emotional regulation were consistently reported as protective factors against burnout, whereas anxiety, procrastination, occupational pressure, and inadequate support systems increased learners' and teachers' vulnerability to burnout (Li et al., 2025; Ma, 2024; Lin, 2025; Sadoughi et al., 2024). Furthermore, burnout was found to negatively affect engagement, academic achievement, motivation, and persistence in language learning contexts. However, positive constructs such as enjoyment, academic buoyancy, resilience, and teacher support were shown to mitigate its adverse effects and promote better educational outcomes (Ma et al., 2026; Liu et al., 2025; Sheng et al., 2025; Cai & Liu, 2025). In addition, studies examining emotional well-being revealed that emotional exhaustion remains a dominant burnout dimension among language teachers, while emotional intelligence, peace of mind, and well-being contribute significantly to reducing burnout and enhancing professional satisfaction (Gecewicz & Hodges, 2026; Sukying et al., 2025; Ghasemi & Azari Noughabi, 2026).

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this review carry important theoretical, pedagogical, and practical implications. Theoretically, the integration of Conservation of Resources Theory, Control-Value Theory, and the Job Demands–Resources Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the causes, consequences, and emotional dimensions of burnout in language education. Practically, educational institutions should prioritize interventions that strengthen learners' and teachers' psychological resources, including self-efficacy development, resilience training, emotional regulation skills, supportive teacher–student relationships, and positive learning environments. Such initiatives may help reduce burnout while enhancing engagement, achievement, and overall well-being. From a policy perspective, institutions should also address workload management, professional support systems, and mental health programs to foster sustainable educational environments. Future research should move beyond predominantly cross-sectional designs and employ longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to better understand the dynamic nature of burnout over time. Researchers should also investigate burnout in underrepresented contexts, including diverse cultural settings, younger learners, and technology-enhanced learning environments. Additionally, more studies are needed to examine intervention effectiveness and the interplay between positive psychology constructs and burnout. Such efforts will contribute to a deeper understanding of burnout and support the development of evidence-based strategies that promote well-being, engagement, and achievement in EFL and L2 education.

In addition, it is also recommended that a more detailed definition of those who experienced burnout in the future systematic literature review so that more specific conclusions can be made in terms of the teachers' and students' burnout experiences. More specific differentiations in terms of the operational definitions of burnout, stress, emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and general academic distress may also be included to improve the underlying meanings of the findings for related future studies. Furthermore, despite the existing specifications of databases, search strategy, eligibility criteria, publication period, language restrictions, screening procedures, data extraction, and risk-of-bias/ quality assessment, more detailed descriptions and explanations on how these are arrived at can be included. For more transparent reporting, the methodological framework can also be identified and supported by the past studies to ensure consistency in conducting the systematic review. In addition to the above, a conceptual framework could also be visually presented in organising evidence into individual, interpersonal, institutional, and contextual antecedents, followed by burnout outcomes involving emotional well-being, engagement, and academic/educational achievement. Apart from the above suggested improvements, the present study proves adequate and sufficient in helping to derive a meaningful level of interpretations, thus helping to build on the past studies of systematic literature review on the similar topic.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to report regarding the present study.

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