

An Analysis of Stress Factors among ELT Students of Private Universities in Bangladesh

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Declaration

I hereby declare that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing a degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Ethics Statement

The work in this paper is original, the ideas mentioned in other journals and articles are cited duly. I have used information from credible sources only. Additionally, ethical guidelines were followed strictly to gather information from the participants. More details are provided in the methodology chapter.

Dedication

To my beloved parents and brother for their unconditional support throughout my entire journey at BRACU. To my father, for letting me study English and always having my back, no matter what. To my mother, for not just being my source of comfort but also the source of my strength. And to my rock, my brother.

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Abstract

English Language Teaching (ELT) has gained significant importance across the globe and also in Bangladesh in recent years for various reasons. However, ELT students in private universities face unique challenges that contribute to burnout, a condition which is distinguished by prolonged physical, mental and emotional exhaustion. This study investigates the external factors that influence burnout among ELT students in private universities using the framework of the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory. Additionally, this paper explores the varying coping mechanisms that are used by the students to navigate their challenges. The researcher also examined how long-term burnout may adversely affect academic performance, mental wellbeing and future career prospects. A qualitative research using semi-structured interviews with eight participants reveals that external factors such as excessive academic workload, socioeconomic background, family expectations, and insufficient institutional support are primary contributors to burnout. Coping strategies vary based on the participants' socioeconomic background where strategies range from time management to even selective disengagement. The study brought out the necessity for targeted interventions including revision of academic workload, enhancement of mental health resources, and establishment of institutional support systems to mitigate stress among ELT students. By acknowledging these challenges, universities can better support their students' well-being and academic success and ensure that they are well developed to meet their future career prospects.

Keywords: *ELT students, burnout, private university, qualitative research, coping mechanisms, Bangladesh*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Burnout is characterised by a state of prolonged physical, mental and emotional exhaustion due to chronic stress. Though it starts as pronounced fatigue among the affected individuals, it slowly turns into reduced motivation and eventually cynicism towards the task and those around them. In 1973, Herbert Freudenberger introduced this concept on the basis of his relation with his own work as a psychoanalyst (Fontes, 2020). Hence, his belief that burnout is exclusive to medical professionals prevailed for a long time. However, recent research indicates that people from different occupational backgrounds may suffer from this syndrome. It has now become one of the most prevalent hazards among professionals, which is adversely affecting both the labour force and the workplace (Edu-Valsania et al., 2022). Among these, English Language Teaching (ELT) students are particularly vulnerable due to the rigorous demands of their academic programs and the socioeconomic state of their environment.

The ELT program teaches future educators with a combination of both theoretical knowledge and practical teaching skills. However, these students, particularly the students of private universities, are more prone to burnout due to their increased educational expenses, assessment methods and the grading criteria unique to their respective universities (Shafiq et al., 2021). The transition from high school to university is inherently challenging for a lot of students. And it is compounded by factors such as excessive workload, unreasonable class hours, and unsupportive academic environments. External stressors including part-time jobs, familial obligations, and socioeconomic factors further increase their difficulties (Shafiq et al., 2021; Rana, 2021). The accumulation of stressors can lead to a gradual progression from hopelessness to developing cynicism and diminished motivation towards academic responsibilities and interpersonal relationships. This negatively affects the academic performance of the students,

which only adds up to the declining mental health of the students. And as students of ELT major strive to become educators in the future, their workloads become exceptionally demanding as they try to balance the dichotomy between theoretical frameworks and hands-on experience (Sad, 2010). Consequently, the prolonged stress and exhaustion threatens to affect their language teaching acquisition, as well as their future career prospects and work ethic.

In the case of private universities, students have to deal with increased academic pressure in a highly competitive environment, where the quality of education and access to resources may vary. The social pressure, especially familial pressure to maintain certain standards further exacerbates their stress (Rana, 2021). And the limited access to mental health support, academic counselling, and career opportunities only adds to their struggles (Shafiq et al., 2021). Issues related to transportation, accommodation, and inadequate infrastructure also contribute to their overall challenges (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2014).

Due to the socio-economic landscape of Dhaka, almost all university students are involved in a number of part time jobs and miscellaneous works to earn some amount of allowance (Islam, 2020). This plays a notable role in the increasing work pressure on the students. Students often spend hours travelling to and from their universities because of the congested roads and inadequate traffic system, which becomes especially difficult during the warmer months (Mondol, 2022). These hours sum up to a great chunk of time in the long run and this also causes immense frustration and loss of motivation among students. Additionally, transportation and tuition fees are significantly higher in Dhaka compared to other cities and as a result, many students have no choice but to work in order to fund their mobility and education (Ali et al., 2023). The intersection of socio-economic factors, including the necessity of part-time employment and transportation aggravates stress levels among the student population of Dhaka

(Shafiq et al., 2021). Therefore, amidst the prevalence of burnout among university students, the role of socioeconomic factors in influencing burnout remains a crucial area of investigation.

The decision to explore burnout among ELT students in private universities was driven by the research gap and personal interest. As a student of ELT, I felt compelled to research one of the most prevalent challenges that students of this subject faced. I chose this topic as I, along with many of my friends have experienced burnout first-hand. While studying ELT, I have faced overwhelming academic workload, financial strains, and the constant pressure of creating balance between personal, work, and academic responsibilities. Such a constant strain has often left me feeling physically, mentally and emotionally drained along with many symptoms that mirror the circumstances experienced by the participants. Interactions with my peers inside and outside of my university have revealed similar struggles and feelings of isolation and alienation without a proper support system. This shared experience motivated me to identify and study the root cause of burnout, find practical solutions to mitigate it, and make people aware of this pressing issue. By studying the causes, effects and coping strategies of burnout, this research aims to offer insight on how to better support students in their academic and professional prospects. My goal is to channel the voice of the students who have been suffering silently, and encourage policy makers and institutions to implement more effective support systems, reduce burnout and create a healthy learning environment for the students.

Hence, this study investigates the contributing factors of burnout among ELT students at private universities in Bangladesh, and the coping mechanisms employed by them to manage it. Using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory or CBI, the paper analyses how external factors such as, academic workload, familial pressure, personal goals, socioeconomic status and commute related stress can adversely affect stress and burnout of students in the ELT field. Data was

collected using a qualitative approach by conducting semi structured interviews with eight students. The participants revealed their qualitative insights, which gave a valuable perspective of their lived experiences. The findings revealed that students suffer from stress and burnout due to various external factors and while some use active coping mechanisms, others apply passive ways of coping with burnout. Besides, socioeconomic conditions also play a significant role in defining these coping strategies. The findings emphasised the need for institutional and structural reforms, including revision of workload, providing better mental health support service, administrative assistance and logistical support to help students with burnout. By illuminating these findings, this study seeks to contribute to the broader study of mental health of students in Bangladesh and endorse more effective support systems for students in higher education.

Rationale for Research

Despite the pronounced impact of burnout on academic performance and mental health, the students, specifically Bangladeshi students, are often neglected when the consequences of severe burnout are discussed. Societal stigma surrounding mental health prioritises physical health, perpetuating neglect of psychological well-being (Faruk et al., 2023). Besides, research focused on specifically ELT students of private universities remains scarce. Most studies in this field address burnout in a generalised context, often neglecting the unique challenges faced by the students in specialised fields such as ELT. This gap is critical since ELT students, who are the future educators, play a crucial role in developing the language education standards of the country. Hence, this study will explore the cause of burnout among different students from the universities in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. By applying the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory framework, which defines the different criteria of burnout, this research provides insights into the multidimensional nature of burnout.

Research Questions

1. What kinds of external factors influence burnout levels among ELT students at private universities, as measured by the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory?
2. What kinds of coping mechanisms do ELT students employ to manage burnout and how do these mechanisms vary depending on their socioeconomic background?

Research Objectives

The investigation of burnout and its probable causes among ELT students in Bangladesh is yet to be done on a university level. The objective of this paper is to study how prolonged stress on individuals threatens students' retention and their language teaching acquisition. Besides, many necessary coping mechanisms are inaccessible due to socioeconomic strains and hence, the inadequate or unhealthy strategies among students need to be studied as they have adverse long-term effects.

Therefore, this research aims to provide an extensive understanding of the experience of burnout. In the existing studies, students from a specialised field such as ELT, are often overlooked and their plight remains unheard. Thus, by investigating the external factors that influence burnout through the CBI framework and the coping mechanisms employed by the students to mitigate burnout, this study seeks to fill a critical gap in contemporary research. Hence, the experiences of the ELT students in various private universities were noted to get a better understanding of the scenario across different universities. Their accounts intend to bring attention to the unique challenges that are faced by ELT students, and offer necessary yet practical solutions to better support them.

I have organized this paper in six key chapters. The first chapter, "Introduction", includes the research problem, significance of the study, research gap and objectives to create a

foundation for the rest of the paper. The second chapter, “Literature Review” summarises the existing studies on student mental health, challenges faced by ELT students, burnout and introduces the theoretical framework, Copenhagen Burnout Inventory. The next chapter, “Methodology”, outlines the qualitative approach that was taken to conduct the findings. It includes the research design, research instruments, research site, data, data collection, and data analysis procedure. The “Findings” chapter presents the key themes that emerged during the interviews. It highlighted the factors contributing to burnout along with the coping mechanisms and the circumstances that hinder the proper implementation of them. This was followed by the “Discussion” chapter, which reviews the broader interpretation of the findings in the context of existing literature. The aim was to draw connections between the study’s results with broader interpretations. Lastly, the “Conclusion” summarises the main findings and offers recommendations for the institutions and future research. Thus, the structure of this paper ensures a coherent flow of information by starting with initial context to the ultimate implication of this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter examines the origins, definition and impact of burnout by synthesising existing studies. This review highlights the research regarding the general student population and ELT students. To analyse these experiences, this review also underscored the use and significance of the CBI framework. Lastly, the chapter also helped to establish the research gap and rationale for this research.

Background of burnout and its relevance to university students

The nature of stress in higher education is widespread and multifaceted. David Robotham (2008) emphasised that “stress...is not a unidimensional concept” (p. 736). He identified the key sources of stress such as “academic demands, examinations, transition to university, financial issues, and personal and social factors,” which significantly impacts the students’ wellbeing. He noted that chronic stress and burnout can lead to serious consequences including physical health problems, mental health issues and diminished academic performance. Like the cause of stress, responses to stress can also vary and he categorised them into emotional, behavioural, and cognitive reactions. As such, individuals that suffer from higher levels of stress will engage in “unhealthy behaviours” (p. 740). Besides, prolonged subjection to stress may also give way to low self-esteem. Consequently, students that have much to accomplish in too little time are subjected to high levels of stress. So Robotham emphasises the criticality of the issue of the burnout symptom as it is characterised by emotional exhaustion, cynicism and reduced professional efficacy.

Engagement can play a crucial role to combat burnout. Schaufeli, Martinez and Pinto (2002) examined the prevalence and dynamics of burnout and engagement among university students across different nations. Similar to Robotham’s study, their study identifies burnout as a

significant issue characterised by exhaustion, cynicism and reduced academic efficacy (p. 465). They highlighted that the initial assumption that burnout exclusively occurs within people in “human services” i.e professions related to healthcare, social work and education is invalid. Rather, people of all ages, especially students can experience it. Though this initial and rather dated idea emerged from the limited scope of study.

