

Predictors of Job Burnout Among Secondary School Teachers in Kuala Muda District, Northern Malaysia

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Abstract

Teacher burnout has become an increasing concern within the Malaysian education sector, where heightened job demands continue to challenge teachers' psychological well-being and professional performance. Although previous studies have identified various determinants of burnout, limited evidence has examined the combined influence of job demands and job resources among Malaysian secondary school teachers using the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model. This study therefore investigated the effects of school leadership support, student behaviour, school performance, and workload on job burnout among secondary school teachers in Kuala Muda District, Kedah, Malaysia. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed, involving 135 teachers selected from secondary schools in the district. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyses. The findings revealed that workload was the strongest predictor of job burnout, while student behaviour also significantly predicted burnout after controlling for other variables. These findings highlight the dominant role of job demands, particularly workload, in explaining teacher burnout within the study context and provide empirical support for applying the JD-R model in Malaysian secondary schools. The study offers practical insights for school administrators and policymakers to prioritise workload management and develop evidence-informed strategies to safeguard teachers' well-being and sustain educational quality.

KEYWORDS

school leadership, students' behaviour, school performance, workload, job burnout.

Introduction

Teacher burnout has become a major occupational health concern worldwide, with serious implications for teachers' well-being, instructional quality, and the long-term sustainability of education systems. Defined as a psychological syndrome resulting from prolonged exposure to chronic work-related stress, burnout is characterised by three interrelated dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation (or cynicism), and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 2003). Among helping professions, teaching is particularly vulnerable to burnout because it requires continuous cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal engagement while simultaneously managing instructional, administrative, and organisational responsibilities. These demands have intensified considerably in recent years, making teacher burnout an increasingly important issue for education policymakers and researchers alike. Evidence from international studies demonstrates that teacher burnout has reached concerning levels across diverse educational contexts. A recent meta-analysis by Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. (2023), which synthesised findings from multiple countries, reported an overall burnout prevalence of approximately 52% among teachers, highlighting that burnout is a widespread occupational phenomenon rather than an issue confined to a specific education system. In the United States, national surveys have similarly shown that nearly 44% of K–12 teachers frequently experience burnout, with excessive workload identified as one of the primary contributing factors (Berkey, 2024). These findings suggest that increasing workload, accountability pressures, and changing educational expectations continue to

place substantial psychological demands on teachers globally.

The challenges have become even more pronounced following the COVID-19 pandemic. The rapid transition to online and hybrid teaching required teachers to redesign instructional approaches, acquire new technological competencies, and adapt to constantly evolving educational policies, often with limited institutional support. These changes substantially increased teachers' workload, emotional demands, and psychological distress, resulting in higher levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion (Cheptea et al., 2021). Although schools have resumed face-to-face teaching, many of these additional responsibilities have remained, creating a more demanding working environment than before the pandemic. Within this broader context, secondary school teachers represent a particularly vulnerable group. Compared with primary school teachers, they face greater instructional complexity, higher academic accountability, examination-oriented performance expectations, and the challenge of managing adolescents with diverse behavioural, emotional, and developmental needs. These responsibilities require sustained emotional regulation, classroom management, and performance monitoring, all of which increase the likelihood of chronic occupational stress and eventual burnout. Consequently, understanding the determinants of burnout among secondary school teachers has become increasingly important for maintaining both teacher well-being and educational quality.

The Malaysian education system reflects many of these global challenges. Recent evidence indicates that occupational stress and burnout among Malaysian teachers have increased substantially over the past decade. A survey conducted by Universiti Putra Malaysia reported that 71.1% of teachers experienced work-related stress, while data from the Ministry of Education showed that 4.4% of more than 48,000 teachers experienced high levels of psychological stress (Thomas et al., 2024). Beyond workload, Malaysian teachers are expected to fulfil numerous administrative responsibilities, implement continuous educational reforms, meet key performance indicators, and respond to increasing expectations from parents, school administrators, and policymakers. These cumulative demands have contributed to growing concerns regarding teacher well-being and workforce sustainability. The consequences of teacher burnout are becoming increasingly visible in Malaysia. Reports from the National Union of the Teaching Profession indicate that approximately 10,000 teachers apply for early retirement annually, with more than 6,000 applications approved in 2023, where burnout and job dissatisfaction were identified among the contributing factors (Astro Awani, 2024). Earlier evidence also showed that almost half of Malaysian teachers reported requiring temporary breaks from teaching because of work-related stress (Che Ani et al., 2023). These trends highlight that teacher burnout is no longer merely an individual psychological issue but has become a systemic concern with important implications for teacher retention, educational continuity, and student outcomes.

