

An Investigation into EFL Students' Burnout Levels and Their Academic Motivation at the Tertiary Level

Esma ŞENEL¹ , İzmir Democracy University, School of Foreign Languages,
esmasenel@gmail.com

Recommended citation: Şenel, E (2025). An Investigation into EFL Students' Burnout Levels and Their Academic Motivation at the Tertiary Level. *Journal of Language Research (JLR)*,9(1), 15-27.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51726/jlr.1575280>

Abstract: While researchers have studied burnout and motivation separately, little attention has been paid to how these factors interact in language learning environments. Understanding the interplay between burnout and motivation in the EFL context is highly relevant in light of the widespread shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, this study investigates the burnout and academic motivation levels of EFL students in terms of gender and language level variables, focusing on learners' experiences during the COVID-19 process. The study took place at a foundation university and 66 students from different language levels participated in this study. Data was collected through demographic information form, Academic Motivation Scale (2012) by Karagüven and Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Form (2011) by Çapri, Gündüz, and Gökçakan. Descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, Kruskal Wallis Test, and Pearson Correlation coefficient were used to analyze the data. The findings of the study indicated that students had quite high motivation even though they felt a high level of burnout. There was a significant difference between students' academic motivation and depersonalization scores by gender variable. Kruskal-Wallis test findings on four language levels revealed that there was not a significant difference regarding academic motivation and burnout scores of the participants. Finally, there was no correlation between students' academic motivation and burnout levels.

Keywords: *Student burnout, academic motivation, online education, COVID-19*

INTRODUCTION

Burnout is a psychological reaction to the external world as a result of unsatisfied demands, emotional tears, failure, and reduced tolerance. It is a severe syndrome that results from emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment among people (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Golembiewski, Sun, Lin & Boudreau, 1995; Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986). Studies on burnout have become widespread since the 70s, including different occupational groups and students who are also the participants of this research. Due to the continuity of their academic duties and responsibilities in school life, student activities have also been considered a job in recent years and are considered within the scope of burnout (Schaufeli & Taris, 2005). Many factors make it difficult for students to fully adapt to the education process at almost every phase of education and prevent students from showing the target behaviors expected from them.

The COVID-19 period has been one of the factors that have deeply affected not only our health but also our education. The closure of schools due to the pandemic caused the entire school-family system to switch to compulsory online education, and as a result, the education system was severely affected. There have always been problems surrounding foreign language teaching prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but they have only been aggravated by the sudden shift from traditional to online learning and created new challenges. This sudden change hindered students' access to important learning opportunities including peer interactions, communicative activities, and getting

¹ ORCID: [0000-0002-5301-0830](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5301-0830)

Submitted: 28.10.2024

Accepted:09.02.2025



timely feedback from their instructors (Adıyaman & Demir, 2021; Erarslan, 2021). It also remained a challenge for students to adapt to self-directed learning environments due to the absence of a dynamic classroom atmosphere that facilitates linguistic interaction among peers (Juntunen, Tuominen, Viljaranta, Hirvonen, Toom & Niemivirta, 2022; Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020). For many EFL learners, this situation not only had an impact on sustaining motivation (Aldossari & Altalhab, 2022) but also increased burnout symptoms (Andrade, Riberiero & Máté, 2023) such as feelings of detachment, diminished sense of accomplishment, and general academic dissatisfaction (Bui, Bui & Nguyen, 2022; Tran, Vo & Ho, 2023; Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020). The scenario became more complicated due to uneven access to online education, the availability of digital resources, the study atmosphere at home, and institutional readiness (Erarslan, 2021; McIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2020; Mihai, Albert, Mihai & Dumitras, 2022; Aldosarri & Altalhab, 2022). These differences influenced their learning outcomes to a great extent as individuals without adequate technological assistance or appropriate home study frequently expressed greater feelings of stress and frustration (Erarslan, 2021; McIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2020; Bui, Bui & Nguyen, 2022; Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020; Andrade, Riberiero & Máté, 2023). However, several studies reported that some students demonstrated flexibility and perseverance using their intrinsic motivation or existing technological skills to maintain involvement (Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020; Adıyaman & Demir, 2021; Aldossari & Altalhab, 2022; Mihai, Albert, Mihai & Dumitras, 2022). In light of this duality, it has become essential to investigate the interplay between burnout and motivation during the COVID-19 process.