The authors highlighted the role of academic and non-academic (personal pressures) in exacerbating stress levels that lead to burnout. Conversely, they emphasised that student engagement, defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind” with dedication, vigour, and absorption is crucial for academic success and well being (Schaufeli et al. p. 468). Here, dedication involves a sense of commitment and significance, vigour refers to high level of energy and mental resilience, and absorption describes being fully engrossed and concentration in academic work. Engaged students are not only more likely to perform well academically but they also experience higher levels of personal fulfilment and psychological health. However, it must be noted that the structure of engagement and burnout may not be consistent across different students from different countries (p. 476). Even so, by fostering an environment that promotes dedication, vigour and absorption, universities can help mitigate the effects of stress and burnout to a significant extent (p. 477). Such a supportive environment can include providing adequate academic resources, encouraging a balanced approach to academic and personal life, and creating opportunities for meaningful student engagement. So student engagement is a proactive measure to counteract burnout.

The shift from intrinsic motivation to extrinsic motivation goal can become detrimental for students. Salanova et al. (2010) discussed the experience of university and college resulting in distress for students due to their involvement in “structured coercive activities” that have a

specific goal (usually the passing of examinations or graduating from their programs). This experience may result in “general form of anxiety or depression” (p. 1). The authors also add that other than having a cynical or detached feeling towards one’s study, a pupil may also perceive himself “incompetent as a student”. The authors have emphasised the relationship between burnout and performance, specifically in the context of work and academic achievement. They suggested that emotional exhaustion is generally linked to lower work performance or achievement. In a similar fashion, burnout is associated with poor academic performance. Students are likely to perform poorly in their studies when they feel frustrated, exhausted or detached from their academic work. Whereas, students who are engaged, i.e actively involved and committed to their studies will show energy, dedication and active participation. Thus engagement, which is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption in studies will lead to better academic achievement, countering burnout and poor performance (p. 2). A study found that higher achieving students were academically engaged 75% of the time compared to low achieving students (for 51% of time). So the longer the students remain detached from their academics, the more likely they are to achieve undesirable results. Hence, there is a positive relationship between engagement and academic performance. Besides, to better focus on factors directly affecting job or academic performance, the study replaced the terms “demands” and “resources” with “performance obstacles” and “performance facilitators”. The negative factors or characteristics in a situation that can hinder productivity and performance are called performance obstacles. A computer malfunctioning during work may be a performance obstacle. On the other hand, the positive factors that not only facilitate but also enhance one’s ability are known as performance facilitators. Having easy access to information could be a facilitator in this case. Thus, unlike general demands and resources, obstacles and facilitators are specific to particular

situations and directly relate to performance. The study considers both situational factors (such as organisational or social aspects) and personal factors (such as individual traits or behaviours). For instance, poor planning is a personal factor, whereas having flexibility and expectations for success can be a personal facilitator. Similarly, organisational obstacles and facilitators affect psychological well being and performance of the students. An organisational obstacle may harm the psychological welfare of the students while a facilitator may improve it. So, while obstacles may have a weak negative impact on performance, it may strongly affect satisfaction and frustration. Therefore, the study hypothesised that obstacles and facilitators impact student performance indirectly by directly affecting their well being, which emphasises burnout and engagement. Whereas, previous research found that high study demands paired with low support lead to poor well being, which eventually resulted in lower academic performance (p. 3). The study shows that student well being mediates between environmental factors and performance. And while good well being improves performance, poor well being does not have the same mediating effects. Though the well being of the student can be impacted by his past performance. Previous academic success is usually considered a strong indicator of future success. However, it must be remembered that obstacles, facilitators, and student well-being also play notable roles in predicting future performance (p. 13).

The experience of burnout begins before university

In a lot of cases, students begin to experience burnout even before their university journey starts. A study by Mamun et al. (2021) showed that burnout starts from the preparation of the mandatory “admission test” for university. Due to the highly competitive nature of the university admissions in Bangladesh, this test can become a significant source of stress for the students. Out of the successful students who appeared in the HSC exam, only a small fraction of

students are able to successfully get admitted to their desired universities. This is because universities, especially public universities, have very limited seats and the university permits the enrollment of only 15% of the eligible students who have successfully passed high school (Mamun et al., 2021).

For many students, the pressure of university admission tests is aggravated by the fact that some universities allow students to sit for the exam a second time (if they do not achieve desired results the first time). But the repeat students are usually under even more stress due to the wait for the test next year, the remorse for losing an academic year and inferiority complex due to their inadequate preparation for the test during the first time. Besides, social neglect from family, relatives and surrounding people may also contribute to their emotional distress.

Research has indicated that burnout is notable among healthcare professionals and students compared to other populations. Burnout, which is characterised by mental and physical exhaustion related to work, is prevalent in medical and highly stressful environments. Consequently, the university admission test-takers can be considered a vulnerable group, experiencing high levels of burnout. Besides, a study in Bangladesh revealed that repeat test-takers have significantly higher rates of depression (51%) and anxiety (32%) compared to first time test-takers, who have depression and anxiety rates of 40.9% and 24.2% respectively (which is still notably alarming) (p. 2). So this suggests that the loss of an additional year spent in preparation can take a toll on the mental health of students.

Burnout typically follows a cycle, which starts with emotional exhaustion and is followed by cynicism and decreased academic efficacy. Repeat test-takers may show high levels of emotional exhaustion, the initial phase of burnout, indicating a greater impact on their well being compared to first time test-takers. Additionally, burnout is closely linked to various

psychological distress and disorders. Academic distress, arising from the pressure to perform well in such competitive exams (for both first and repeat test-takers) is one of the major contributors to student suicide in Bangladesh. As a matter of fact, the authors found “academic distress and its failure to be the second most suicide reason after relationship problems in the general students’ suicide” (p. 2). And this phenomenon is not only exclusive to Bangladesh, the students of its neighbouring country, India, are equally vulnerable in this regard.

In Bangladesh, an academic achievement such as getting admitted into one’s desired university is highly regarded by the society (Mamun et al., 2021). However, students who achieve higher or lower GPA than moderate in their HSC and SSC examination displayed “higher burnout tendencies”. And these students are more likely to experience “comorbid symptoms like depression, anxiety, etc.” (p. 11). Since burnout and depression have many signs and symptoms in common (such as diminished interest or pleasure, low mood, exhaustion or lack of energy, difficulty concentrating, feelings of worthlessness, etc.), it is thus proposed that burnout is a clinical picture of depression. These conditions can increase or decrease over time, as proven by various studies. Anxiety, which involves cognitive, physical and emotional components may relate to burnout with high levels of emotional exhaustion and cynicism (which increases anxiety symptoms). Hence, people with depression and anxiety are more likely to experience burnout. Therefore, the current study shows a strong link between burnout and mental disorders such as depression and anxiety (p. 12).

Contributing factors in facilitating burnout

There are a few factors that affect the mental health status of students including work environment, gender discrimination, human rights violations, segregation, physical health and so on (Muhammad, 2021). University students are more vulnerable to disorders related to mental

health such as depression, anxiety, addiction, suicidal tendencies, etc compared to the general public. And this rate is even higher in the case of female students compared to the male students during their freshman year. Factors such as failure in an examination, financial constraints, part-time workplace challenges, higher cost of study materials etc. may play a notable role in the decline of the mental health of the students. Besides, a lot of students migrate to a new place to attend their university. The sudden move to an unfamiliar place can also negatively affect them and make them susceptible to psychiatric disorders, specifically in the initial days. As a result, the most prevalent psychological issues that students face are anxiety, depression and stress. Sometimes these issues give way to physical problems in the form of diseases and harmful habit formation such as addiction, overeating etc. In many cases, the prolonged depression may manifest into thoughts of suicide and other forms of self-harming activities. And male students are acutely vulnerable because they refuse or fail to acknowledge their mental health issues compared to female students (pp.1264-1265). Most of these disturbing cases emerge from the hopeless students who perform poorly in academics.

Furthermore, the pressure of work on students may vary due to their respective socioeconomic status. A lot of students from middle or lower income families or backgrounds may face extensive stress due to managing satisfactory academic performance and part-time work. According to a study conducted by Kaggwa et al (2021), “nearly one third of university students” in low and middle income countries face burnout (p. 2). Their study indicated a low level of burnout at 12% among the participants (students of different universities in middle income countries such as Brazil and China). While almost 28% of participants displayed emotional exhaustion and about 32% exhibited cynicism towards their work. Hence their findings suggested a lower rate of burnout than that of high income countries as well as medical

students. However, the burnout levels of students in low income countries (Africa and Asia) were higher than middle income countries and especially in the case of medical residents (p. 13-14). The study categorised the burnout “risk factors” into primarily three groups. They are “individual factors” such as “sociodemographic variables”, educational characteristics which include workload, course work, part-time work and so on, and lastly “emotional demands” that include various relationships inside and outside the university (p. 2). These along with socioeconomic status, cultural background, and psychological support may play a role in the experience of burnout among students.

But as Nahar and her colleagues (2022) mentioned in their article, in Bangladesh, the general public still views mental health as a highly stigmatised and significantly less relevant concern. And university students are particularly susceptible to mental health issue symptoms because of the strain of their studies and uncertainty about their future jobs. Even though inadequate mental well-being substantially lowers quality of life, interferes with day-to-day activities, and leads to other medical complications, people tend to neglect the psychological wellbeing of students and sometimes even themselves. However, it seemed that policymakers and healthcare officials were concerned regarding people's mental health in light of the COVID-19 pandemic as the nationwide lockdown forced institutions to conduct classes and exams online. The anxiety of sitting for exams with faulty internet connections, inadequate devices and high cost of internet connectivity caused a great amount of stress, depression and subsequent mental health issues. Even though specific measures were taken to mitigate such stress factors, the students still experienced difficulties and burnout.

Burnout in the context of Bangladeshi Private University and ELT Students

A study by Rahman and Pandian (2018) highlighted the classification of Bangladesh as a lower middle income country (with consistent GDP), emphasising the importance of improving English education in order to meet global standards. However, despite the importance of English as a global language and as a necessity in the global job market, economic constraints have restricted educational funding which has led to a decline in English language teaching standards. The transition from Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been an issue for many (along with persistent challenges to implement a new curriculum), contributing to student burnout. ELT students face many difficulties to succeed in a system with inadequate resources and ineffective curriculum implementation. Addressing these problems is pivotal to improving both education and student well being (p. 43-44). However, it is unfortunate that “inconsistency in education policies has always been a feature of ELT in Bangladesh” and “decisions about changes have often been driven by no apparent justification” (p. 44). The ELT curriculum in Bangladesh is part of a centralised education system and thus it faces significant challenges in its implementation. Teachers tend to suffer because they lack clarity regarding what is expected of them and the lack of robust teacher training infrastructure. Besides, policy makers often fail to realise the needs of the teachers, overlooking classroom realities in Bangladesh. As the CLT curriculum was not clearly explained, confusion and persistence of the traditional GTM remains. The CLT approach, which is rooted in Western methods and culture, clashed with the teacher-centred norms in Bangladesh. And as a result, many teachers revert back to old practices. This misalignment between the innovative curriculum and teachers’ belief has hindered the effectiveness of CLT in Bangladesh (p. 46). Furthermore, when teachers revert to traditional but outdated methods due to unclear guidelines, students are caught in an ineffective learning environment. The inconsistencies lead to confusion,

frustration and stress for students struggling to meet the high expectations placed on them without appropriate resources. Eventually, the pressure accumulates and leads to burnout.

