

## Online Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Exploring University Teachers' Burnout Levels

Received 30 June 2023, Accepted 07 Feb 2024, Published online: April 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36832/beltaj.2023.0701.07>

Journal homepage: <https://www.journal.belta-bd.org/>

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### Abstract

In 2020, traditional classroom learning was shifted to distance learning because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In Bangladesh, educational institutions closed in March 2020. Both public and private universities decided to take classes and examinations online to provide uninterrupted education to students during this closure. The Ministry of Education, Bangladesh, reopened the secondary and higher secondary institutions as well as universities in February 2022, considering students' vaccination status. The long period of online education from March 2020 to February 2022 has been a new experience for both the teachers and students, and both groups faced several challenges to adapt to this novel situation. For teachers, a significant challenge was to adapt to the abrupt transition to a different mode of instruction they had no experience with. Dealing with this challenge might have caused burnout among them. This study was designed to determine the extent of burnout Bangladeshi university English teachers have possibly faced in online teaching scenarios. The Maslach Burnout Inventory- Educators Survey (MBI-ES) was used to collect the data and understand the burnout level of the participants. Data analysis revealed that Bangladeshi English teachers from universities felt a moderate level of Emotional Exhaustion, a low level of Depersonalization, and a low level of reduced Personal Accomplishment. The results also demonstrate that private university teachers felt more burned out than public university teachers. A positive correlation was also found between workload and burnout. The teachers also provided several reasons, effects, and suggestions through interviews, demonstrating a clearer picture of teacher burnout in online teaching.

**Keywords:** Online teaching, public university, private university, burnout, teachers' experience

## INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the world saw an outbreak of the novel corona virus that impacted all the human lives of the world. Like other fields, the education sector has also seen a significant paradigm shift where educational institutions have had to shift from face-to-face classroom teaching to online teaching (Mbhiza, 2021). Though this abrupt shift was born out of necessity in response to the pandemic, the transition was not smooth in developing countries due to the lack of necessary infrastructures, unequal access to educational resources and technology, and significant impact on the physical and mental health of teachers, students, and parents (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). Likewise, in Bangladesh, teachers faced challenges due to a lack of training, knowledge, and experience in online education, while students struggled with physical, emotional, and financial issues during the pandemic (Dutta & Smita, 2020; Mahmud et al., 2021).

In Bangladesh, educational institutions closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic. Gradually, different educational institutions started shifting to online education following the instances from other countries. On May 7, 2020, private universities received approval from the Ministry of Education and University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh to conduct online teaching and examinations, although some private universities had already started taking online classes in March (Abdullah, 2020). However, public universities were still in a dilemma considering the challenges regarding online education's accessibility as many of their students are from rural and underprivileged backgrounds. Finally, public universities started taking online classes in June 2020 (Kamol, 2020). Since then, online education continued in Bangladeshi higher education for almost one and a half years. In February 2022, the Ministry of Education, Bangladesh decided to reopen all the secondary, higher secondary, and university-level institutions (Abdullah, 2022). By the end of 2023, all levels of institutions in Bangladesh had returned to in-person education, although online classes were also held occasionally because of emergency situations like political strikes.

Williamson et al. (2020) believed online teaching might have a long run as it was uncertain how long this pandemic would last or if any other disasters would occur in the future. Moreover, as mentioned above, online elements are constantly being integrated with in-person education. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the online teaching experiences during the pandemic to implement more effective online education. Understanding teachers' experiences would contribute to the design of necessary professional development opportunities. Furthermore, studying their experience may also contribute to creating a supportive environment for teachers' mental and physical well-being.

Previous literature published during- and post-pandemic times discussed the infrastructural and support issues in detail that teachers faced while teaching online (Dutta & Smita, 2020; Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). However, there is a scarcity of studies that discussed the teachers' experiences, especially dealing with this new context as well as impacts on their physical and psychological health during this time. Though there are studies that discussed how teachers faced burnout caused by online teaching (Goebel & Carlotto, 2019; Hogan & Mcknight, 2007; Mukundan & Ahour, 2011), most of them were conducted in the pre-pandemic era and do not explore the nuances of teacher burnout in relation to the emergency online learning caused by COVID-19. While working in public and private universities as teachers, we encountered the challenges of emergency online teaching, including severe mental and physical exhaustion and heavy workloads. We also witnessed our peers and colleagues experiencing similar episodes of

burnout. Therefore, we decided to systematically investigate the levels of burnout Bangladeshi university teachers experienced during their first online teaching experiences.