As foundational pillars of foreign language education in Türkiye, preparatory schools are crucial for examining the experiences of EFL learners during COVID-19. In recent years, the transition from traditional to online instruction has been rapid and unprecedented for preparatory schools aiming to provide students with the required language skills for academic success (Balbay & Erkan, 2021; Eraeslan, 2021; Irgatlıoğlu, Sarıçoban, Özcan & Dağbaşı, 2022). As a result of this rapid transformation, established pedagogical practices were disrupted and educators and students were both placed under additional demands causing stress (Meşe & Sevilen, 2021; Yuvayapan & Yükselir, 2021). Although some research has been carried out on burnout and academic motivation in the Turkish educational context (Karataş & Tuncer, 2020; Çevik & Bekircioğlu, 2021; Koyuncuoğlu, 2021; Tüfekçi & Böke, 2021, Adıyaman & Demir, 2021), there have been few empirical investigations into their interaction in EFL context (Baş, 2024; Seis, 2023; Kurt, 2023; Irgatlıoğlu, Sarıçoban, Özcan & Dağbaşı, 2022; Yuvayapan & Yükselir, 2021). This study therefore set out to examine the interplay between burnout and academic motivation among Turkish EFL learners during the COVID-19 process by considering gender and language proficiency levels. The findings of this research may contribute to the development of curriculum, effective teaching strategies, and institutional policies intended to reduce burnout and promote motivation.

Depending on the concerns above, this study is addressed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the levels of burnout and academic motivation among EFL learners?
2. Do EFL learners' burnout and academic motivation levels differ in terms of gender?
3. Do EFL learners' burnout and academic motivation levels differ in terms of language level?
4. Is there a correlation between EFL learners' burnout and academic motivation levels?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are two major theoretical constructs that are grounded in this study: burnout theory and self-determination theory. These theories establish the basis for comprehending the relationship between student burnout and academic motivation, particularly in the EFL learning context during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past four decades, burnout has been a popular topic of research not only in psychology but also in education and other related fields. The first studies on burnout were initiated by Maslach (1982) and she gave three different dimensions to burnout as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal achievement. According to the Maslach burnout model, burnout syndrome begins with the tendency of individuals to show emotional exhaustion and



leads to their depersonalization. As a result of depersonalization, people begin to perceive themselves as low-achieving individuals due to the mismatch between their current positions and expectations (Leiter, Maslach & Frame, 2014). The presence of these dimensions is not limited to occupational settings, but also manifests itself clearly in academic settings as a result of inability to meet academic expectations and demands among students (Schaufeli, Martínez, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002). In the educational setting, student burnout, often referred to as academic burnout, presents distinct features that manifest it from the phenomenon of occupational burnout. That is to say, a student's burnout or academic burnout results from the lack of resources available to the student to do his or her studies and the inconsistency between the student's expectations and the expectations of his immediate environment including his family, friends, and teachers (Kutsal & Bilge, 2012).

In the wake of the pandemic, the abrupt transition to online education caused significant burnout among EFL learners and disrupted their learning habits (He, Feng & Ding, 2024). On the one hand, emotional exhaustion was aggravated due to extended screen time and the challenges of dealing with self-directed study. On the other hand, depersonalization frequently appeared as a feeling of detachment from language learning objectives, especially due to the absence of face-to-face interaction and engagement. Consequently, low personal achievement arose as students encountered challenges in achieving language learning goals without sufficient feedback or assistance (González-Ramírez, Mulqueen, Zealand, Silverstein, & BuShell, 2021). These factors together obstruct the motivation necessary for maintaining effective language learning and create a cyclical relationship between burnout and reduced academic involvement.

The second theoretical pillar of this study is Self Determination theory by Deci and Ryan (1985) as applied to academic motivation. Self-determination theory defines motivation as a combination driven by intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Intrinsic motivation entails engaging in an activity for instinctive satisfaction whereas extrinsic motivation relies on external rewards or personal value of the activity. The theory highlights that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are three essential psychological needs that must be fulfilled to maintain motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). As in other educational settings, these psychological needs were often disrupted during the pandemic in the EFL context. The rigid format of online learning environments where students had minimal control over how they learned impaired their learner autonomy (Bui, Bui & Nguyen, 2022, Meşe & Sevilen, 2021). The lack of immediate feedback and opportunities to practice language skills weakened competence whereas diminished interaction between peers and teachers hindered relatedness. (Meşen & Sevilen, 2021; Al-Samiri, 2021; Lee, 2021).

A large number of existing studies in broader literature have examined student burnout and academic motivation. In a study investigating the relationship between personality, burnout, and academic motivation, David (2010) reported that personality and burnout are associated and that academic motivation mediates this association. Trigueros, Padilla, Aguilar-Parra, Mercader, López-Liria, & Rocamora (2020) examined the impact of teacher leadership on academic resilience and motivation, burnout, and academic performance. The results of the study revealed that there is a negative moderate correlation between academic motivation and burnout. A significant analysis and discussion on the subject were presented by Mohammadi, Moslemi, & Ghomi (2021). They reported a significant negative relationship between student burnout and academic motivation which indicated that the increase in the rate of academic motivation might decrease the level of student burnout. Together these studies provide important insights into the current study and shed light on the investigation of student burnout and academic motivation from different angles.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to investigate EFL students' burnout and academic motivation in the higher education context in Türkiye by comparing different data and variables to examine whether and to what extent correlate. Therefore, this research was designed as descriptive and correlational to gain further insight into student burnout and academic motivation among EFL learners at the tertiary level.