The authors also highlighted the challenges in implementing the CLT curriculum due to inadequate teacher qualifications, proficiency and training. Though this is largely due to the lack of resources. Various projects, aimed to improve teacher training, such as OSSTTEB and ELTIP were unsuccessful, which left many teachers and ELT students unprepared for their job. Bangladesh's reliance on foreign aided projects for ELT reform has affected the sustainability of the CLT curriculum as it does not align with national standards and interests. And this further complicated the viability of improvement in the ELT system (p. 47). This directly affects the ELT students who are studying in an unreliable environment where they may not receive adequate training, resources and preparation for CLT methods. The ineffective training and resource gaps lead to increased stress and frustration, contributing to burnout among students as they struggle to meet the expectations of modern language teaching without proper support.

Karim et al. (2018) investigated the effectiveness of pre-service teacher education programs such as TEFL, TESOL and ELT in Bangladesh. Their study found the lack of synchronisation between coursework and practical application even though they aim to prepare students to become skilled English teachers by combining theory and practice. This has led to challenges for students' pedagogical practice. They highlighted students' perception, revealing that while these training programs are beneficial for developing competence, there are significant gaps in the training quality, especially regarding the integration of theory with practice. When students fail to effectively prepare them for real-life situations and teaching challenges, it can lead to increased stress and frustration, contributing to burnout (p. 128-129).

In Bangladesh, usually private universities offer programs for teaching ELT in the form of degrees like BA in English with majors in ELT, TESL, TEFL and TESOL. While public universities offer courses in Applied Linguistics and ELT, a comprehensive program i.e., a BA in English with a specialisation in English teaching is usually available at private universities. Though these private institutions have designed their curricula to prepare students to become skilled English teachers, the admission requirements for these programs involve high academic standards in previous educational levels (p. 132). Besides, in order to be eligible for an MA in TESOL or ELT in Bangladesh, candidates may require a Bachelor's degree along with years of higher education and experience in teaching English language. Among the private universities that were investigated in the study, one required two years of experience in teaching English while the other did not require any such experience (p. 133-134). The final part of the study (in the form of a survey) revealed that while student teachers feel that current English teaching programs help them develop teaching skills and language knowledge, they do not focus enough on classroom context. Classroom observation and management is a weak spot and effective teaching requires adequate management skills. Students are familiar with the dichotomy between theory and practice, and the lack of preparation in a practical setting may lead them to feel overwhelmed and less confident in their roles as future teachers (p. 143-144). Thus, enhancing teacher education programs by addressing the gaps could potentially alleviate the some pressure that students face which leads to burnout.

Another study by Rahman et al. (2019) also highlighted the issues with the state of English education and the challenges with new teaching methods (including CLT) and assessment forms. The language policy reform in Bangladesh which aimed to improve English teaching by replacing dated methods lacked proper planning and inconsistent language policies.

Though recent policies have revised their stance, there is still a significant gap between the policy and actual practice, which affects teaching methods, curriculum development and resources for teachers (p. 3-4). Furthermore, “most of the primary schools across the country are inadequately resourced, and lack of English teachers robs all aspirations” (p. 5). The unequal access to language has created “social inequity within the population”, especially between the rural and urban areas. And since English medium schools have greater access to English and ELT resources (with very limited exposure to Bangla), the difference in the level of proficiency is incredibly high. Consequently, the emergence of such schools have largely contributed to the inequality between the students of various areas and this inequality becomes increasingly visible when students of different institutions attend the same university for higher education. Such a difference may become incredibly unfair and daunting to those who are aiming to earn a degree in English. (p. 5).

Though a new curriculum (CLT) was introduced to mitigate the inequality, its “assessment approach” was met with resistance from teachers and stakeholders. Hence, its implementation was met with challenges as the “success of language policy and implementation of the curriculum depends mostly on the quality of assessment and testing” (p. 8). Failure of ELT and curriculum innovation is closely related to poor assessment methods.

In nation-wide secondary, higher secondary and university admission tests (mostly public universities), two of the important language skills: speaking and listening are not included. This outdated approach leads to a narrow curriculum, which shows that tests are not testing what they were supposed to test and as a result the tests do not align with the curriculum and national language policy. There is a severe lack of validity and teachers are forced to teach only certain parts of the curriculum content. This phenomenon compels the students to memorise the

language instead of learning it. Furthermore, such high stake tests are incredibly competitive, which poses the problem of “shadow education”. The prolonged stress of attending high stake tests and intense focus on memorisation leads to the feelings of burnout, especially when students start their university journey (p. 8). Moreover, as two important skills are not assessed, the teachers and students refuse to engage and practise these skills in the classroom. This results in making the ELT students feel unprepared for real-life teaching scenarios, causing frustration and a sense of inadequacy within them. This negative washback due to ineffective assessment impacts several aspects of ELT teachers and students, extending beyond the throes of learning experience (p. 8-9).

The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI)

The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory or CBI is a theoretical framework that can identify the multiple dimensions of burnout. Kristensen et al. (2005) conducted a study to test the validity and reliability of the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI). The results showed that the CBI had high internal reliability and effectively distinguished between different occupational groups. Furthermore, the scale was also able to predict future health problems that included sickness, insomnia, cynicism towards work and so on (p. 192-193).

Generally, the Maslach Burnout Inventory or the MBI was used to study burnout among the “people work” professions. However, the researchers found the existing burnout questionnaire quite dated and inadequate. The sole focus of the MBI was on “employees in the human service sector” and as a result, it offered a circular argument (p. 193). Hence, they formed the new CBI. The CBI was designed to measure burnout across three different aspects: personal burnout, work-related burnout, and client-related burnout. Each section of a questionnaire is tailored to each category. Here, the personal burnout section is designed to be

applicable for any human being and is a “truly generic scale”. The work-related burnout section is meant for individuals who are employed and the burnout is related to their job. Lastly, the client-related burnout is intended for people who work with students, patients, inmates and so on (p. 196). So the CBI does not only acknowledge fatigue and exhaustion in burnout but it also takes a step further by attributing the exhaustion and fatigue to specific areas of an individual’s life. This distinction becomes crucial to understand burnout as more than just general fatigue. It involves recognising the particular source and domain that contribute to the state of prolonged exhaustion (p. 196).

The CBI is a versatile tool that offers a comprehensive device to measure the different dimensions of burnout that the ELT students face. A study by Milfont et al. (2008) investigated the burnout that secondary school teachers of New Zealand experience in the light of CBI. Teaching in general is considered to be a “highly stressful occupation”. The factors that contribute to teacher burnout may include “job satisfaction, poor working conditions, work-family conflicts, time pressures” etc. The research indicated that burnout is more prevalent among teachers who perceive their job to be demanding and inflexible and consequently, urban teachers may experience higher levels of burnout compared to their rural counterparts (p. 170). Additionally, the correlation between the three criterias of burnout was substantial, suggesting the presence of a higher-order burnout factor (p. 173). The study highlighted the robustness of CBI in measuring burnout and the result suggested that the scales can be used reliably to assess burnout making it particularly relevant for ELT teachers and students. After studying 205 full-time teachers, it is evident that the teaching profession, including those who are training to become teachers, is inherently demanding which may lead to stress and burnout (p. 173-174). But the multifaceted nature of burnout in this profession can be evaluated by the CBI’s ability to

capture the different domains of one's work, providing valuable insights into their overall wellbeing and strategies to mitigate burnout (p. 176).

In 2012, Campos, Carlotto and Moroco evaluated the reliability and validity of the Portuguese version of CBI. This time the participants were higher education students from Brazil and Portugal (p. 88). Though at first the questionnaire did not fit well with the student, upon using a revised version of the CBI, an accurate measurement of the students' burnout was determined which remained consistent across different samples (p. 91). Confirmatory factor analysis tested and showed that the updated questionnaire worked well in case of both Brazilian and Portuguese participants. However, the way of measuring burnout was not exactly the same in both countries, indicating cultural differences. Even so, the revised CBI still effectively identified burnout and showed strong correlations with other measures of depression and emotional exhaustion (p. 94). Similar to the study by Milfont et al. (2008), this study reflected the CBI's ability to assess burnout across different populations, including its application to study students and teachers. For the ELT students, the CBI or the tailored version of it (to fit the country or participant standards) can provide insight into burnout across different educational settings and manage individual stressors in their academic and professional lives (p. 94-95).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology that was conducted for this research including the research design, participants, instruments, data collection and analysis procedure. The method of investigation was chosen for finding out two key aspects, the eternal stress factors of ELT students and their coping mechanisms.

Research Design

The aim of this study is to examine the elements that contribute to the burnout of ELT students in private universities as well as their varying coping strategies, specifically in Dhaka. A qualitative approach was chosen for this paper as it allowed the in-depth exploration of the circumstances of the students through interviews (see Appendix B). This method allowed the participants to delve deeper into their experiences of burnout due to internal and external causes. They also conveyed the reasoning for their chosen coping mechanisms and requirements for further improvements. The qualitative study allowed me to visualise the key similarities and differences between the stress factors and coping mechanisms of different participants. Unlike quantitative research, the qualitative method did not present numerical data. Rather this study allowed a thorough analysis of the variables encountered by the students inside and outside of their educational institutions. This aligns with a study conducted by Islam and Aldaihani (2022), who asserted that a qualitative research method is necessary to understand the setting of a participant's experience in specific settings or context. Through the data collection process, this approach showed how students of Dhaka experience and deal with burnout in their day to day lives. Additionally, the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) framework guided the research process by providing a theoretical lens to examine burnout across three dimensions: personal burnout, work-related burnout, and client related burnout. This system allowed for a structured

analysis of how various stress factors traverse through students' academic, personal, and professional lives. Hence, the research was conducted with primarily two questions in mind.

1. What kinds of external factors influence burnout levels among ELT students at private universities, as measured by the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory?
2. What kinds of coping mechanisms do ELT students employ to manage burnout and how do these mechanisms vary depending on their socioeconomic background?

Research Participants

In this study, a group of young adults, who are students in different private universities of Dhaka were sampled. These students are within the age of 22 and 24 and are in their second to fourth year of university. All of these students are currently majoring in ELT. A total of 8 students were sampled with a balance of 4 male and 4 female students. Among all the participants, 5 students are engaged in some type of part-time jobs currently. Except for one student, all of them are working as home tutors. During the interview, some participants revealed that they tutor multiple students throughout the day besides their own studies. While the sample size of participants is relatively small, it aligns with the qualitative approach of this study, prioritising in-depth exploration over volume.

Students from solely private universities were chosen because they have distinct academic environments compared to public universities. They have different class sizes, academic culture, teaching methods and focus on intensive coursework. Besides, students of private universities may face financial burden due to higher tuition fees, especially if they hail from varying backgrounds. The financial stress along with the academic workload can become a significant source of burnout for them. Furthermore, students across different private universities face similar challenges regarding insufficient counselling services, institutional support and

career advising unlike the students from public universities. Additionally, private university students may face notable familial pressure as their education requires a high fees. The close knitted student community also leads to heightened competitiveness among students of ELT. Besides, the socio economic landscape of Dhaka sets it apart from the other cities of Bangladesh, which is significantly more rigorous and demanding. The interviewees were selected on the basis of their enrollment in ELT programs and availability. So in this case, a purposive sampling strategy was used to capture the diverse experiences of different students within a certain group, which was ELT students in this scenario (Islam and Aldaihani, 2022).