Freudenberger (1974) first coined the term "burnout" to characterize a societal circumstance in which human service workers are so fatigued that they are unable to execute their duties properly. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), "burnout" is an umbrella term to characterize a condition of emotional fatigue and cynicism that arises in reaction to the stresses and strains of professional life. Teaching is widely seen as a demanding, high-pressure job with a high burnout rate (Yu, 2005). Moreover, there is a belief that online teaching is more stressful and tedious than traditional teaching, which leads to teacher burnout (Hislop & Ellis, 2004). For teachers, several difficulties in online teaching situations can contribute to their burnout (Hogan & Mcknight, 2007). Moreover, burnout is more likely to happen if they are teaching online for the first time without any training, and proper infrastructural facilities during an emergency situation like the COVID pandemic. Consequently, this study examined the burnout level of Bangladeshi public and private university teachers while conducting online teaching and assessment for a significant amount of time during an emergency.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Teacher Burnout*

Burnout is described as a long-term, unpleasant mental condition marked by emotional weariness resulting from distress. According to McCann and Holt (2009), the three-dimensions model (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), which combines feelings of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and a lack of Personal Accomplishments (PA), is one of the most widely recognized descriptions of burnout. It was created in reaction to persistent stress in occupations where people interact with others. Mukundan and Ahour (2011) stress that in the teaching profession, Emotional Exhaustion (EE) occurs when a teacher experiences tiredness and fatigue due to emotional energy being worn out. Therefore, teachers find that they are unable to offer students their full attention as they formerly did. When teachers do not have favorable sentiments towards their pupils, they experience Depersonalization (DP) or cynicism. They experience diminished Personal Accomplishment (PA) when they start to believe that they can no longer assist pupils in learning and growing (Mukundan & Ahour, 2011).

Burnout is a long-term, unpleasant mental condition marked by emotional exhaustion resulting from distress (McCann & Holt, 2009). It occurs when there is an excessive amount of labor, a lack of personal control, insufficient incentives, a collapse of the working community, a lack of equality, or opposing ideals (Maslach & Leiter, 1999). In addition, Lee and Ashforth (1996) identify role stress, role conflict, and workload as precursors of burnout. The personal qualities of an individual instructor are also factors that influence burnout (McCann & Holt, 2009). Burnout's physical and behavioral symptoms include a reluctance to go to work, unhappiness with performance, an extension of work issues into personal life, and a sense of worthlessness (Cedoline, 1982). According to Dunham and Varma (1998, as cited in Hogan & McKnight, 2007), the most common signs of teacher burnout are a significant decrease in professional commitment, a loss of passion and interest, and feelings of dissatisfaction and estrangement. Mukundan and Ahour (2011) state that burned-out instructors may exhibit signs of a lack of enthusiasm in teaching, communicating, and transmitting the day's lesson.

Teacher burnout can intensify students' adverse reactions and attitudes toward the instructor and the learning circumstance in general. Adverse emotions have been linked to worse teaching quality, a lack of flexibility in accommodating diverse student requirements, and poor teacher-student relationships (Capel, 1991). In addition to the negative impact on individuals, burnout has significant consequences and costs for the institution. It includes lower individual work performance, high rates of turnover, lower levels of organizational loyalty, lower perceived job satisfaction, high healthcare expenses, and reductions in creativity, problem-solving, and innovation (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Shirom, 2003, as cited in Hogan & McKnight, 2007).