Setting

The study was conducted at the School of Foreign Languages of a foundation university in Istanbul in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. The School of Foreign Languages consisted of an English Preparatory Program, a Russian Preparatory Program, and English Language Support Program. This study was addressed to the English Preparatory program, which provides language education to students from various disciplines, equipping them for their departmental courses conducted in English. The English Preparatory Program adopts an 8-week modular system and there are four different levels of classes from STEP 1(A1/A2) to Proficiency. Students are subjected to the Oxford Placement Test to be placed in their classes, and they were placed in their level groups according to the results of this test. An integrated skills approach is implemented for language instruction and the curriculum highlights linguistic competence that incorporates both study skills and academic skills to prepare students for their departments. Assessments include several quizzes during the module and final exams at the end of each 8-week module. These assessments are aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the Global Scale of English (GSE) standards and are designed to evaluate overall language proficiency.

Participants

A total number of 68 participants from different levels of classes participated in this study from the English Preparatory Program. The participants were mostly young adults whose ages varied from 17 to 35. Their faculties included the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (16 participants), Faculty of Arts-Sciences (12 participants), Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (14 participants), Faculty of Fine Arts (10 participants), Faculty of Communication (9 participants), and Vocational School (7 participants). There were 29 male participants (43%) and 39 female participants (57%) in the study.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected using the Academic Motivation Scale (2012) by Karagüven and the Student Burnout Inventory (2011) by Çapri, Gündüz, and Gökçakan. Several factors guided the selection of these scales, including their robust theoretical foundation, validity, and reliability issues along with their particular relevance to the constructs investigated in this study: student burnout and academic motivation. Moreover, both scales are well-suited to the Turkish educational settings and helpful in examining how burnout and motivational dimensions interrelate in an online EFL context. The first part of the questionnaire was used to collect demographic information about the participants' gender, age, departments, and language level. The second part of the questionnaire included 25 statements with a 7-point Likert scale to measure academic motivation. The reliability of the academic motivation scale was measured with Cronbach alpha and the Cronbach Alpha value was obtained as .87. Confirmatory factor analysis technique was used to test its construct validity and expert opinion was taken for content validity. The scale has seven sub-scales including "intrinsic motivation, amotivation, introjected regulation and to accomplish, external regulation, and identified regulation." In the current study, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was .90. The last part of the questionnaire consisted of 13 statements with a 5-point Likert scale to measure student burnout. The reliability analysis was measured using Cronbach Alpha and The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be .76 for the first sub-factor, .82 for the second sub-factor, and .61 for the third sub-factor. In the current study, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be .79 for the first sub-factor, .74 for the second sub-factor, and .68 for the third sub-factor. The Confirmatory factor analysis technique was used to test its construct validity. After the Confirmatory factor analysis, three subscales emerged "exhaustion, depersonalization, and competence." In the scoring, three separate burnout scores are calculated for each person. High scores on the exhaustion and depersonalization subscales and low scores on the competence subscale indicate burnout.



Procedures for Data Collection

Prior to undertaking the investigation, ethical clearance was obtained from the publication ethics committee for social sciences and humanities, and consent from the participants was obtained to address ethical issues. Participants were ensured that their identities would be kept confidential and they could withdraw from the study whenever they wanted. As the researcher herself was an academic staff at the English preparatory school, she delivered the questionnaires online to the target groups and it took three weeks to collect the data. The online questionnaires were sent to nearly 500 students, and only 68 of them were returned from the participants. Two of the participants were excluded and the study was conducted with the remaining 66 participants.

Procedures for Data Analysis

Data management and analysis are performed using SPSS software (version 25). For the preliminary analysis, the test of normality was checked. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was conducted to determine whether the data from academic motivation and burnout was normally distributed. The findings indicated that the data for motivation and burnout were normally distributed ($p > .05$). The data are analyzed by descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, Kruskal Wallis Test, and correlations. Descriptive statistics are calculated for participants' gender and language computing frequencies and percentages. To investigate participants' academic and burnout levels, mean values are computed. In addition to this, Pearson Correlation analysis is performed to investigate whether there was any correlation among the reported statements by the participants. Although the data were normally distributed, instead of ANOVA, the Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted due to the low number of participants in each proficiency level. Finally, an independent samples t-test was administered to check burnout and academic motivation levels in terms of participants' gender.

FINDINGS

The Levels of Burnout and Academic Motivation

The first research question was concerned with the main aim of the current study. The following table presents the descriptive analysis of the participants' burnout and academic motivation levels.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of the participants' burnout and academic motivation

Scales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Academic motivation	5.15	.91
Exhaustion	3.03	.82
Depersonalization	3.42	.85
Competence	2.50	.74

Note. $N = 66$

Table 1 provides the results obtained from the descriptive analysis of the students' academic motivation and burnout levels. The findings obtained from the burnout level of the students demonstrated that students usually felt exhaustion ($M = 3.03$, $SD = .82$), they were often depersonalized ($M = 3.42$, $SD = .85$), and they did not feel competent enough ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .74$). It seems possible that the sudden shift to online education created highly challenging psychological challenges for students such as frustration, emotional detachment, and diminished-self efficacy. Factors including physical fatigue due to extended screen time, lack of face-to-face interaction, and the need for self-regulated learning might have aggravated these feelings. Despite these challenges, the findings indicated that the academic motivation level of the students was quite high ($M = 5.15$, $SD =$



.91). This surprising outcome could be attributed to the capacity for resilience and flexibility among students thanks to their ability to navigate online platforms and maintain their intrinsic motivation. However, the combination of high burnout and high motivation might demonstrate that the difficulties in online learning may have affected students' emotional well-being while they remained dedicated to their studies.