Name	Age	Gender	University Year	Part-time job
Asif	23	Male	4 th	Home Tutor
Badol	23	Male	4 th	-
Tahmid	24	Male	4 th	-
Sadia	22	Female	2 nd	Home Tutor
Manik	22	Male	4 th	Content Writer
Maliha	23	Female	4 th	-
Tasnim	22	Female	2 nd	Home Tutor
Nishat	23	Female	3 rd	Home Tutor

Table 1: List of students who participated in the research

Research Site

The interviews were conducted with students enrolled in ELT programs across three different private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Firstly, universities were selected due to their diverse student body with different levels of English proficiency. The students belonged from

different academic (school level) and socioeconomic backgrounds. This allowed the investigation of experiences from students having diverse settings. During the interviews, students expressed varying views regarding perception, experience and coping strategies of burnout. Secondly, an initial research on these universities underscored that these institutions boast highly qualified faculties, many of whom hold advanced degrees from prestigious universities in and outside Bangladesh. As per a study by Biggs (2003), the quality of teaching and diverse assessments significantly influences the student experience and overall learning. And these universities are known for fostering both theoretical and practical teaching skills. The teaching staff is dedicated to producing academic excellence through supportive but rigorous programs, making these universities the ideal site to study burnout among ELT students. Besides, personal connections with some students from these universities enabled convenient communication.

All the interviews were conducted online through the video conference application called “Zoom”. Even though the students were asked for an in-person interview, they either did not respond or asked for a video conference instead. Some students conveyed discomfort at the notion of giving an in-personal interview while others expressed time constraints due to personal and academic commitments. Conducting online interviews ensured that participants would partake in the interview in a setting that was convenient for them, making the research more inclusive (Wakelin et al., 2024).

Research Instruments

The data collection took place by taking semi-structured interviews using the application called “Zoom”. This application was used due to its recording feature and its availability on mobile phone and laptop. Since a number of students were selected from different universities

and areas of Dhaka, the interviews were conducted online due to their availability and convenience. Besides, the research required the participants to express their experiences thoroughly and this method allowed them to take part from the comfort of their homes or chosen places. The participants received an email with the consent form (see Appendix A) and invitation link for the “Zoom” call. Meanwhile the questions were designed based on the three dimensions of burnout outlined by the CBI. Since the CBI is a reliable tool for assessing burnout across different domains of life, it was highly relevant in the development of the questions (Kristensen et al., 2005). Participants were asked questions about emotional exhaustion, work-related stress, and disengagement from academic responsibilities to help link their experiences with the relevant dimensions of the framework. Some clarifications were given during and before the interview if they did not understand or hear the questions. The students did not receive any questionnaire with quantitative questions. The semi structured interview allowed the researcher to build a rapport with the participants and engage more during the interview.

Data

The data collected for this study primarily consisted of two components: transcriptions of interviews and research memos. The semi structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask questions which gave the participants the scope to express their thoughts elaborately. They talked about their experiences of stress due to academic workload, familial pressure, inadequate institutional structures, financial strains etc. The interviews from the 8 participants were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The interviews and transcripts were of varying lengths with the shortest transcription having 6 pages and the longest one having 17 pages. The researcher then identified the codes and key themes of each of the interviews, arranging them in tables in a Google document (see Appendix C). The transcripts along with the codes were analysed in a

thematic order. These transcripts consisted of detailed narrative about their experiences with burnout and coping mechanisms.

In addition to the interview transcripts, research memos were used during the data collection and analysis process. The memos included observations during interviews, reflections on emerging themes, initial expectations from the interviews and the recurring patterns among the transcripts. These memos consolidated the researcher's insights which coincided or diverged with the findings and became a relevant part of the data and analysis. It allowed the researcher to delve deeper into the data, exploring the meaning of individual interviews and maintaining momentum while conducting the research (Birks et al., 2008).

Data Collection

The participants were contacted through email at first where they were invited to participate in an in-person interview at a convenient location. However, while some expressed discomfort in partaking in an in-the-flesh interview, others had limited time availability. Hence, all the interviews took place through live video calls through "Zoom". Upon their agreement to participate in the research, the participants received the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix A) and an invitation link to the Zoom call. The interviews were taken in English as the participants are from English departments. Every interviewee was asked the same set of questions to gauge their varying experiences. These questions were made based on the dimensions of burnout in the CBI framework. The questions aimed to investigate the factors related to personal burnout, work-related burnout and client-related burnout. Some interviews lasted a short time, for example, one of the interviews lasted for around 17 minutes while other interviews lasted for a longer period of time, up to 50 minutes. Though the duration of the interviews mostly depended on the participants' answers, students who were more proficient in

English, talked for longer time while students with less proficiency had shorter interviews. The recording feature in “Zoom” was used to record the interview, which was then transcribed by the researcher. The transcripts were stored in individual files on Google Docs. Afterwards, the transcripts were analysed for relevant codes, from which themes were developed eventually. Each theme usually consisted of two or three codes. The codes and themes were then analysed to identify any recurring pattern and their common denominator (see Appendix C). The key concepts were analysed in the context of the interviewees’ narratives, which allowed the researcher to uncover nuanced insights into the factors contributing to burnout among ELT students along with their coping mechanisms.

Data Analysis

The coding allowed the researcher to identify the key themes for a thematic analysis. The process began with a thorough review of the transcripts to engage with the data, this revealed the initial codes. The codes consisted of recurring ideas, patterns, and concepts within the different interviews. These codes were then labelled carefully and categorised to ensure that all the aspects of the data are taken into consideration. Next, these codes were classified into broader categories to identify the themes that carry the key concepts (see Appendix C). The themes were merged, split or reviewed to ensure an accurate representation of data in the light of the participants’ narratives. Subsequently, these themes revealed notable resemblance and also differences between the causes and coping mechanism of burnout among the interviewees. This represented the nuances, complexities, diversities within the experiences of the participants.

The accumulated themes or findings were then interpreted thematically within the CBI framework, and in the light of the existing literature on burnout. The key themes that emerged included academic workload, socioeconomic background, lack of family support and inadequate

institutional support. These were the primary causes that influenced stress and burnout among ELT students. However, different students regarded these causes differently. Similarly, the coping mechanisms were also diverse in nature. They ranged from time management and prioritisation to withdrawal and selective disengagement. The findings revealed that students take an active or passive approach to cope with burnout and stress. So the analysis reveals that though there are recurring patterns, personal or situational circumstances shape the way individuals experience and manage burnout. The diversity of themes provides a nuanced understanding of the encounters of participants, providing a comprehensive answer to the research questions. It showcases that the interplay of external stressors and coping mechanisms impact the burnout of each ELT student differently. Hence, it is paramount to address burnout through multifaceted manners.

Ethical Considerations

The anonymity of the participants was ensured by the researchers. All the participants signed an informed consent form (see Appendix A) beforehand in which they were assured of their privacy and ability to withdraw from the interview at any time. The students participated voluntarily without any monetary compensation. During the interviews, the participants were told to keep their cameras off and kept from uttering any personal information. To ensure their privacy, pseudonyms are used instead of their real names in the study. The collected data was not manipulated to ensure transparency.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the key findings of the study, which explores the external factors contributing to burnout among ELT students in private universities in Bangladesh as well as the coping mechanisms that they exercise to manage their burnout. The findings are divided into two sections aligning with the research questions.

External Factors Influencing Burnout Among ELT Students

The collected data from the interviews reveal that there are certain external factors, which originate outside the individual but affect their overall, including internal burnout. These factors include excessive academic workload or pressure, socioeconomic background and financial challenges, family expectations, limited institutional support, and commute related stress. Each of these factors can be identified by participants in playing a prominent role in their experiences of burnout. Furthermore, these significant factors give rise to several seemingly smaller and less conspicuous elements such as exhaustion, sleep deprivation, procrastination, loss of motivation etc, which aggravate their experience of burnout. Such aspects of burnout hinder the ELT students from exercising and reaching their true potential as students and future teachers, particularly in the context of private universities in Bangladesh.

Academic Pressure

Participants have consistently highlighted the academic workload in the ELT program as a major contributing factor to their burnout, specifically the students of fourth year. Tahmid and Badol mentioned that the extensive research work for academic courses have been incredibly demanding as they require long hours for data collection and analysis. Asif also highlighted his struggle due to his courses along with mandatory thesis work. He said,

As a fourth year student, the burnout is excessive since I am majoring in ELT and I have two courses with me alongside my thesis, so those courses are 300 level courses. The biggest problem is that these are research-based courses and doing research takes plenty of your personal time (Asif).

This reflects how research intensive courses along with thesis requirements can become overwhelming for students, especially when these tasks include independent work outside of class hours. The significant time that is consumed by this limits their ability to recover physically and mentally, reflecting the gradual exhaustion and disengagement. The rigid structure of the program seems to prioritise academic output over student's well being, which leads to significant stress and alienation among students.

On the other hand, students of second and third years expressed a different but equally critical concern. Sadia described her classes as memorization based lectures which are "hard to keep up with" while Nishat mentioned that she finds it difficult to retain the theories of ELT courses for long periods of time. Badol also stated that his focus on grades keeps him from skill-building, "Most of what I read, I remember for a very short period of time, because I am learning those for a good grade and not for acquiring that skill" (Badol).

These findings underscore that the curriculum is not aligned with the students' learning needs. The focus on rote learning not only limits their ability to acquire knowledge but also affects their engagement with studies. In this case, many students perceive their studies with a transactional approach where the goal becomes passing exams or getting good grades instead of acquiring meaningful skills. Here, the motivation of students shifts from intrinsic to extrinsic causes, reducing their ability to find meaning in their studies.

However, dissatisfaction with grades was another recurring theme. Findings suggest that obtaining unsatisfactory grades have played a notable role in reducing motivation. For instance, Manik has expressed his frustration with his field due to poor grades in spite of putting effort, “My overall experience in ELT is not quite satisfying because despite attending lectures and trying my best, it is not satisfactory. I’m not getting good marks and that is why I do not like this field” (Manik)

Several participants have noted their frustration with their grades despite putting in effort. They have also stated that the heavy academic workload leads to a lack of balance between academic responsibilities and personal life which increases physical and mental exhaustion. This prolonged exhaustion has played a significant role in affecting the motivation of students. 4 out of 8 participants have addressed that they tend to procrastinate due to lack of motivation. One of the students, Maliha says, “I was not feeling very motivated in studying and my attention span was reduced so I started procrastinating. It has become very difficult to focus on studies” (Maliha).

Many participants have reported the disruption of work-life balance. This stems from long assignments, frequent deadlines and high academic expectations which leaves very little time for personal and social activities. This imbalance is more pronounced among the students of fourth or final year who have to engage in advanced research works alongside their regular coursework. The inability to foster a balance between work and life has resulted in a constant cycle of exhaustion, disengagement and procrastination. Hence, the findings reveal a systematic lacking in the academic structure of the ELT program. Even though the program puts much emphasis on research and theoretical knowledge, it does not take into account how the students cope with such challenges.