The present study is grounded in the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Kassim et al., 2025), which provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for explaining how workplace characteristics influence employee well-being. The model proposes that burnout develops when job demands consistently exceed the resources available to employees. Within the context of this study, workload, student behaviour, and school performance pressure represent job demands that require sustained physical, cognitive, and emotional effort, whereas school leadership support represents an important job resource that may help teachers cope with these demands. Examining these variables within a single theoretical framework enables

a more comprehensive understanding of how different organisational factors jointly influence teacher burnout.

Although teacher burnout has received considerable scholarly attention in Malaysia, several important gaps remain. Existing studies have generally focused on individual determinants of burnout or specific occupational factors, with relatively limited attention given to the simultaneous influence of multiple job demands and job resources within a single analytical model, particularly among secondary school teachers in the post-pandemic context. Furthermore, empirical evidence from district-level settings remains limited, despite the likelihood that organisational environments and contextual factors differ across educational regions. Addressing these gaps is important for developing interventions that are theoretically grounded and contextually relevant to Malaysian schools. Accordingly, this study investigates the influence of school leadership support, student behaviour, school performance, and workload on job burnout among secondary school teachers in Kuala Muda District, Kedah, Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022). By applying the JD–R model to examine the combined effects of multiple job demands and job resources, this study contributes to the growing literature on teacher burnout in three ways. First, it extends the application of the JD–R model within the Malaysian secondary education context. Second, it provides empirical evidence on the relative importance of different organisational predictors of teacher burnout. Finally, the findings offer practical insights for school leaders and policymakers in designing evidence-based strategies to reduce burnout, strengthen teacher well-being, and support the long-term sustainability of the teaching profession.

Literature Review

Underlying Theory: The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model provides a widely accepted theoretical framework for explaining employee burnout across occupational settings (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The model proposes that every occupation comprises two broad categories of work characteristics: job demands, which require sustained physical or psychological effort and may lead to strain, and job resources, which help employees achieve work goals, reduce job demands, and promote well-being and work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In the teaching profession, excessive workload, challenging student behaviour, and increasing performance expectations constitute important job demands that can contribute to burnout, whereas supportive school leadership represents a key job resource that helps teachers cope with these demands (Kristensen et al., 2024). According to the JD–R model, burnout occurs when job demands consistently exceed the available job resources, resulting in prolonged occupational stress and emotional exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Drawing on this theoretical perspective, the present study conceptualises workload, student behaviour, and school performance as job demands, while school leadership support is conceptualised as a job resource. The JD–R model therefore provides an appropriate framework for examining how these workplace factors influence job burnout among secondary school teachers.

Job Burnout Among Teachers

Job burnout among teachers has emerged as a significant occupational problem caused by prolonged exposure to uncontrolled stress. Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a declining sense of personal achievement are features of burnout that affect teachers' psychological state and professionalism (Bedir, 2023). In numerous cases, teachers who have reported burnout complain of diminished motivation, job dissatisfaction, poor teacher-student relationships, and increased desire to quit the profession. Burnout is a

progressive condition in which symptoms develop from long-term exposure to stressors, rather than from short-term events. Teacher burnout has been a prominent academic and policy issue in Malaysia because it affects educational achievement and labour sustainability. Teachers often face problems such as too much work, student misbehaviour, excessive expectations from parents and society, and limited institutional support. All these factors increase the risk of burnout, especially among female teachers, who make up the majority of the teaching force (Norhisham et al., 2021). According to regional research, the prevalence of burnout in Southeast Asia is alarming, and Malaysia shows burnout-related symptoms in over 50% of working adults (Abdul Aziz & Ong, 2024). Online learning, the need to adjust rapidly, the necessity of working in a digital environment, and heightened administrative requirements further increased stress levels among teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The emotional and cognitive load worsened burnout symptoms, particularly emotional exhaustion. Malaysian teachers have also been complaining that they are beginning to feel emotionally and physically fatigued, frustrated, withdrawn at work, less committed to their profession, and less effective due to prolonged occupational stress. Continuous mismatches between job requirements and resources, such as the lack of clarity in role expectations and professional support, are also causes of burnout (Amzat et al., 2021). The need to further explore the causes of teacher burnout in Malaysian schools is evident in connection with these issues.