The Levels of Burnout and Academic Motivation Regarding Gender

The second research question in this study was addressed to examine whether EFL learners' burnout and academic motivation levels differ in terms of gender. The findings from the independent-sample t-test are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Independent-Samples t-test results of students' burnout and academic motivation levels in terms of gender

	Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> (66)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Academic motivation	Female	39	5.45	.74	3.44	.001	.84
	Male	27	4.72	.98			
Exhaustion	Female	39	2.88	.78	-1.83	.07	.44
	Male	27	3.24	.84			
Depersonalization	Female	39	3.20	.91	-2.80	.007	.67
	Male	27	3.74	.66			
Competence	Female	39	2.46	.68	-.40	.69	.09
	Male	27	2.53	.83			

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare academic motivation, exhaustion, depersonalization, and competence scores for male and female participants. The findings indicated that there was a significant difference in academic motivation scores for males ($M = 4.72$, $SD = .98$) and females ($M = 5.45$, $SD = .74$; $t(66) = 3.44$, $p = .001$). The magnitude of the differences in means has a large effect (eta squared = .84). The observed increase in academic motivation among females could be attributed to sociocultural factors that affect educational attitudes as female students tend to display greater effort and commitment in language learning contexts. Regarding burnout, there was not a significant difference in exhaustion scores for males ($M = 3.24$, $SD = .84$) and females ($M = 2.88$, $SD = .78$; $t(66) = -1.83$, $p = .07$). The effect size between the groups had a small effect (eta squared = .44). For depersonalization, there was a significant difference for male participants ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .66$) and female participants ($M = 3.20$, $SD = .91$; $t(66) = -2.80$, $p = .007$). The magnitude of the differences in means was moderate (eta squared = .67). Finally, there was not any significant difference in competence scores for males ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .83$) and females ($M = 2.46$, $SD = .68$; $t(66) = -.40$, $p = .69$). The effect size between the groups had a very small effect (eta squared = .09). In terms of burnout dimensions, this difference in depersonalization results might indicate that male students struggled more to sustain a sense of connection possibly due to the lack of in-person support and structured support provided in traditional classroom setting. On the contrary, the similarity between exhaustion and competence results might indicate that the overall emotional burden of adapting to online learning was experienced equally across genders.

The Levels of Burnout and Academic Motivation Regarding Language Proficiency

The third research question in this study sought to determine whether EFL learners' burnout and academic motivation levels differ in terms of language level. The findings from the Kruskal-Wallis test are shown in Table 3.



Table 3. Kruskal Wallis Test results of burnout and academic motivation in different language levels

	Level	<i>N</i>	Mean Rank	<i>df</i>	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Academic Motivation	A1	9	30.17	3	1.45	.70
	A2	20	37.28			
	B1	23	31.04			
	B2	14	34.30			
Exhaustion	A1	9	28.11	3	1.93	.59
	A2	20	32.28			
	B1	23	37.60			
	B2	14	32.00			
Depersonalization	A1	9	31.78	3	4.75	.20
	A2	20	26.35			
	B1	23	37.43			
	B2	14	38.36			
Competence	A1	9	34.44	3	.60	.90
	A2	20	30.90			
	B1	23	35.26			
	B2	14	33.71			

Kruskal-Wallis test findings on four language levels concerning academic motivation and burnout indicated that there were not any significant differences at the $p < .05$ level in academic motivation $\chi^2(3, N = 66) = 1.45, p = .70$, exhaustion $\chi^2(3, N = 66) = 1.93, p = .59$, depersonalization $\chi^2(3, N = 66) = 4.75, p = .20$, and competence $\chi^2(3, N = 66) = .60, p = .90$ for all language levels. This result may be due to the standardized format of the English preparatory program which ensured equal access to educational resources and support regardless of the language levels. The implementation of a consistent curriculum along with a modular assessment might have contributed to minimizing discrepancies and balancing the situation for students in their burnout and motivation experiences.

The Interplay between Burnout Dimensions and Academic Motivation

The last research question in this study was to examine whether there was a correlation between EFL learners' burnout and academic motivation levels using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The following correlation matrix shows the correlations among the variables of "academic motivation", "exhaustion", "depersonalization" and "competence".