Socioeconomic Background and Financial Challenges

The collected data reveals that socioeconomic background and financial challenges, which lead to the need for part-time employment can contribute to burnout. Participants who are from more privileged backgrounds such as Asif and Sadia acknowledged that their socioeconomic status allows them to be privileged enough to use academic devices such as laptops and phones, Using these they are able to conduct their academic responsibilities from the comfort of their homes reducing additional stress due to accessing resources. In contrast, Badol and Tahmid admitted that the financial strains due to their socioeconomic background restricts their access to resources that would support them academically such as tutoring sessions and even textbooks. Tahmid says, “My financial situation also remits access to private tutoring or academic support that might help reduce my workload stresses, which contributes to feeling of burnout.” So this disparity shows that socioeconomic background can directly affect academic performance where less privileged students have to carry a heavier burden of stress.

Positive Aspect of Part-time Jobs

Besides, the necessity of part-time jobs emerged as a key theme in the findings. Most of the participants that took part in the interviews work or have worked in the past. However, while some enjoy their work and see it as an opportunity to practise the theories of ELT, others view it as another source of their stress. Asif and Tasnim feel that their coursework lacks the practical implementation of ELT theories. So they test the learned theories during their tutoring jobs. Tasnim mentioned that,

Studying ELT has helped me put things in perspective and I actively try to use various methods such as direct method, mixed method or task-based method to create engaging activities for my students. This is a favourable aspect of my job (Tasnim).

This perspective suggests that when a part-time job aligns with future career goals academic and academic relevancy, it can reduce burnout by providing a sense of accomplishment.

Negative Aspect of Part-time Jobs

On the other hand, some students mentioned that part-time jobs were a source of additional stress. One of the participants, Sadia mentioned that due to her financial background, she currently has three part-time tuitioning jobs. And having certain responsibilities towards her students (and their parents) who have “strict expectations”, increases her workload making it hard to balance responsibilities. Nishat also mentioned that even though her students are well behaved, they end up taking a lot of her energy. The expectations from her students’ parents impact her work experience and well being. She says,

Parents are very alert about how tutors are handling their kids. They try to keep me in check, I would say. And that really stresses me out as I don’t like it when people try to judge the quality of my work. So the process of earning money really impacts my health in a bad way (Nishat).

Similarly Manik, who works as a content creator, mentions that high workload from his job and unpredictable demands from employers and clients often leaves his schedule in disarray. He mentions, “I have a fixed schedule for writing content but when my client demands me to re-edit or rewrite the content, it requires additional time, which affects my burnout” (Manik).

These accounts underscore the dual nature of part-time employment. While part-time jobs offer financial stability and professional experience, they also magnify burnout and stress, particularly when workload and expectations are unmanageable. This becomes particularly

amplified for students whose financial state compels them to take on more responsibilities than they can manoeuvre.

Commute Related Stress

Another recurring theme was the toll that long commutes have on student's time and energy due to congested roads. Several participants reported that their commutes have added to another layer of difficulty. Tahmid and Manik noted being drained and unable to focus on work due to their daily travels, especially during the hotter seasons in Dhaka while Sadia viewed commuting as a time drain which hinders her from investing more time in studying. Asif also indicated,

The traffic situation is so horrible in Bangladesh that you cannot reach university without wasting two or three hours, and it takes another three or four hours to come back so that's seven hours wasted with no time for yourself or for finishing assignments (Asif).

These narratives suggest that the structural challenges of Dhaka's layout has a great impact on the students ability to manage their time, work and wellbeing. The long commutes not only lessen their ability to engage with their work but also reduce their capacity to recover from stress. This is particularly difficult for students who belong to less affluent backgrounds and have to use public transportation. Such long and tiring commutes amplify their already high levels of stress. So, the findings reveal a complex interplay between socioeconomic status, financial strains and external factors such as part time employment and long commute.

Family Expectations and Personal Goals

Several participants have stated that their families have high expectations regarding their academic performance, which adds another layer of pressure on them to succeed. For some participants, this expectation is explicitly communicated while others are able to perceive it

through familial and cultural norms. For example, Badol, who is an only child, feels responsible to financially support his family. He says,

They don't mention it but my family has expectations from me, I'm their only child. So I have responsibilities to look after them when they get old or when they retire from their jobs. So besides academic pressure, I also have to consider my career to give my family a secure life (Badol).

This sense of responsibility may serve as a source of motivation and also stress as he struggles to meet these unexpressed expectations while managing his academic responsibilities.

However, in some cases such expectations are disclosed clearly. For instance, Maliha, who is a fourth year student, says her family has high expectations from her due to her previous academic accomplishments. She says, "Because of my previous results, they always expect that I will do the best. But the academic pressure from university is quite different from the one in school, which my family fails to understand" (Maliha).

In several cases, families fail to understand the specific challenges that ELT students face and hence, students feel lost due to the lack of adequate familial support. Similar to Maliha, Tasnim also highlighted that her family expects her to prioritise them over her studies despite not offering much support. When asked about the support she receives from her family, she replied,

They expect me to manage it somehow and attend family gatherings as well as staying committed to my academics. Most of the time, they don't care about how I am supposed to do it unless it gets very overwhelming for me (Tasnim).

In such a dynamic there is a tension between familial obligation and academic responsibilities. Students like Tasnim are forced to prioritise one over the other with little to no support from their family. Such a strenuous affair takes significant emotional labour adding

another layer of stress, especially when families lack awareness of the intensity of academic pressure.

On the other hand, some students feel responsible for getting good grades and set high expectations for themselves. So on top of external pressure, these students have self-imposed expectations, which are deeply rooted in their personal goals. Asif and Nishat have their own goals which puts pressure on them but also acts as a catalyst to work harder. Asif's dream to be a teacher helps him cope with pressure. As he mentions,

I have my own personal goal that I want to be a teacher in the future. I chose this dream so I can push through every kind of pressure that is given to me. And I am very close to my goal as I am in my last year, this is my biggest strength (Asif).

Thus, his ambition to become a teacher in the future has served as a noteworthy motivator and just the thought of getting closer to his dream helps him to overcome the obstacles in his path including stress and burnout. He feels intrinsically motivated to do well. Similarly, Nishat says that she wishes to avoid bad grades as her choice to study ELT was a personal responsibility. She says, "It's not just due to family expectation, I do not wish to have a bad CGPA as well. I chose to study ELT on my own accord so it is my responsibility to try my best" (Nishat). So, Nishat's personal goal provides her with direction and motivation. However, sometimes it can also heighten stress, especially when students fail to meet their self-imposed standards.

However, in some cases, the overlap between family expectations and personal goals can become a significant form of pressure. Sadia shared that she suffers from her own and her family's expectations to do well as she feels responsible for supporting her younger sister. She express that,

I have three part-time jobs because I need to support myself and my little sister. So I would say if I was provided with my living expenses I could study more and have time to myself. I don't want to have bad grades but I also need to meet my family's expectations.

So, my stress really adds up due to my family background and expectations (Sadia).

Sadia's dual form of responsibility impacts her stress even more as she has to balance family expectations with personal goals. Hence, the findings reveal that familial and personal expectations shape the way each individual experiences burnout. While family support can provide motivation and courage, unreasonable assumptions can increase a student's stress. Similarly, personal goals can empower students but also crush them under the weight of their own presumptions.

Limited Institutional Support

The interviews revealed that many students feel that their universities are not providing adequate support in managing their stress. Though participants have agreed that the faculties in their respective departments are quite supportive, they are yet to receive similar help from the university authority. Asif mentioned that,

My university has not done anything to reduce my stress; rather, only increased it by shifting to a larger campus at a further distance. In such a situation, my university can provide help by arranging transportation that is more affordable and create relaxing environments for students to rest (Asif).

Such a response highlighted that some institutional decisions, such as the change of campus location, may adversely affect the students. This effect is heightened when institutes do not provide adequate logistical support such as transportation. Tasnim, who attends the same university, agreed that students face difficulties due to the long commute and it becomes an issue

as there is a lack of resting areas in the campus. She says, “There are students who come from long distances and have long gaps between classes. There should be dedicated resting spaces for students who have to stay in the university for a long period of time”(Tasnim).

Sadia highlighted the lack of proper resources in her university library. She mentioned, “Oftentimes we have to read books online because we don't really get them from the library. There are not enough hardcopies of books in the library. So having more accessible books would be very helpful” (Sadia). Insufficient library resources can cause students to look for books online which often becomes challenging. Besides, many students including Badol and Sadia have complained about having eye problems for staring at computer screens for long periods of time, which frequently happens due to the prevalence of using softcopy books and PDFs. Thus universities need to ensure a proper stock of hardcopy documents and books.

On the other hand, some participants conveyed their concerns regarding the lack of mental health services provided by the university. Badol feels that his university counselling unit requires more resources. When asked about his experience with the counselling unit, he replied,

The counselling unit tries to accommodate us. But I think it is very short staffed because the sessions end abruptly when time is up, which is very frustrating. It's like they have no responsibility for us and are just doing it for the payment (Badol).

Meanwhile, Sadia who attends another university, finds herself unable to secure appointments with the university counsellor. She shared that,

I think that my university needs to provide general workshops for stress management in order to reach a larger audience. I feel that there should be access to resources for flexible stress management timing because I often find myself not getting appointments (Sadia).

Sadia's sentiment also highlighted that many students in her university do not get sufficient mental health support due to lack of availability of counselling units. Both Badol and Sadia's accounts underscore that even though universities have counselling units, they often do not have enough staff or funding, making them ineffective for a large number of students.

Similar to other participants, Nishat has also expressed her dissatisfaction with her university's "seemingly non-existent" counselling service. She feels that unlike other private universities, her institution has contributed to her stress because of the lack of a competent registration system. So, other than mental health resources, institutions can cause much stress to students due to administrative inadequacies. She mentioned that,

The course registration at the beginning of the semester is a very big challenge. I'm already struggling with my studies and it's unfair that my university only adds up to that stress...I am paying a lot for studying here and I deserve to get a seat in my desired course, in my desired section (Nishat).

So the insufficient academic resources faculty in her department creates significant stress for her. Her university has failed to offer necessary major or compulsory courses in time which may delay her graduation. This causes her further anxiety. Her frustration increases ten-folds due to the significant financial investment she has made to study at a private university. As she is paying a larger sum of money to study at a private university, Nishat feels justified to receive seats and sections in her desired courses. Thus, these accounts reveal that institutional shortcomings in providing mental health services, and logistical and administrative inadequacies can contribute to the stress and experience of burnout for students. Students may get alienated when they feel that their university prioritises profit maximization over their well-being.

Coping Mechanism Employed by ELT Students

Coping mechanisms play a crucial role in managing stress and burnout, especially in a rigorous program like ELT. These strategies help students to mitigate the effects of stress in a demanding academic environment to maintain their wellbeing and continue their studies despite the external stressors they face.