### *Previous Research on Teacher Burnout*

Teacher burnout has received wide attention as teaching is commonly seen as a high-stress occupation. The majority of teacher burnout research has looked at the correlations or significant impacts of demographic factors on the three aspects of burnout confronted by the teachers. Talbot (2000) looked at burnout in 63 nursing college faculty members who reported high to moderate degrees of emotional exhaustion (39.7%), low feelings of personal accomplishment (73%) and little effects on the depersonalization among the three dimensions of burnout. Lackritz's (2004) study on 265 university faculty members depicted that job burnout had strong relationships with the number of students taught, time spent on various tasks, and numerical student assessments. Mukundan and Khandehroo (2009) experimented on 120 English language teachers in Malaysia and found that emotional exhaustion of female teachers and depersonalization of male instructors were both considerably high, while both had a significantly low degree of personal accomplishment. Another study on 437 Malaysian female teachers shows that the number of children, level of teaching, age, and years of teaching experience were all significant predictors of burnout (Mukundan & Ahour, 2011).

According to a study of 270 College English teachers conducted by Xu (2010), 75.4% were burnt out on a low to medium level. Similarly, Lou and Chen's (2016) study on 79 English university teachers showed that the participants experienced low to medium level burnout. Wang (2010, as cited in Lou and Chen, 2016) surveyed 75 female college English instructors and discovered that 41.89% of them were suffering from burnout. Goebel and Carlotto (2019) investigated the characteristics of burnout syndrome in remote education teachers and emphasized the significance of striking a balance between job and family life. Loh and Liew (2016) found that value-laden content of the English language, the pressure of evaluating essays, the stress of high-stakes testing, and the need for culturally relevant pedagogies are the cause of emotional burdens and challenges for English teachers.

A pioneering study on online instructors' burnout was conducted by Hogan and McKnight (2007) where they experimented on 76 online instructors from the US using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES). The findings showed that online instructors had a moderate score on the emotional exhaustion subscale, a high degree of depersonalization, and a low degree of personal accomplishment. Follow-up research was done by McCann and Holt (2009), who also used MBI-ES to measure the burnout level of 650 online university teachers in the US. They concluded that online instructors were less stressed than face-to-face instructors. A fairly recent study by Shlenskaya et al. (2020) on online teachers' burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that university teachers reported a high degree of emotional fatigue and depersonalization but a moderate level of personal accomplishment.

The lack of studies conducted on teachers' burnout, and its reasons, effects, and solutions during COVID-19 indicates that it is under-researched both in Bangladeshi and international contexts. This study intends to contribute to the existing literature to fill this gap. Furthermore, there was an evident difference between public and private universities' tendency to employ online teaching. Aligning with this fact, the researchers attempted to determine the level of teachers' burnout from these two types of universities and compare them to see whether there is any statistically significant difference between their burnout levels. Also, the researchers aimed to emphasize teachers' opinions on the reasons and effects and suggested solutions to address burnout in the Bangladeshi higher education sector.

To fulfill these purposes, the study addressed four research questions:

1. What is the degree of burnout among public and private universities' English teachers because of online teaching during the pandemic?
2. Is there any statistically significant difference between public and private university teachers' burnout caused by online teaching?
3. What are the reasons behind teacher burnout in online teaching, according to Bangladeshi university teachers?
4. What are the effects of teacher burnout caused by online teaching, and what are the solutions suggested by Bangladeshi university teachers?

## METHODOLOGY

This study addressed the research problem from a pragmatist paradigm, as teacher burnout is a phenomenon caused by the actual practice of teachers during the pandemic. Moreover, the goal of this research is to contribute to the effective practice of online teaching by investigating the reasons for teacher burnout and seeking ways of reducing it. The teachers' experiences and the aspect of their burnout are significantly complex and multifaceted, and only a quantitative or qualitative approach may not fully explore the extent and uniqueness of these phenomena (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2015). Therefore, to answer the multifaceted research questions of this study, mixed methods research was chosen as mixed methods research provides a comprehensive picture of the phenomena by combining quantitative and qualitative methods (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). This study incorporated the Maslach Burnout Inventory—Educator Survey (MBI-ES) for quantitative data collection and a semi-structured interview format for qualitative data collection.