Table 4. Correlations analysis of burnout and academic motivation levels

Variable	1	2	3
<i>Academic Motivation</i> (1)			
<i>Exhaustion</i> (2)	-.18		
<i>Depersonalization</i> (3)	-.06	.70(**)	
<i>Competence</i> (4)	-.09	.24	.24

Note. $N = 66$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$



It can be seen from the data in Table 5 that a positive high correlation was found between exhaustion and depersonalization $r(66) = .70, p < .001$. The correlation coefficient for the correlation between exhaustion and depersonalization explains 49% of the variance which indicates a moderate effect size. There is a weak correlation between exhaustion and depersonalization $r(66) = .24, p > .05$. Depersonalization and competence also indicated a weak correlation $r(66) = .24, p > .05$. It is interesting to note that no correlation was found between academic motivation and burnout subscales. A possible explanation for this might be that burnout might not have affected students' motivation directly within the specific context of the English preparatory program. A range of institutional factors including structured course delivery, timely assessments, and access to online resources may have diminished the negative impacts of burnout on motivation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, EFL students' academic motivation and burnout levels were examined in terms of gender and language level variables. When discussing the findings, it should be taken into consideration that this research covered the period of COVID-19 on academic motivation and burnout levels of students at the preparatory level. The findings indicate several important patterns that have contributed to our understanding of student experiences throughout emergency online learning in the EFL context.

With respect to the first research question, it was found that students usually experience exhaustion ($M = 3.03, SD = .82$), were often depersonalized ($M = 3.42, SD = .85$), and did not feel competent enough ($M = 2.50, SD = .74$). These findings suggest that students experience a high level of burnout during COVID-19. These results may emphasize the considerable mental burden that the transition to emergency online learning placed on students. The lack of in-person interaction, extended screen time, and the lack of self-directed learning might have played a role in these results. This finding is consistent with Gonzalez-Ramirez, Mulqueen, Zealand, Mulqueen, and BuShell (2021) who also found that students felt more burnout in emergency online learning during COVID-19. Further supporting these findings, He, Feng, and Ding (2024) indicated that online academic burnout reduced Chinese EFL learners' engagement during the pandemic, however, teacher emotional support mediated the effect of burnout. Contrary to expectations, the findings showed that students had a quite high level of academic motivation ($M = 5.15, SD = .91$) even if their burnout level was high. This discrepancy could be attributed to individuals who were competent users of technology but unable to cope with responsibilities related to their education. In a study conducted by Wang, Bu, Li, Sang and Li (2021), it was found that academic burnout was mediated by academic engagement to some extent whereas Cong, Yang, and Ergün's (2024) structural equation modeling analysis revealed academic self-efficacy and learning engagement acted as protective elements against burnout. These results further support the ideas of Özer and Badem (2022) who revealed how increased autonomy and accessible online resources contributed to sustaining motivation in online classes among Turkish EFL learners.

The second research question sought to determine whether gender issue plays a role in EFL learners' burnout and academic motivation levels. Accordingly, there was a significant difference in academic motivation scores for males ($M = 4.72, SD = .98$) and females ($M = 5.45, SD = .74; t(66) = 3.44, p = .001$). This finding is in line with that of Ünal & Alır (2014) who found a difference between male and female participants' motivation. However, this outcome is contrary to previous studies which suggested that male and female participants did not reveal a significant difference regarding academic motivation (Zaccoletti, Camacho, Correia, Aguiar, Mason, Alves & Daniel, 2020; Malinauskas & Pozeriene, 2020; Tang, Chen, Lav, Wu, Lav, Guan & Ho, 2021). The study conducted by Adiyaman and Demir (2021) during COVID-19 is helpful for contextualizing our findings, which suggested that female students displayed better adaptation and flexibility to remote learning environments than male students. Concerning burnout, different findings were sought in all sub-scales. For exhaustion, there was not a significant difference for males ($M = 3.24, SD = .84$) and females ($M = 2.88, SD = .78; t(66) = -1.83, p = .07$) whereas there was a significant difference in depersonalization



scores for male participants ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .66$) and female participants ($M = 3.20$, $SD = .91$; $t(66) = -2.80$, $p = .007$). Finally, competence scores for males ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .83$) and females ($M = 2.46$, $SD = .68$; $t(66) = -.40$, $p = .69$) did not reveal a significant difference. In a study conducted by Ertek, Özkan, Candansayar, and İlhan (2022), it was indicated that there were significant differences between male and female participants' burnout levels. However, several studies showed that gender did not reveal a significant difference in terms of gender (Bolatav, Seisembekov, Askarova, Baikonova, Smailove & Fabbro, 2021; Vu & Bosmans, 2021). The study conducted by Derakhshan, Eslami, Curle, and Zhaleh (2022) clarifies these two-fold findings, indicating that gender disparities in burnout might be mediated by communication preferences and methods of pursuing academic support. Taken into account the unique challenges faced by male and female students in online learning settings, these findings may illustrate the need for gender-sensitive approaches in instructional design.