Time Management

Several participants highlighted the use of time management and schedules to keep track of their tasks in order to maintain a balance between their responsibilities. This helps them feel that they are in control of their tasks and helps mitigate stress and burnout. 2 of the participants, Tasnim and Tahmid, mentioned that they form a schedule by prioritising the work according to their urgency. Tahmid mentions, “I try to create a schedule to manage my time. However it does not always work out as planned due to too much pressure. So I prioritise the hardest tasks and complete them first to meet the deadlines” (Tahmid). Thus, a systematic prioritisation of work and creating a schedule accordingly can ease the stress on students. By completing the more time consuming or difficult tasks beforehand, students can feel less anxious and focus on their studies without last-minute preparations. However, this may raise concerns regarding its long term effect. By prioritising the more urgent work, the less immediate tasks are sidelined, which can result in the accumulation of work in the long run.

On the other hand, some participants underscored the importance of taking breaks in-between to avoid getting overwhelmed. Badol and Maliha like to take short breaks while completing long tasks. When asked about his strategy, Badol described the “pomodoro” technique. He says, “I try to take small breaks when I work. I work for 25 minutes, then I take a

5-minute break, then again I start working” (Badol). Similarly, Sadia mentions that whenever she has to study for long hours, she takes frequent short breaks. She shares that,

If I study for a very long period of time it gets very hectic. Everything starts to hurt and nothing gets into my brain. So I try to take very short breaks periodically. I guess you can call this my strategy (Sadia).

Studying for long periods of time can become incredibly tiring for students. This can often impact their ability to grasp and retain information too. Hence, by taking short breaks while studying, students can feel less tired and concentrate better in their studies.

However, some participants admitted to approaching burnout in a passive manner. This is characterised by selective disengagement and withdrawal from work. Nishat and Manik often struggle from procrastination as they leave their work until the last minute. Nishat mentions that,

I don't really have a specific strategy to cope with my burnout. I feel like the damage has been done. So I actually wait for the stress to hit and once it does, I start it. I've relied on this process for quite some time now even though it's not a healthy mechanism (Nishat).

Such a strategy may help them finish work during the last minute adrenaline rush. But this method is incredibly stress-driven. And though it makes students productive momentarily, it may reduce performance over time. Furthermore, the adrenaline-fueled last minute motivations can lead to heightened stress and anxiety. Hence, the long term consequences of such a strategy can turn quite dire. And though the participants are aware of the demerits of their approach, they are unable to break this cycle.

Therefore, the contrast between active and passive time management strategies have distinct challenges. Active approaches like time management and systematic prioritisation require consistent effort and discipline but they can mitigate stress in the long run. On the other

hand, avoidance and withdrawal can provide short-term relief but have adverse long term effects on students' stress.

Reliance on Social Support

Many participants revealed that they depend on the social support from their friends, family, and faculties to cope with burnout. Asif and Manik rely on their friends for support. They emphasised that the feeling of solidarity with friends and peers gives them a feeling of belonging. Their friends understand them better as they are going through similar situations. Asif feels that,

Only my friends can handle my pent up negative emotions and vice versa as we are in the same situation. It's like our negatives cancel each other out and we are able to forget about our stress temporality. I feel like I can forget about my burnout and get my energy back among my friends (Asif).

This account highlights the role of friendship and peer solidarity in alleviating stress. Such a support group can become an emotional outlet by shared experiences. However, even though the mutual exchange of frustration can create a supportive environment, it does not address the root cause of burnout. Unless peers share well constructed strategies to mitigate burnout, students are unable to find stable resolutions. Even so, social support and the genuine sense of belonging can sometimes do wonders for one's emotional and mental wellbeing. As Nishat expresses, "I feel like my school friends are my lifeline. Even though I don't get to see them often, even a short conversation drains all the stress. It might be temporary but it helps a lot" (Nishat).

On the other hand, some participants accentuated the role of family support and its effect on burnout. For instance, Sadia and Maliha find their mothers to be extremely supportive and find relief by spending time with them. One of them shares,

Whenever I need support, I just go up to my mom. I feel like she's the only person I can depend on. She's the one person I can rant to. Talk about friends, or academic pressure, or any burnout, because I feel like she's the one who understands me the most (Sadia).

Sadia's statement underscores the complexity of family support. As here she mentions the comfort and encouragement that she finds in her mother. Whereas previously she expressed her frustration with her family's lack of understanding. This was also the case with Maliha, who calls her mother her "biggest support" even though earlier she mentioned feeling stressed due to her family's expectations due to her previous academic result. This inconsistency in familial support shows that while positive familial interaction can mitigate emotional stress, it can also amplify burnout due to unrealistic expectations.

In other ways, participants have also found a supportive figure in their faculties. Even though the administrative inefficiency may become a source of burnout, the students have perceived positive support during their interactions with professors. As Nishat mentions, "Even a small amount of support from your elders or from your teachers really helps you get rid of the stress" (Nishat). So positive interactions with faculty members can act as an emotional buffer for students. However, such guidance from individual faculty is not part of the organisational support from university. Personal connections with professors may be crucial to some students. However, they may become vulnerable if such support is not readily available. And it must be noted that just as positive interaction with faculty can mitigate burnout, negative interactions may have the opposite effect.

Meanwhile, Badol and Tahmid find extracurricular activities and club engagement as a way to meet new people, which works as a stress reliever for them. One of them indicates that, Extracurricular activities are one of the things that I do to get rid of stress. During my class break, I often go to the auditorium and play carrom with different people. It's also helped me to socialise and meet new people, who have similar experiences as me, which is actually a stress reliever for me (Badol).

Badol's experience suggests that engaging with people who share the same interests can become a great outlet for stress relief. Socialising and making new friends can help with one's emotional stress. However, such a view may be highly subjective as people who are more introverted or have social anxiety may prefer to spend time with familiar faces or just by themselves. So social support is a vital but uneven coping mechanism. While interactions with family and friends can yield emotional relief, the effectiveness of such support depends on the quality of these relationships and individual circumstances. Furthermore, some may perceive it as temporary relief with no everlasting solutions.

Socioeconomic Constraints Affecting Coping Strategies

The interviews reveal that the coping strategies employed by the ELT student can vary depending on their socioeconomic background. The disparity underscores that even though the coping mechanisms are dictated by needs rather than choice, financial strains can limit the already restricted options that students have. For instance, participants that support themselves financially usually do not have enough means to fund their personal interests. Nishat revealed that managing her personal finances by tutoring kids has restricted her access to activities and resources as she does not earn a substantial amount of money. In such a situation, her socioeconomic situation has barred her from accessing even moderately expensive resources

such as eating out with friends or seeking professional help. When asked about her limitations, she says,

I wish I didn't have to manage my own finances. But I don't have a choice. Everything I do, I do it with my own money so yeah, there are a lot of things that could help with the burnout but I don't get to do much with that money. (Nishat)

Then again, participants who do not have part time jobs feel hesitant to ask their family for financial support, particularly those who do not belong from affluent families. Several students expressed their need for professional therapy in their interviews. However, due to financial limitations, they have to use free or low cost resources which may not address the root cause of their issue or provide momentary relief. When asked about their go-to solutions, Badol replies “I use resources from the internet, engaging in breathing and mental exercises to manage my stress”. While other students, such as Asif and Tahmid distract themselves through different cost-effective activities. Tahmid expresses, “Whenever I become stressed, I watch movies. They are usually motivational or crime thrillers. The different genres motivate me and relieve my stress so that I can work faster”. Hence, economic limitations keep students from employing more effective or formal coping mechanisms, especially for managing academic burnout. Their coping mechanisms are temporary distractions that keep their stress at bay.

On the same note, some participants mentioned self-reflecting and connecting with their spiritual side. For instance, Maliha finds praying very helpful. She tries to offer the five obligatory prayers as well as additional prayers to manage her stress. While, several students prefer to relax without doing anything definitive as Tasnim mentions, “I prefer to come back home, take a long shower and just lay on my bed and watch something on my laptop”. Even though these activities do not include any definitive resources they act as self-care for the

participants. However, such acts of self-care can also be affected by one's financial situation. As Tasnim belongs from a stable socioeconomic background, she is able to afford a laptop and manage her stress from home. Similarly, Asif and Sadia too addressed their privilege of using electronic devices such as mobile phones and laptops to mitigate burnout. This access reduces some of their logistical burdens and allows them to spend more time on leisure activities. Hence, students who are able to engage in self-care practices due to substantial economic standings have a better chance to focus on proactive coping strategies.

These findings once again highlight the duality of part-time employment, particularly in the case of coping mechanisms. For some participants, working is a burdensome necessity instead of a choice while some view it as an opportunity. In some cases, the activity that is meant to mitigate stress (financial) becomes the primary cause of burnout. The responsibility to perform well in both professional and academic fields leaves students with little time and energy for appropriate coping activities.

Therefore, socioeconomic background significantly affects coping strategies of ELT students by either facilitating or limiting their ability to participate in dedicated and well-structured interventions. While students from privileged backgrounds acquire a wide range of tactics, others who are not as privileged are forced to engage in sloppy or less effective methods. But institutions can address this discrepancy by providing impartial access to support systems to all students, regardless of their financial background. In this way, students may have an even-handed opportunity to manage their burnout.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The chapter will discuss the data in the light of existing literature to provide a comprehensive analysis of how burnout manifests in ELT students and how their coping mechanisms reflect their socioeconomic realities.

Possible Causes for Academic Pressure Facilitating Burnout

The findings reveal that academic pressure significantly contributes to burnout among ELT students, especially for those in their final years. This exhaustion can be reflected in the personal and work-related burnout dimensions of the CBI. The study by Kristensen et al. (2005) showed that CBI can effectively distinguish between personal and work-related burnout. Students like Tahmid and Badol reported high levels of burnout as per their description of decreased motivation and exhaustion. This shows that research-based tasks that are imposed simultaneously without enough downtime for recovery can heighten stress and burnout. The pressure becomes overwhelming when students have to conduct research in multiple courses at the same time as their thesis. They feel constant exhaustion which gradually leads to loss of concentration and interest. Hence, a tailored version of CBI can be used to show that even though academic responsibilities are different from traditional employment, they can function as a work-related burnout for students, which Serafica and Castano (2024) called the “studies-related burnout.”

In such a situation the focus shifts to grades rather than skill acquisition, as noted by Badol. And as a result students feel emotionally detached from their studies. This mirrors a previous study conducted by Kaggwa et al. (2021), in which they argued that students who face excessive workload often prioritise performance metrics, such as grades, over retention of long term knowledge. Hence, students may be more focused on passing their coursework rather than

gain an understanding of the ELT skills. However, high levels of personal burnout can be associated with low motivation, which ultimately leads to poor academic performance. Whereas, students with a high GPA tend to experience less cynicism and academic burnout (Rahmatpour, 2019). The frustration with poor grades can lead to a dislike towards one's subject as noted by Manik. Obtaining a low academic grade despite studying demotivates the students, gradually leading towards withdrawal and cynicism towards the field, which is one of the primary reasons for high student drop-out rate (Oyola & Pagullo, 2019). Some students like Maliha experience low motivation which, when paired with physical exhaustion gives way to procrastination. A study by Rozental et al. (2022) shows that a significant number of physical ailments are caused due to prolonged anxiety and stress which makes procrastination a complex blend of physical and psychological issues.

The lack of balance between academic and personal life, which was reported by many participants, is a crucial element of the personal burnout dimension in the CBI. The exhaustion experienced by students indicates that private universities may not be addressing the toll on mental health caused by their academic and program structure, contributing to both personal and academic burnout.