The sample of this study was 60 English teachers from Bangladeshi public and private universities who were selected through a convenience sampling process. The researchers contacted these 60 participants and circulated the questionnaire via email, Messenger, and WhatsApp. Among them, 30 teachers were from 3 renowned public universities and 30 from 4 renowned private universities. It has been made sure that these teachers have taught online classes for a significant amount of time during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Table 1: Demographics of the Participants**

Variables	Frequencies (N=60)	Percentages
<b>Gender</b>		

Male	26	43.3
Female	34	56.7
<b>University</b>		
Public University	30	50
Private University	30	50
<b>Online Teaching Experience</b>		
1-5 months	5	8.3
5-10 months	13	21.7
10-15 months	32	53.3
Over 15 months	10	16.7
<b>Online Class Hour in a week</b>		
5-10 hours	32	53.3
11-15 hours	21	35.0
16-20 hours	5	8.3
21-25 hours	2	3.3
26 and 30 hours	0	0
Over 30 hours	0	0
<b>Total workload in a week</b>		
5-10 hours	11	18.3
11-15 hours	12	20.0
16-20 hours	15	25.0
21-25 hours	8	13.3
26-30 hours	3	5.0
Over 30 hours	11	18.3

This study employed the Maslach Burnout Inventory—Educator Survey (MBI-ES) and a demographic questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire consisted of information about gender, the experience of online teaching, current class hours, and the workload of the participants. The MBI-ES was used to determine the extent of burnout caused by online teaching among university teachers. It is a popular instrument for addressing the three subscales (syndromes) of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA) (Maslach et al., 1996). It is a 7-point Likert scale with a range of 0 to 6 (where 0 = never and 6 = every day). It has 22 statements where respondents are asked how often they experience feelings related to burnout. The emotional exhaustion subscale comprises 9 items that assess feelings of being emotionally exhausted or overextended (e.g., "I feel fatigued

when I get up in the morning"). The depersonalization subscale consists of 5 items that assess impersonal responses to coworkers and service users (e.g., "I don't really care what happens to some students"). Personal accomplishment consists of 8 items assessing perceptions of competence and achievement (e.g., "I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job").

A semi-structured interview was conducted to derive the qualitative data for this research. The questions in the interview questionnaire dealt with the reasons and effects of teacher burnout as well as suggestions to overcome burnout caused by the recent trend of online teaching. The purpose of using a semi-structured interview questionnaire was to provide participants with the liberty to elaborate on any answer with interesting and contextual discussions and examples. The semi-structured interview format allows delving deeper into the opinions of respondents where the researcher "does not want to use ready-made response categories that would limit the depth and breadth of the respondent's story" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136).

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0. The sum of the associated items was computed for each degree of burnout in order to compare with Maslach et al. (1996) response categories for high (EE = 27 or over; DP = 13 or over; PA = 0-31), moderate (EE = 17-26; DP = 7-12; PA = 32-38), and low (EE = 0-16; DP = 0-6; PA = 39 or over). According to Maslach et al. (1996), greater EE and DP ratings indicate more experienced burnout. On the other hand, lower PA scores indicate higher levels of experienced burnout since the PA subscale measures the respondents' effective achievement with people. Descriptive analysis was conducted to understand the common trends, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Moreover, paired-samples t-test and Pearson correlation coefficients were also used to understand the relationships among different variables and groups.

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews were transcribed by the researchers. This interview data was deidentified and pseudonyms were provided to participants while reporting data to maintain confidentiality. The transcribed data were then analyzed using a process where the researchers organized the data in a certain order, highlighted or specified the special or recurring points, and reorganized the data under specific categories.

## RESULTS

The burnout level of the whole sample (N=60) caused by online teaching was estimated in terms of the high, moderate, and low response categories of Maslach et al. (1996). Table 2 shows that the university teachers in Bangladesh experienced a moderate level of Emotional Exhaustion (EE=21.1), a low level of Depersonalization (DP=5.68) and a moderate level of reduced Personal Accomplishment (PA=32.9) because of online teaching.