With respect to the third research question, Kruskal-Wallis test findings on four language levels concerning academic motivation and burnout indicated that there were not any significant differences in academic motivation $\chi^2(3, N = 66) = 1.45$, $p = .70$, exhaustion $\chi^2(3, N = 66) = 1.93$, $p = .59$, depersonalization $\chi^2(3, N = 66) = 4.75$, $p = .20$, and competence $\chi^2(3, N = 66) = .60$, $p = .90$. A possible explanation for this result is that it might be due to accessibility to online classes and learning materials without limits during COVID-19. This outcome is contrary to that of Çapulcuoğlu and Gündüz (2001) who found that students who perceived their achievement levels as low experienced more depersonalization than students who perceived their achievement levels as medium and high; according to the competence subscale scores, students who perceived their achievement levels as high felt more competent than students who perceived their achievement levels as medium and low, respectively, and thus experienced less burnout. In another study conducted by Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2015), it was found that language achievement levels correlate significantly but negatively with burnout. Regarding the finding related to academic motivation, Chioma Jennifer (2021) showed that English language achievement and academic motivation for secondary school students had a very weak and negative correlation. These rather contradictory results might be explained by Li, Zhang, and Jiang (2021) who suggested that language learning strategies and technical competence may mediate the relationship between language proficiency and burnout.

Very little was found in the literature on the question of whether there was a correlation between EFL learners' burnout and academic motivation levels. In this study, there was no correlation between academic motivation and burnout levels. Therefore, it could be implied that students' academic motivation might not be affected by their burnout. However, the findings of the current study do not support the previous research. Karimi and Fallah reported that there was a negative strong correlation between EFL learners' intrinsic motivation and academic burnout components at $p < .05$ level. This finding was also reported by Pisarik (2009) who found that individuals with greater intrinsic motivation to attend college experience less exhaustion and cynicism, and are more likely to be professional and effective. Further, he revealed that amotivated individuals were more likely to experience exhaustion, cynicism, and a lower level of efficacy than motivated individuals. The discrepancy between the current study and previous works could be linked to specific conditions of emergency remote education during COVID-19, in which different factors such as teacher support and technological competence may have mediated the findings.

It is important to bear in mind that the results of this study should be interpreted within the wider context of Turkish higher education during COVID-19. The educational setting at foundation universities could offer various unique features that might have impacted the learning atmosphere. The institution's extensive technological infrastructure, established before the pandemic, might have enabled a fairly seamless shift to online education. The students were provided high-quality digital resources, including licensed language learning platforms and a user-friendly learning management system, which may have contributed to sustaining engagement despite their physical isolation. Moreover, the socioeconomic backgrounds of students at a foundation university might have played a critical role in shaping the educational process. The majority of the students possessed stable internet connections and personal devices appropriate for online education. This helped eliminate any technical obstacles that might have influenced motivation and participation in learning. The institution's student



support services, such as academic advising and psychological counseling, were still available online during the pandemic, which might have affected students' motivation and general well-being.

College students are challenged by numerous obstacles on their path to higher education. The ongoing demands of schoolwork, combined with the existence of stressors may result in detrimental outcomes such as burnout. To this end, this study provided an opportunity to investigate what impact college students had when they were forced to switch to another learning platform as a result of the pandemic. The results of this investigation showed that students experienced a high level of burnout and had quite high motivation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Turning to implications for practice, differentiated instruction, and social-emotional learning can be integrated into the teaching practice to support students. It is also beneficial to cultivate a supportive and collaborative classroom atmosphere in which students feel comfortable discussing their challenges and sharing learning experiences to help them build resilience and maintain motivation in the learning process. The psychological conditions of the students should be taken into consideration. For this purpose, the institutions could benefit from integrating support systems and might provide regular face-to-face or online counseling services. Regular access to counseling services, whether in person or online, could minimize feelings of burnout, enabling students to stay engaged and motivated in their academic life. The findings also highlight how crucial it is for the higher education system to keep up robust support networks and technology infrastructure. It might be beneficial for higher education institutions to allocate resources to strong digital learning systems that can enhance engaging language education experiences while reducing technical issues that could lead to burnout. This can be achieved by facilitating the use of online learning programs and making technical support readily available to both instructors and students.

There are several limitations of this study. The first one is its quantitative scope. This study was limited to 68 participants. Conducting a study with more participants might provide more comprehensible results and combining the quantitative findings with qualitative ones could provide in-depth perspectives to enrich quantitative findings. Another constraint was the burnout scale. The scale could be scored separately for each sub-scale. Developing another scale or finding a more appropriate one might help researchers get more accurate and reliable results. Moreover, this study investigated the academic motivation and burnout levels of EFL students with gender and language level variables. Additional variables and different student groups might provide more striking findings for future studies. Finally, this study took place at a foundation university. Comparing burnout and academic motivation levels among EFL learners across different educational contexts, such as public versus foundation universities might help identify the role of institutional factors.

Ethical Statement: This research has been conducted in compliance with the institutional regulations of Publication Ethics Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities, as outlined in the ethical permission document dated 21/05/2021.