Role of Socioeconomic Strains in Facilitating Burnout

The findings highlighted that particular socioeconomic background can affect an individual differently from others. As studied by Wu et al. (2022), students from a higher socioeconomic background tend to experience less burnout as they have notable advantages which can transform into resources for their development. This in turn enables them to have a positive attitude towards their studies. Such an attitude can be facilitated by the use of certain technology, as mentioned by Asif and Sadia. On the other hand, students like Badol and Tahmid

struggle to acquire the necessary equipment for their learning such as tutoring and textbooks due to their financial challenges. This increases their difficulties as students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to experience higher levels of burnout due to insufficient access to academic, economic and psychological support (Kaggwa et al. 2021). Hence, students like Badol may often feel restless due to the lack of part-time jobs.

However, it seems that university students refuse to succumb to their financial strains. Rather, they take it upon themselves to get rid of their grievances by engaging in part-time jobs. But their employment takes the role of a double-edged sword for them as students like Tasnim and Asif view their job as a way to practically apply their theoretical knowledge of ELT. On the other hand, students like Sadia reported that working multiple tutoring jobs due to financial necessity significantly increases her stress. So this duality shows that even though part-time jobs are a necessity for many, they may often become a significant source of burnout. On a similar note, if employees are unable to achieve high employer and customer satisfaction, the self-efficacy and optimism of employees are diminished significantly, which also applies to non-service jobs that require social interactions (Dormann and Zapf, 2004). So, for Nishat, her students and their parents may act as customers while Manik's employer plays the role of a traditional clientele. The client's expectations may diminish their self-assurance while accelerating their stress which aligns with the work and client-related burnout dimension of CBI (Milfont, 2008).

Furthermore, the study revealed that long commutes can become a notable source of stress for students, particularly for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who travel using public transportation. The traffic situation in Dhaka has been a longstanding obstacle for many people, which can be attributed to the city's booming population growth compared to the

inadequate infrastructure (Ali, 2023). Students who do not live near their university have to spend long hours commuting to and from their university campuses. And as a result, the struggle of living far from the campus is exacerbated due to the commute-related stress, which affects their time management, productivity and work-life balance (Kamruzzaman & Rumpa, 2019).

The findings suggest that students' socioeconomic backgrounds can not only restrict their ability to attain their academic goals but also increase their likelihood of experiencing burnout, especially with the need of part-time jobs and long commutes.

Role of Familial Obligation and Personal Ambition in Facilitating Burnout

The findings indicate that most participants acknowledged that their family has shown them immense support, even though they do not have much knowledge about ELT. Even so, their family expects them to graduate with a reasonable GPA and pursue higher education in order to obtain good employment. Though these expectations may not be verbalised, students can feel the untold pressure. This is evident in students such as Badol and Maliha's case, whose families' high expectation creates additional pressure on them. Badol's role as the only child and the primary caregiver of his parents along with his lack of financial freedom show that familial responsibility can increase can affect the way one perceives life's satisfaction and stress (Chu et al, 2015).

Moreover, the result suggests that family support or the lack thereof may affect a student's mental well being. For example, Tasnim's family does not offer her much support despite expecting her to prioritise them over her studies, which has elevated her experience of stress and burnout. According to Mamun et al. (2021) academic expectations and neglect from family is a major cause of emotional distress among students, which unfortunately has become a cultural phenomena in Bangladesh at present. Whereas, a supportive family can serve as a

“protective factor against academic burnout” which can shape a student’s adaptability to face vigorous academic challenges (Andrade et al., 2023).

On the other hand, students like Asif and Nishat experience significant pressure due to their self-imposed higher academic goal. However, while personal ambition can motivate one to do considerable work, it can also become a source of stress. When an effort driven endeavour is accompanied with overtaxing behaviour, students are unable to keep up with the demands leading to exhaustion. Similarly, when motivation driven students fail to achieve their desired result due to a lack of resources, they foster disengagement and mental withdrawal (Salmela-Aro and Upadaya, 2014). Hence, motivated students who set high academic goals can succumb to frustration and “achievement-related burnout”. And students like Asif, who desire to push through academic challenges for a definite future goal may feel emotionally exhausted when they face obstacles. This mirrors one of the crucial contributing factors of the personal burnout dimension of CBI (Kristensen et al. 2005).

However, the combination of familial and personal expectations underscore the multifaceted nature of burnout among ELT students. Not only do they feel external pressure from family but they strive to meet their own personal goals. Hence, students like Sadia, who face both internal and external pressure may face remarkable challenges to balance academic responsibilities with mental well being. This is in alignment with the study conducted by Stoeber et al. (2011) which associated obsessive passion for academic achievement and perfectionism with burnout.

Role of Universities

The findings suggest that insufficient support from institutions can play a significant role in exacerbating burnout among ELT students, particularly in the private universities. As noted by

Asif and Tasnim's experiences, the university's insufficient logistic and infrastructural support including adequate resting spaces and affordable transportation can contribute to both physical and emotional exhaustion. This mirrors a study by Salmela-Aro and Upadyaya (2014) which underscored the role of the environment in which academic education takes place in the student's well being and how universities that fail to provide basic facilities to students can create additional stress for the student body. Besides, it is not uncommon for students to have large breaks in between classes. By having dedicated resting areas for students, they can preserve their energy and still feel active after their classes end. And being in a comfortable environment can help the students to somewhat manage their stress and eliminate their physical and mental exhaustion.

On the other hand, on campus psychological counselling units (academic related) can play a notable role in improving the experience of burnout. The burnout level of those who receive counselling periodically is low compared to those who do not (Lei, 2024). Whereas, the lack of mental health support can have a detrimental effect on the students' experience as noted by Badol and Sadia. In such a situation, the lack of mental health resources can make vulnerable students feel like a liability to the university, where the counsellors are forced to help them. Counselling units with inadequate resources may make students feel neglected and unaccepted, which can have a negative impact on their wellbeing (Ferguson and Whitelock, 2024).

Furthermore, institutional inadequacies such as lack of a competent registration system and insufficient course offerings, as noted by Nishat, are significant sources of academic stress. Unfortunately, like Nishat's university, many other private universities have a small English department, which often lacks competent lecturers, professors and adequate resources compared to the number of students. And as most private universities follow the open credit system, they

fail to distribute seats in a fair manner. As a result, many of the major courses are not offered regularly or have insufficient sections delaying the graduation of students. In such situations, students of certain departments, the English departments in this case, may feel alienated from the rest of the university, further aggravating their burnout (Samson, 2021). This is especially frustrating for the private university students as they pay a larger sum of money as course and tuition fees compared to other universities. The overall lack of institutional support structures can lead to exhaustion and a sense of helplessness, which often takes place due to universities placing substantial emphasis on profit maximisation instead of students' wellbeing (Chaudhry, 2024). Hence, universities need to be transparent with the students regarding the services they can provide with their staff. If needed, they must reevaluate their student services to develop realistic proactive strategies that would consider the students' academic and psychological needs (Abrams, 2022).

Role of Coping Mechanisms in Mitigating Burnout

As identified by the CBI, all the participants in this study experience burnout, and often struggle from personal, academic, work, and university related stressors. But their coping strategies vary depending on their socioeconomic background, access to resources, individual preference and intensity of burnout. While some rely on time management, social support groups, and hobbies, others take a more passive approach such as avoidance and withdrawal. By analysing these strategies, this study aims to explore the patterns that could provide insights into improving student wellbeing and offer institutional support structures.

Scheduling and Prioritisation as a Coping Mechanism

The findings reveal that several participants take an active approach to manage their time in order to mitigate burnout. By managing their time, participants are able to perform their

preferred hobbies such as gaming, photography, watching movies, reading non-academic books, physical activities and painting. Prioritising more urgent work over the less urgent tasks may help students to complete work in a systematic way. The suitable time management helps them to boost their productivity and creativity keeping burnout at bay. In this case, the Pomodoro technique which includes 25 minutes of focus work followed by a five minute break can improve focus. (Septiani, 2022). On the contrary, some students may prefer to not do anything definite and simply engage in activities that they find helpful, as noted by Tasnim and Maliha. However, lack of time management, may overwhelm the students with too much work at once which leads to procrastination and anxiety. Unfortunately, a notable number of students like Nishat and Manik, avoid and mentally withdraw from their work due to high academic load or lack of understanding of course content (Oyola & Pagullo, 2019).

Social Support as Coping Mechanism

The data revealed that several students prefer socialisation and social support systems to cope with their burnout. Asif, Manik and Nishat's reliance on friends and peers for support mirrors the study by Ferguson and Whitelock (2024) who emphasised the role of social and community networks, including friends, on the mental health and wellbeing of students. On the other hand, despite the familial pressure, Sadia and Maliha find their mother's support to be crucial to mitigate burnout. This shows that care and affection from family can inversely affect the burnout identified by CBI. Similarly, lack of family functionality and support can have adverse effects on academic burnout (Andrade et al., 2023). On the other hand, positive support from faculty and associated staff can have a significant impact on the wellbeing of students, as noted by Nishat (Chaudhry, 2024). In such a situation, it is crucial for faculties to have a proactive role to work in sync with the administrators to help the students (Samson, 2021).

Though some participants have viewed their involvement in extracurricular activities as a time drain, many perceive it as a method of socialising. Social life can act as a buffer against depression for students. Hence, students like Tahmid and Badol may use their social support groups to minimise the risk of anxiety and depression (Teh et al., 2015). Thus, on-campus activities such as workshops and club-works may increase the social connectedness among students, determining the perception of their acceptance within the social context. This in turn also helps them to become socially competent (Samson, 2021).

Role of Financial Background in Coping Mechanism

The findings indicate that many university students are unable to access adequate coping resources due to economic strains. Research shows students facing substantial financial strains suffer from poor mental health due to limited access to resources and more hours spent working at jobs (Eisenberg, 2007). Hence, students like Nishat, who do not have enough economic flexibility to receive formal help may be at a greater risk of facing mental and physical health problems. Similarly, students that depend on their family for economic support may be at a risk too. Students such as Badol and Tahmid, who do not receive financial stability and support from their families, may lack mental fortitude. These students are more vulnerable to emotional and academic stressors (Vadivel et al., 2023). In such a situation, universities can come forward to help their students by providing more accessible mental health resources. They can make a comfortable environment for students where their concerns are seen and heard without judgments.

Implications

The findings of this study provide insight into the external factors that contribute to the burnout among ELT students and the coping mechanism that they use, particularly in the case of

private universities. The implications of these findings are multifaceted in nature and can provide students, institutions and policymakers with a better support structure and tailored interventions. Institutions need to target the factors that cause burnout among students and improve the support systems to fit the students individually or make it more inclusive. The data highlights that many students experience burnout due to excessive academic workload, limited support, financial challenges, part-time jobs, and commute related stress. While there is no one size that fits all solutions, universities can address these concerns in a multitude of ways.

Revision of Academic Workload

The academic workload has been a significant stressor for students, especially those who feel a deep sense of responsibility to do well. The data suggests that universities should revise course load, content, and assignment structure to better balance academic achievement with mental wellbeing. A uniform grading system among universities could be used that would reduce unnecessary competition between students in the job market. The university departments should offer ELT courses that give the students a chance at employing the theories in a practical situation in order to mitigate the theory and practise dichotomy. More importantly, universities need to ensure that these courses have adequate instructors, sections and resources so that students can enroll in their desired classes.