**Table 2: Burnout level of the whole sample**

Burnout Subscales	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	60	21.01	11.99
Depersonalization (DP)	60	5.68	5.53
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	60	32.9	8.21

Note. EE= Emotional Exhaustion (high  $\geq 27$ , moderate= 17-26, low  $\leq 16$ ); DP= Depersonalization (high  $\geq 13$ , moderate= 7-12, low  $\leq 6$ ); PA= reduced Personal Accomplishment (high  $\leq 31$ , moderate= 32-38, low  $\geq 39$ )

An independent sample t-test was conducted to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences between the class hour and workload of public and private university teachers. The responses were coded into numbers. Table 3 shows that Private university teachers had significantly more class hours and workload than public university teachers (p for class hour= .001 and p for workload= .001).

**Table 3: Class hour and workload of public and private university teachers**

Variables	Public University	Private University	P value
Class hour (Mean)	1.17	2.07	.001
Workload (Mean)	2.33	4.10	.001

Next, a comparison of public and private university teachers' burnout levels was made to see whether there was any difference between their burnout levels, as one group of teachers had more class hours and workload. Table 4 indicates that both groups of teachers faced a moderate level of Emotional Exhaustion (EE). However, there is a statistically significant difference between EE means of the two groups  $t(58) = -2.51, p = .015$ . By comparing the means, it can be said that private university teachers (EE= 24.73) were more emotionally exhausted than public university teachers (EE=17.30).

**Table 4: Burnout level of public and private university teachers**

Burnout Subscales	Public (n=30)		Private (n=30)		P value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	17.30	12.23	24.73	10.70	.015
Depersonalization (DP)	5.13	5.72	6.23	5.37	.446
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	33.2	9.04	32.7	7.44	.816

Note. EE= Emotional Exhaustion (high  $\geq 27$ , moderate= 17-26, low  $\leq 16$ ); DP= Depersonalization (high  $\geq 13$ , moderate= 7-12, low  $\leq 6$ ); PA= reduced Personal Accomplishment (high  $\leq 31$ , moderate= 32-38, low  $\geq 39$ )

Both groups of teachers showed a low level of Depersonalization (DP for public university= 5.13, DP for private university= 5.72), and there was no statistically significant difference between them,  $t(58) = -.768, p = .446$ . Similarly, both the groups had a moderate level of reduced Personal Accomplishment (PA for public university= 33.2 and PA for Private university= 32.7).



Moreover, no statistically significant difference was found between the means of their PA,  $t(58) = .234, p = .816$ .

An independent sample t-test was also conducted to determine whether there was any relationship between the genders and burnout levels. Table 5 shows that both male and female teachers had a moderate level of EE (20.15 and 21.68), low DP (5.61 and 5.73), and a moderate level of reduced PA (34.08 and 32.09). There was no statistically significant difference between their EE, DP, and reduced PA levels.

**Table 5: Burnout level of male and female teachers**

Burnout Subscales	Male (n= 26)	Female (n=34)	P value
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	20.15	21.68	.630
Depersonalization (DP)	5.61	5.73	.934
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	34.08	32.09	.357

*Note.* EE= Emotional Exhaustion (high  $\geq 27$ , moderate= 17-26, low  $\leq 16$ ); DP= Depersonalization (high  $\geq 13$ , moderate= 7-12, low  $\leq 6$ ); PA= reduced Personal Accomplishment (high  $\leq 31$ , moderate= 32-38, low  $\geq 39$ )

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was calculated to determine whether there is any relationship between the class hours and workload and their degree of burnout. Table 5 shows that there is no significant correlation between class hours and three dimensions of burnout. However, there is a significant positive correlation between the workload of the teachers and their EE level  $r = .274, p = .034$ .