REFERENCES

- Al-Samiri, R. A. (2021). English language teaching in Saudi Arabia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: Challenges and positive outcomes. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on COVID*, 19.
- Adıyaman, A., & Demir, Ç. (2021). The effect of stay at home days on the language learning motivation of foreign language students during the COVID-19 pandemic process. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (Ö9), 374-388.
- Aldossari, S., & Altalhab, S. (2022). Distance Learning during COVID-19: EFL Students' Engagement and Motivation from Teachers' Perspective. *English Language Teaching*, 15(7), 85-109.
- Andrade, D., Ribeiro, I. J., & Máté, O. (2023). Academic burnout among master and doctoral students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Scientific Reports*, 13(1), 4745.
- Balbay, S., & Erkan, G. (2021). Online language learning in times of crisis: Hindrance or opportunity?. *Journal of Educational Technology and Online Learning*, 4(3), 448-463.



- Baş, B. (2024). *Situation-specific motivational dispositions of EFL students and instructors in online teaching at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic* (Doctoral dissertation, Bilkent University).
- Bolatov, A. K., Seisembekov, T. Z., Askarova, A. Z., Baikanova, R. K., Smailova, D. S., & Fabbro, E. (2021). Online-learning due to COVID-19 improved mental health among medical students. *Medical science educator, 31*(1), 183-192.
- Bui, Q. T. T., Bui, T. D. C., & Nguyen, Q. N. (2022, June). Factors Contributing to English as a Foreign Language Learners' Academic Burnout: An Investigation Through the Lens of Cultural Historical Activity Theory. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 7, p. 911910). Frontiers Media SA.
- Chioma Jennifer, O. (2021). Academic motivation and self-esteem as correlates of academic achievement in English language among senior secondary school students in Imo State. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies, 21*(4), 35-43.
- Cong, Y., Yang, L., & Ergün, A. L. P. (2024). Exploring the relationship between burnout, learning engagement and academic self-efficacy among EFL learners: A structural equation modeling analysis. *Acta Psychologica, 248*, 104394.
- Çapri, B., Gündüz, B., & Gökçakan, Z. (2011). Maslach Tükenmişlik Envanteri-Öğrenci Formu'nun (MTE-ÖF) Türkçe'ye Uyarlaması: Geçerlik Ve Güvenirlilik Çalışması. *Cukurova University Faculty of Education Journal, 40*(1).
- Çapulcuoğlu, U., & Gündüz, B. (2013). Lise öğrencilerinde tükenmişliğin cinsiyet, sınıf düzeyi, okul türü ve algılanan akademik başarı değişkenlerine göre incelenmesi. *Trakya Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 3*(1), 12-24.
- David, A. (2010). Examining the relationship of personality and burnout in college students: The role of academic motivation. *Educational measurement and evaluation review, 1*, 90-104.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2013). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Derakhshan, A., Eslami, Z. R., Curle, S., & Zhaleh, K. (2022). Exploring the predictive role of teacher immediacy and stroke behaviors in English as a foreign language university students' academic burnout. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching, 12*(1), 87-115.
- Erarslan, A. (2021). English language teaching and learning during Covid-19: A global perspective on the first year. *Journal of Educational Technology and Online Learning, 4*(2), 349-367.
- Ertek, İ. E., Özkan, S., Candansayar, S., & İlhan, M. (2022). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of medical students. *Journal of Surgery and Medicine, 6*(2), 162-167.
- Ghanizadeh, A., & Jahedizadeh, S. (2015). De-motivators, burnout and language achievement in an Iranian EFL context. *Journal of Teaching Language Skills, 34*(3), 61-85.
- Golembiewski, R. F., Sun, B. C., Lin, C. H., & Boudreau, R. A. (1995). Burnout among Taiwanese police: A cross-cultural replication of the phase model. *Advances in International Comparative Management, 10*, 145-162
- Gonzalez-Ramirez, J., Mulqueen, K., Zealand, R., Silverstein, S., Mulqueen, C., & BuShell, S. (2021). Emergency online learning: college students' perceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. *College Student Journal, 55*(1), 29-46.
- He, L., Feng, L., & Ding, J. (2024). The Relationship between Perceived Teacher Emotional Support, Online Academic Burnout, Academic Self-Efficacy, and Online English Academic Engagement of Chinese EFL Learners. *Sustainability, 16*(13), 5542.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T., & Mercer, S. (2020). Language teachers' coping strategies during the Covid-19 conversion to online teaching: Correlations with stress, wellbeing and negative emotions. *System, 94*, 102352.
- Hartshorn, K. J., & McMurry, B. L. (2020). The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on ESL learners and TESOL practitioners in the United States. *International Journal of TESOL Studies, 2*(2), 140-156.
- Irgatoğlu, A., Sariçoban, A., Özcan, M., & Dağbaşı, G. (2022). Learner autonomy and learning strategy use before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sustainability, 14*(10), 6118.
- Jackson, S. E., Schwab, R. L., & Schuler, R. S. (1986). Toward an understanding of the burnout phenomenon. *Journal of applied psychology, 71*(4), 630.
- Juntunen, H., Tuominen, H., Viljaranta, J., Hirvonen, R., Toom, A., & Niemivirta, M. (2022). Feeling exhausted and isolated? The connections between university students' remote teaching and