Institutional Support and Intervention Programs

Furthermore, universities need to employ dedicated support programs such as mental health workshops, improved counselling services and academic advising by experienced professionals to offer academic and emotional support to students, which would relieve pressure regarding their academic and future careers. Since commute-related stress is a recurring theme in the context of Dhaka, universities should offer affordable and safe transportation systems by

providing shuttle services or partnerships with local transit systems. By taking the responsibility of the long commute to and from university, the authority can help mitigate the mental and physical toll of students. Although, these services should be designed with flexibility to include the students of different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study identified and analysed the individual factors that influence burnout among the students of ELT in private universities along with the coping strategies and how they may vary from one person to another. The paper aimed to recognise external stressors, understand their impact and examine how socioeconomic variables influence students' impression of burnout. A qualitative methodology was used, which employed semi-constructed interviews to discern the insights of the unique encounters of the students. The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) framework guided the research, to study burnout from three dimensions: personal, work-related and client-related. The experiences of the students are characterised by academic pressure, financial strains, family expectations, and limited institutional support. Collected data indicated that burnout is multifaceted and is deeply affected by individual circumstances which may include but not limited to socioeconomic backgrounds, individual goals and inadequate institutional support. The findings also underscored the distinct coping mechanisms that students may employ such as time management, prioritisation, seeking social support, and even disengagement from work. The coping strategies, especially leisurely activities, varied distinctly due to individual preferences, socioeconomic background and intensity of burnout of students. These accounts culminate the need for private universities to implement targeted interventions that would help support the wellbeing and academic success of ELT students. Systematic intercessions involving academic workload, mental health services, logistical units and administrative inefficiencies can help the students to a great extent. Future research could target a broader sample size or use a comparative study of private and public universities to grasp a broader perception of the needs of ELT students. Furthermore, future studies can shed light on

the long-term impact of various coping strategies to develop appropriate student support services.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of my study I would like to make a few recommendations to better support students to deal with various stress factor for improved learning experience and better student outcomes:

1. Universities should consider implementing structured systems to alleviate the stress of students. This could include a revision of workload to balance academic achievement and wellbeing of students.
2. Adequate facilities and support from the university is necessary to sustain the mental health of students. This can be done by ensuring that there are adequate course instructors, resources, and dedicated counselling units.
3. Institutions can take practical approaches such as arranging affordable transportation systems, sufficient libraries and study resources.
4. Universities can devise financial aid programs and on-campus part-time jobs to ease the economic pressure that many students face.

Limitation of the Study

Though this study showcases the multifarious nature of burnout, its contributing factors, and coping methods, it is limited by its relatively small sample size. The demographic of this paper only consists of ELT students from private universities in Dhaka. Hence, the result may not entirely represent the student population, especially of those who are from other programs or public universities. Furthermore, this study was conducted over a short period of time so it may

not capture burnout to its full extent and its experience across varying times or other time bound elements.

Scope for Future Research

Future studies can conduct research by expanding the sample size. The demographic may include students from both private and public universities of Bangladesh across different lines of studies. As burnout is the result of chronic exhaustion over a notable period of time, its origins and magnitude can be studied by conducting in-depth research that spans across a lengthy period. Additionally, quantitative study or a mixed method approach can be used to put forth statistical data that distinguishes the prevalence and intensity of burnout among a broader sample. Lastly, studying the varied coping mechanisms over time could dispense the understanding of their long standing effects.

Concluding Thoughts

This study contributes to the exploration of student-specific insights in academia. As more and more students are facing burnout and chronic stress, it is crucial to study the intricate dynamics of burnout. As students often push themselves due to their personal goals, their mental wellbeing is affected by complex interactions between academic, socioeconomic and institutional elements. Thus studying and improving their mental health is pertinent as these students are our future teachers. Their personal welfare will also ensure their subsequent effectiveness as educators. Therefore, institutions and policy makers can implement well-informed, context-specific interventions that would sustain a healthy academic environment and cultivate a resilient upcoming workforce.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Title of Research: An Analysis of Stress Factors Among ELT Students of Private Universities in Bangladesh

Principal Investigator: Zaima Imtiaz

Information and Purpose: The interview for which you are being asked to participate in is a part of a research study that is focused on evaluating burnout among ELT students at private universities in Bangladesh. The study will explore the factors contributing to burnout, the role of socio economic stressors and coping mechanisms used by students.

Your Participation: Your participation in this study will consist of an interview, where you will be asked a series of questions related to your personal experiences with burnout, the factors that influence your burnout levels and your coping mechanisms. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to discontinue or withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

Confidentiality: The interview will be recorded; however, your name and personal identifying details will be removed. The researcher will store the collected data securely and will not share your responses with anyone other than the research supervisor.

If you have any questions or concerns about the interview, please contact the researcher.

By signing below, I hereby consent to give my interview and allow the researcher to use the collected data for the purpose of the study. I acknowledge that my interview will be recorded for research purposes and I have the ability to discontinue my participation at any time.

Participant's Signature:

Email:

Date:

Researcher's Signature:

Email:

Date:

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Can you please introduce yourself?
2. Can you please describe your overall experience as an ELT student, highlighting any specific Challenges or stressors you have encountered during your academic journey?
3. How did you first recognise that you were experiencing burnout? What specific Symptoms have you noticed in yourself? (symptoms of burnout include feeling tired and overwhelmed by your studies/work for long periods of time, loss of motivation/interest in coursework, feeling mentally and physically drained, difficulty in keeping focus, procrastination and increasing cynicism towards responsibilities)
4. How do you perceive the role of academic workload in contributing to your burnout? Are there any specific aspects of ELT courses that contribute to burnout?
5. Do you have any part-time jobs? — To what extent do external factors, such as part-time jobs and transportation issues, influence your overall well-being and contribute to feelings of burnout?
6. Do you engage in any extracurricular activities? — Can you discuss your involvement in extracurricular activities and the impacts it has on your stress levels?
7. How do you balance academic responsibilities with other commitments?
8. How do family expectations and support impact your stress levels and burnout? What kind of support do you get from your family to cope with the challenges you face as an ELT student?
9. How do your academic responsibilities (work-related) and interactions with professors or peers (client-related) impact your burnout levels?

10. What kind of support have you received from university regarding managing your burnout?

Is there anything more that the university could do to help you?

11. Who do you turn to for support when you experience burnout? How effective do you find these support systems?

12. What strategies or activities do you use to cope with burnout?

13. How does your socioeconomic background influence the coping strategies you use? How does your socioeconomic situation affect your access to resources or support systems for managing burnout?

14. How has burnout affected your overall well-being and academic performance? Do you feel that the support you receive is enough to address your burnout?

15. What changes would you suggest to improve the support systems for ELT students to better address burnout?

Appendix C

Coding Sample

Participant	Data Excerpt	Codes	Themes
Asif	"In your first years of university, you don't really face any challenges... But in my third year... I was made to do courses that were mandatory, which made us create class syllabus and course curriculum." "As a fourth year student, the burnout is excessive since I am majoring in ELT and I have two courses with me alongside my thesis, so those courses are 300 level courses. The biggest problem is that these are research-based courses and doing research takes plenty of your personal time"	Transition to advanced courses	Academic pressure: Academic Challenges
Asif	"Since linguistics and English language teaching are not similar... When you teach, you have to make a plan, and when you have to analyze language, you have to analyze the data, you don't teach it. So I think the clash between the two courses, the most problems."	Complexity of ELT vs. Linguistics courses	
Asif	"One of the biggest symptoms was that I couldn't cope up with everything... I just procrastinated, I thought I could do it later on later on."	Procrastination, inability to cope	Symptoms of burnout: Mental burnout
Asif	"I have two courses with me alongside my thesis... the burnout is excessive in a way that... doing the research alongside doing my thesis and doing the work that I have to do	High workload	Academic Pressure

	outside of my university life."		
Asif	"Without any experience, we cannot pre-plan... there is no practical experience plus there is no practical example given to us about how this kind of testing is done and evaluation is done."	Lack of practical application in ELT courses	Practical experience
Asif	"I could not come home. I had to immediately go teach him... It made me a wreck. It was impossible to cope up with everything at the same time."	Part-time job challenges	External Factors: Part-time job related stress, Socioeconomic stressors
Asif	"The traffic is so disgusting in Bangladesh that you cannot really reach university without wasting two hours, three hours... So that's seven hours wasted."	Transportation issues	External Factors: Commute related stress
Asif	"I have my own personal goal that I want to be a teacher in the future... I am in my last year. I just need to graduate and do my master's so that I can achieve my goal. That's my biggest strength, actually, that I can motivate myself and stay motivated to keep taking the pressure and finishing it, getting the work done, no matter what. I'm proud of myself and that just makes me even more confident that I can do something that others may not be able to do."	Personal motivation	Coping strategies
Asif	"There are some faculties who are really understanding, like the senior faculties... they give us time, and sometimes they even decrease the workload."	Faculty support, Positive interactions with Professors	Support systems: Positive support from faculties

Asif	"There are also some faculties that are not very nice... there was one faculty...the way she did everything with so much hypocrisy...it was very difficult"	Negative interactions with Professors Professor expectation	Interaction with Professors
Asif	"...university did not really do anything other than make the burnout even larger by taking the campus to a bigger place, to a further distance...And the university doesn't really provide any type of breaks"	Insufficient support from university	Lack of institutional support
Asif	"if the university wants to do something like that. It needs to provide a very convenient transportation that's cheaper...and some type of relaxing environment...where students can meditate or just spend the time"	Support from university, Cheap transportation, Resting areas	Institutional support
Asif	"I have friends who I can talk with, I can chill with...all the negativities we have we just cancel it out... and we just forget about the burnout."	Peer support, Emotional support	Support system: Interaction with peers, Social support groups
Asif	"There's a mobile game I play... It helps with the burnout... I can fight with them online... It's so positive, that it helps me, it gives me even more energy to keep going."	Gaming	Coping strategies and activities
Asif	"I mean a middle, an upper middle class, and that allowed me to actually have, a laptop, a phone... I have all the necessary provisions that I need, that subsidize most of the burnouts that others are not able to use to cope with their own...I think, the socio-economic sector really played a big part in... downsizing the amount of"	Privileges due to (upper middle class) economic background	Socioeconomic background

	burnout I have, compared to others, who might have experience, even more, due to not having the socio-economic background that I have, currently."		
Asif	"I have that support from my friends, and from my own personal hobby as well as my background that I won't really be that much bothered... even if the burnout I have is high, because I know I can just bring it back down."	Peer support, Hobbies in mitigating burnout, Socialization	Support system: Interaction with peers Social support groups Coping strategies
Asif	"They need to bring the grade down... ELT expects you to have the perfect grades, and that's not possible... Also, their workload needs to be given with more practical applications... where students are evaluated based on how much effort they put in."	Grading systems, Practical application of ELT courses	Suggestions for Improvement: grading system and curriculum changes
	"The university needs to build their confidence by letting them see that what they're learning... is worth it in the end... This is one of the best ways that the university can help... give them that confidence that their hard work will not go to waste."	University support to build confidence	Suggestions for Improvement: University mental health support to build confidence