Determinants of Job Burnout Among Teachers

Teacher burnout is influenced by a combination of organisational, social, and environmental factors that contribute to emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment. Guided by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and supported by previous empirical studies, this study focuses on four key determinants of teacher burnout in the Malaysian context: school leadership support, student behaviour, school performance, and workload. These factors represent important aspects of teachers' work environment that shape their daily experiences and psychological well-being. School leadership support has consistently been recognised as an important factor in reducing teacher burnout. Teachers who receive guidance, emotional support, recognition, and constructive feedback from school leaders are better equipped to cope with work-related demands and remain motivated. Supportive leadership also fosters a positive organisational climate characterised by trust, collaboration, and professional autonomy (Leithwood et al., 2020). In contrast, ineffective leadership may increase teachers' vulnerability to burnout by limiting organisational support, failing to manage workloads effectively, and reducing teachers' confidence and professional efficacy (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Burnout symptoms are likely to intensify when school leaders fail to address disciplinary issues or provide adequate support in managing teachers' responsibilities.

Student behaviour is another important determinant of teacher burnout. Disruptive behaviours such as absenteeism, defiance, lack of engagement, and classroom misconduct place considerable emotional and psychological demands on teachers. Managing persistent behavioural problems requires continuous emotional regulation and often leads to frustration and professional strain (Amzat et al., 2021). Teachers who frequently encounter behavioural difficulties tend to report higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation. These challenges may be further aggravated by limited parental involvement and inadequate administrative intervention. Previous research also suggests that repeated exposure to student misbehaviour creates a

cycle in which increased teacher stress contributes to poorer classroom management, further reinforcing burnout over time (Amzat et al., 2021). School performance expectations also contribute to teacher burnout. Teachers are expected to achieve institutional performance targets, comply with curriculum requirements, and improve students' academic outcomes. Such expectations intensify work demands and increase occupational stress. While teachers in high-performing schools experience pressure to maintain excellent results, those in lower-performing schools face equally demanding expectations to improve academic performance despite limited resources. These circumstances may reduce teachers' professional autonomy and contribute to emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction (Aydin et al., 2019; Pietarinen et al., 2013). Nevertheless, positive school climates characterised by collaborative relationships, participative decision-making, and supportive organisational cultures have been shown to alleviate occupational stress and buffer the effects of burnout (Md Shah et al., 2024).

Among the various determinants, workload has consistently been identified as one of the strongest predictors of teacher burnout. Beyond classroom teaching, teachers are responsible for lesson planning, assessment, administrative reporting, co-curricular activities, and numerous additional responsibilities. Excessive workload limits opportunities for recovery, professional reflection, and work-life balance, thereby contributing directly to emotional exhaustion, the core dimension of burnout (Md Shah et al., 2024). Teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy may experience even greater psychological strain when confronted with demanding workloads (Dung et al., 2024). In organisational environments characterised by limited resources, inefficient management practices, and unrealistic expectations, excessive workload further increases teachers' susceptibility to burnout (Md Shah et al., 2024). The analysis above provides the foundation for the following hypotheses:

- H1: Support from school leadership significantly predicts job burnout among secondary school teachers.
- H2: Student behaviour significantly predicts job burnout among secondary school teachers.
- H3: School performance significantly predicts job burnout among secondary school teachers.
- H4: Workload significantly predicts job burnout among secondary school teachers.

Methods

Research Type

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological orientation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). This design was selected because the study aimed to explore the lived experiences, meaning-making processes, and psychological dynamics of wives who experienced depression in the context of domestic violence. Rather than measuring depressive symptoms only as clinical indicators, the study sought to understand how participants interpreted repeated violence, loss of self-worth, helplessness, and loss of hope within their marital relationships.