- learning experiences, motivation, and psychological well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Educational Psychology*, 42(10), 1241-1262.
- Karagüven-Ünal, M. H. (2012). Akademik motivasyon ölçeğinin Türkçeye adaptasyonu. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Bilimleri*, 12(4), 2599-2620.
- Karimi, M. N., & Fallah, N. (2021). Academic burnout, shame, intrinsic motivation and teacher affective support among Iranian EFL learners: A structural equation modeling approach. *Current Psychology*, 40, 2026-2037.
- Kurt, A. (Ed.). (2023). *Perspectives on Digital Burnout in Second Language Acquisition*. IGI Global.
- Kutsal, D., & Bilge, F. (2012). Lise öğrencilerinin tükenmişlik ve sosyal destek düzeyleri. *Eğitim ve Bilim*, 37(164).
- Lee, I. (2021). The development of feedback literacy for writing teachers. *Tesol Quarterly*, 55(3), 1048-1059.
- Leiter, M. P., Maslach, C., & Frame, K. (2014). Burnout. *The encyclopedia of clinical psychology*, 1-7.
- Li, C., Zhang, L. J., & Jiang, G. (2024). Conceptualisation and measurement of foreign language learning burnout among Chinese EFL students. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 45(4), 906-920.
- Malinauskas, R. K., & Pozeriene, J. (2020). Academic motivation among traditional and online university students. *European journal of contemporary education*, 9(3), 584-591.
- Maslach, C. (1982). *Burnout: The cost of caring*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M.P. (1997). *The truth about burnout: How organizations cause personal stress and what to do about it*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass
- Meşe, E., & Sevilen, Ç. (2021). Factors influencing EFL students' motivation in online learning: A qualitative case study. *Journal of Educational Technology and Online Learning*, 4(1), 11-22.
- Mihai, M., Albert, C. N., Mihai, V. C., & Dumitras, D. E. (2022). Emotional and social engagement in the English language classroom for higher education students in the COVID-19 online context. *Sustainability*, 14(8), 4527.
- Mohammadi, S. D., Moslemi, Z., & Ghomi, M. (2021). The relationship between, academic motivation with academic burnout and academic achievement in students. *Development Strategies in Medical Education*, 8(2), 10-20.
- Ozer, O., & Badem, N. (2022). Student Motivation and Academic Achievement in Online EFL Classes at the Tertiary Level. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 15(1), 361-382.
- Pisarik, C. T. (2009). Motivational orientation and burnout among undergraduate college students. *College Student Journal*, 43(4), 1238-1253.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American psychologist*, 55(1), 68.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Martinez, I. M., Pinto, A. M., Salanova, M., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). Burnout and engagement in university students: A cross-national study. *Journal of cross-cultural psychology*, 33(5), 464-481.
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Taris, T. W. (2005) The conceptualization and measurement of burnout: common ground and worlds apart. *Work and Stress*, 19 (3), 256 62.
- Seis, Z. (2023). The challenge EFL teachers face in Turkey: Burnout. *Futurity Education*, 3(2), 227-250.
- Tang, Y. M., Chen, P. C., Law, K. M., Wu, C. H., Lau, Y. Y., Guan, J., & Ho, G. T. (2021). Comparative analysis of Student's live online learning readiness during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the higher education sector. *Computers & education*, 168, 104211.
- Trigueros, R., Padilla, A., Aguilar-Parra, J. M., Mercader, I., López-Liria, R., & Rocamora, P. (2020). The influence of transformational teacher leadership on academic motivation and resilience, burnout and academic performance. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(20), 7687.
- Tran, T. X., Vo, T. T. T., & Ho, C. (2023). From academic resilience to academic burnout among international university students during the post-COVID-19 new normal: An empirical study in Taiwan. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(3), 206.



- Vu, B. T., & Bosmans, G. (2021). Psychological impact of COVID-19 anxiety on learning burnout in Vietnamese students. *School Psychology International*, 42(5), 486-496.
- Wang, J., Bu, L., Li, Y., Song, J., & Li, N. (2021). The mediating effect of academic engagement between psychological capital and academic burnout among nursing students during the COVID-19 pandemic: A cross-sectional study. *Nurse Education Today*, 102, 104938.
- Yuvayapan, F., & Yükselir, C. (2021). Exploring EFL Teachers' Burnout Experiences in Online Learning. *Yabancı Dil Öğretimine Genel Bir Bakış V*, 75-84.
- Zaccoletti, S., Camacho, A., Correia, N., Aguiar, C., Mason, L., Alves, R. A., & Daniel, J. R. (2020). Parents' perceptions of student academic motivation during the COVID-19 lockdown: A cross-country comparison. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 592670.