**Table 6: Pearson correlation between class hours, workload, and three dimensions of burnout**

Variables	EE	DP	PA
Class Hour			
R	.129	.038	-.043
P	.327	.773	.747
Workload			
R	.274	.147	.001
P	.034	.261	.995

In the qualitative part of the study, 20 participants were interviewed to learn about the possible reasons, effects, and solutions to teachers' burnout caused by online teaching. The first

question asked them to discuss some of the common reasons behind teacher burnout because of online teaching. They mentioned technological difficulties, heavy workloads, less interaction with students, less satisfaction from the teachers' side, lack of proper training for teachers and students, giving extra effort for the preparation, spending too much screen time, and lack of fixed work hours as some of the common reasons for teachers' burnout in the online teaching scenario. According to them, all the teachers and the students were still not accustomed to the technologies required for online teaching. Classes got disrupted, and student-teacher communication was frequently interrupted because of poor internet connection and lack of technological knowledge.

Moreover, teachers did not get enough satisfaction after conducting the class, as keeping the students engaged in online classes was challenging. As a result, teachers had to put in additional effort, which contributed to their burnout. One of the teachers, Tisha mentioned,

*We are habituated to face-to-face instructions. In online classes, we have to make an extra effort to make a connection with the students and keep them engaged. Not only conducting classes, whichever work we do online require extra effort from our side. It becomes more hectic as we spend 12-13 hours sitting in front of the screen for class, exam and other work-related purposes.*

Five of them mentioned that checking too many scripts on-screen was another cause of their burnout. English teachers always have to check more scripts (e.g., essays, paragraphs, letters etc.) because of the nature of language courses, and according to the participants, it had become more complex and time-consuming to check the scripts and give feedback virtually. Finally, the participants mentioned they felt more stressed in online teaching as the work hours were not fixed anymore because everyone was working from home. Sometimes, they had to attend a meeting or workshop in the evening or night, which made them feel that they were working more than before. One participant, Arish said,

*Earlier we used to work for a certain period of time and do our office works at office. But now, I am at home but working for the office all the time. It has made the job more demanding.*

There are several impacts of burnout on the teachers' physical and mental health. A significant number of teachers mentioned that spending too much time on screen hampered their eyesight and caused a headache. One of the participants declared not having a proper sleep since the start of online teaching. Their mental health was also affected as they became frustrated and depressed because of less satisfaction, less interaction, huge workload, and not having enough time for themselves. According to the participants, burnout affects both the professional and personal lives of the teachers. One of the teachers, Saabira mentioned: "In professional life, it's getting more difficult to control the students and to keep my attention intact. I am getting nervous and distracted during the class".

Two of them mentioned they were not getting enough time to do their own research and work on their professional development. Moreover, they remarked that there had been no bar between their professional and personal life as these overlapped simultaneously because of work from home. They could not give enough time to family or do anything for pleasure because of the heavy workload and being mentally stressed. Another teacher, Hafiz commented,

*I spend too much time looking at the screen because of my work and I cannot watch a movie or TV series after that. Sometimes I cannot read anything for pleasure as I am too bored by checking all the scripts.*

The teachers also shared their experiences of dealing with burnout and provided suggestions for the others. Firstly, many of them stressed making a routine for online teaching and not

leaving work for the next day. They thought if the work were done in a certain amount of time every day, it would not make the teachers feel that they were working all the time. Moreover, leaving work for later might create extra pressure because there would be more work the next day. Therefore, finishing the pending work as early as possible was recommended. Secondly, taking proper rest and sleep was also suggested by the majority of the teachers. They thought that as online teaching is a demanding job, it is essential for the teachers to take care of themselves and take a break whenever possible. Doing meditation, workout and breathing exercises were also suggested by some of the participants. Thirdly, providing opportunities for proper training, facilities, and counseling to teachers and students was recommended to institutions.

To increase teacher-student interaction and keep students engaged and present in the class, training for both the teachers and students was deemed necessary by the participants. Additionally, to deal with technological difficulties, the government, University Grants Commission (UGC), and respective universities should provide necessary facilities such as devices and mobile data to students and teachers. Moreover, teachers and students should get proper counseling from professionals to deal with their mental health problems. Fourthly, the participants suggested that teachers keep themselves motivated and adapt to challenging situations, as it is still unlikely that physical teaching will be resumed. A participant, Saad said,

*We should lower our expectation bar. We should not be frustrated because of less interaction with students. It has to be understood that students are also going through a lot of problems. We shouldn't take too much stress on ourselves.*

Lastly, some of the teachers suggested that reduction of workload (especially in private universities) should be taken into consideration in this pandemic situation. Furthermore, they suggested that recruiting Teaching Assistants (TA) could help reduce their burnout as they have to check many scripts in English classes, and TAs can help them in this regard.

The last question asked, according to them, which group of teachers between public and private universities felt more burnout. All the teachers responded that private university teachers are more burned out because of online teaching, which is similar to the results from the quantitative part of the study. The trimester system, more workload, management's control over the teachers, and taking the classes and exams from the very beginning of the pandemic were mentioned as some of the main reasons for more teacher burnout in private universities.

## DISCUSSION

The findings in our study show that Bangladeshi university teachers face moderate Emotional Exhaustion (EE) because of online teaching. This finding is aligned with Hogan and McKnight (2007) who also reported moderate emotional exhaustion of the online instructors; however, the context of the present study is different from Hogan and McKnight's (2007) study in that it is conducted during a global pandemic. Though both of these studies showed similar results in different contexts, the role of the global pandemic in teacher burnout might be a contributing factor in our study.

Furthermore, private university teachers were found to be more emotionally exhausted than public university teachers which may be because they had started taking online classes and exams regularly from the beginning of the pandemic, and they also had a greater workload than public university teachers. This study shows that Bangladeshi university teachers did not depersonalize their students much as the means fall into the low category in Depersonalization

(DP), similar to McCann and Holt's (2009) study, where the participants' scores were low in the DP category. The teachers also had a moderate amount of reduced Personal Accomplishment (PA). Although there was no statistically significant difference between the DP and reduced PA level of public and private university teachers, private university teachers depersonalized their students slightly more and had a little less feeling of personal accomplishment than public university teachers.

From the perspective of gender, both male and female teachers had moderate EE, low DP, and moderately reduced PA. No significant difference between them was reported in the study. However, female teachers were more burned out as they scored higher in all three dimensions of burnout than male teachers. Li's research (2015) also presented similar findings where female English instructors had somewhat higher burnout scores than male English teachers, although there is no statistically significant difference. It might have been because women in the Bangladeshi society remain occupied with household chores.

Levy et al. (2009) stated that excessive working hours induce cognitive and physical overload and contribute to the development of chronic stress. Mukundan and Khandehroo (2010) found that instructors who teach more than ten hours per week have a substantially higher level of EE. The findings of this study also depict similar results where the teachers' workload had a significant relationship with their Emotional Exhaustion (EE). Workload and EE were positively correlated, meaning teachers with more work tend to be more emotionally fatigued. As private university teachers have more workloads than public university teachers, they suffer more from emotional exhaustion.

Teachers' burnout is caused by technological difficulties, huge workloads, lack of students' interaction and participation, lack of proper training, absence of fixed office hours, less satisfaction, and so on. Teachers are affected both mentally and physically because of burnout. Both their professional and personal lives are affected as a result of it. According to Shlenskaya et al. (2020), the most adverse effects of online education were the increased time spent at the computer and the lack of a clear boundary between work and personal time. The findings of this study also demonstrate that university teachers spend too much time sitting in front of the screen. They also feel like there is no bar between their professional and personal lives. This study finds that having a proper routine, proper rest, training, and adapting to the situation might be some of the solutions to this problem. Kyriacou (2001, as cited in Wood & McCarthy, 2002) emphasizes the importance of providing adequate technological support, professional development activities, and reducing work hours. This study also shows similar findings where providing technological assistance, proper training, and counseling to teachers was recommended. Moreover, this study also suggests that teachers' workload should be reduced to decrease their burnout.

## CONCLUSION

The global COVID-19 pandemic has significantly reshaped the education landscape, particularly in higher education institutions worldwide, including Bangladesh. The abrupt shift from traditional face-to-face classroom teaching to online education brought numerous challenges and opportunities. Though the online mode of education had almost become the new norm during this time, its implementation varied between private and public universities in Bangladesh due to infrastructural disparities and students' diverse backgrounds. Therefore, it was crucial to understand the various challenges that institutions and educators faced along with the mental health condition of the teachers who had to navigate an entirely new medium of teaching.

This research contributes to understanding the current burnout situation among university teachers in Bangladesh. The comparison between public and private university teachers' burnout sheds light on the present condition of online teaching and teacher burnout in these two types of universities. The quantitative analysis revealed the differences in burnout levels between public and private university teachers, indicating that private university teachers experienced higher emotional exhaustion than their counterparts. Understanding the relationship with factors like class hours and workloads helped to comprehend the complete picture of teacher burnout caused by online teaching.

The qualitative findings provided deeper insights into the reasons behind teacher burnout, which included technological challenges, heavy workloads, reduced satisfaction, and blurred work-life boundaries. Burnout not only impacted teachers' professional lives but also had significant consequences for their physical and mental well-being. The study emphasized the importance of routine, proper rest, and self-care as coping mechanisms for teachers. Additionally, recommendations were made for improving training, providing necessary facilities, and offering counseling to both teachers and students.

The findings of the study point to the need for continued research and further exploration of the long-term effects of online teaching on teachers' well-being. As countries, including Bangladesh, transition back to in-person education, it is crucial to learn from the experiences of teachers during the pandemic to better prepare for potential future disruptions. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of addressing burnout not only from a practical perspective but also from a policy standpoint. Policymakers, educational institutions, and stakeholders should collaborate to implement measures that enhance teacher resilience, provide ongoing professional development, and create supportive environments.

This study has some limitations, as the sample size was not large enough. Because of this sample size, the findings of this research do not represent all teachers of higher education in Bangladesh. Large-scale research based on a greater number of probability samples representing the population of faculty members can be conducted in the future. Moreover, further research can be done in this area to understand the condition of teacher burnout in other developed and developing countries and compare them with the situation in Bangladesh.

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## TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Hasan, M. U., & Biswas, A. (2024). Online teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Exploring university teachers' burnout levels. *BELTA Journal*, 7(1). 1–18. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36832/beltaj.2023.0701.07>

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## Appendix 1

The aim of this questionnaire is to investigate some problems with regards to online teaching in Bangladeshi universities. It is important that you give correct and sincere answers in order for the study to achieve its aim.

This questionnaire has 2 parts. It takes 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Thank you very much for contributing to this study by filling out this questionnaire.

1. Your gender:
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
2. Your current university is a:
  - a. Public university
  - b. Private university
3. How long have you been taking online classes?
  - a. 1-5 months
  - b. 5-10 months



- c. 10-15 months
  - d. Over 15 months
4. How many hours a week do you teach at university?
- a. 5-10
  - b. 11-15
  - c. 16-20
  - d. 21-25
  - e. 26 and 30
  - f. Over 30
5. How many hours a week do you work (teaching + Assessment + office hours + meetings etc.) at university online?
- a. 5-10
  - b. 11-15
  - c. 16-20
  - d. 21-25
  - e. 26-30
  - f. Over 30

Please indicate **how often you feel** the way the following items suggested because of taking online classes. Select the most suitable option provided next to each item.

Never = 0

A few times a year or less = 1

Monthly or less = 2

A few times a month = 3

Every week = 4

A few times a week = 5

Everyday = 6

1. I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning.
4. I can easily understand how my students feel about things.
5. I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal "objects".
6. Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
7. I deal very effectively with the problems of my students.

8. I feel burned out from my work.
9. I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.
10. I've become more callous toward people since I took this job.
11. I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
12. I feel very energetic.
13. I feel frustrated by my job.
14. I feel I am working too hard on my job.
15. I don't really care what happens to some students.
16. Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.
17. I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students.
18. I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students.
19. I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
20. I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.
21. In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.
22. I feel my students blame me for some of their problems.

## Appendix 2

### Interview Questions:

1. According to you, what are some of the common reasons behind teacher burnout caused by online teaching?
2. What do you think are the impacts of burnout on the teachers?
3. What are your suggestions to overcome burnout in pandemic situation?
4. Which group of teachers (between public university and private university) feel more burned out because of online teaching? Why?



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