The study used a phenomenologically oriented thematic analysis. This means that the analysis focused on participants' lived experiences and the meanings attached to those experiences, while also using systematic thematic procedures to organize significant statements, meaning units, categories, and themes. Beck (1976) cognitive theory, as described in the Introduction, was used as an interpretive framework during analysis. It helped explain how repeated violent experiences were internalized into negative views of the self, the environment, and the future, without replacing the phenomenological orientation of the study.

Population and Sample/Informants

The informants in this study were wives who had experienced domestic violence and showed depressive symptoms relevant to the focus of the study. Three informants were selected using purposive sampling because they met the predetermined inclusion criteria and were able to provide rich, detailed, and relevant narratives regarding the lived experience of depression in abusive marital relationships (Etikan et al., 2016).

The inclusion criteria were: (1) women with the status of wife, (2) having experienced physical, psychological, sexual, or economic violence in the household, (3) having experienced violence for at least two years, (4) being between 25 and 50 years of age, and (5) showing depressive symptoms identified through initial interviews and psychological screening. The exclusion criteria were women who were unwilling to participate voluntarily, unable to provide informed consent, or unable to continue the interview process because of emotional distress or safety concerns.

The use of three informants was considered adequate for this phenomenologically oriented qualitative study because the study did not aim for statistical generalization, but for an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences. The adequacy of the sample was assessed using the principle of information power, in which a smaller number of participants may be sufficient when the study aim is specific, the sample is highly relevant to the phenomenon, the interviews produce rich narratives, and the analysis is conducted in depth (Malterud et al., 2016). In this study, the three informants represented different durations and dynamics of domestic violence: SS experienced violence from the beginning of marriage, RN experienced long-term psychological and economic violence, and YN experienced chronic psychological violence for more than two decades. These variations provided sufficient depth and contrast for intracase and cross-case analysis.

Recruitment was conducted carefully by first identifying potential informants who met the study criteria and were willing to participate voluntarily. Before the interviews, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality procedures, and the participants' right to withdraw at any time. Only women who agreed to participate and met the inclusion criteria were included as informants.

Depressive symptoms were identified using an initial screening guide adapted from the DSM-IV-TR criteria for a major depressive episode (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Kumar, 2013). The screening indicators included depressed mood, loss of interest, sleep disturbance, fatigue or loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, difficulty concentrating, hopelessness, and self-blame. In this study, the screening procedure was used only to determine participant eligibility and to ensure that the participants' experiences were relevant to the research focus. It was not intended to establish a formal clinical diagnosis or to replace a comprehensive psychological or psychiatric assessment by a licensed mental health professional.

Research Location

The study was conducted within the social contexts of participants who had experienced domestic violence. The specific research locations and participants' personal identities were anonymized to maintain confidentiality, safety, and anonymity because the research topic is sensitive and relates to experiences of domestic violence.

Instrumentation or Tools

The primary research instrument was the researcher, supported by a semi-structured interview guide, observation sheets, field notes, an interview recording device, and a depressive-symptom screening guide adapted from the DSM-

IV-TR and used only for participant eligibility screening. The interview guide was used to explore experiences of violence, emotional responses, depressive symptoms, social support, reasons for remaining in the relationship, and the meaning of violent experiences for the participants.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observation. Initial interviews were conducted to ensure that participants met the study criteria and to identify depressive symptoms. Subsequently, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' subjective experiences. All interviews were conducted in Indonesian, and participant quotations were translated into English for manuscript preparation while preserving the original meaning, emotional tone, and contextual nuances of the participants' narratives. During the interview process, the researcher observed affective expressions, body language, tone of voice, emotional responses, crying, pauses in speech, and signs of psychological distress. Source triangulation was conducted through significant others, such as close family members or close friends who knew the participants' conditions. Member checking was conducted by presenting summaries of interview results and initial interpretations to the participants to ensure that the meanings of their experiences had been accurately represented.

Researcher Reflexivity and Bracketing

Because this study involved sensitive narratives of domestic violence and depressive symptoms, researcher reflexivity was applied to minimize interpretive bias during data collection and analysis (Palinkas et al., 2015). The researcher recognized that personal assumptions, sympathy toward participants, and prior understanding of domestic violence could influence the interpretation of participants' narratives. Therefore, the researcher attempted to bracket these assumptions by focusing on participants' own words, emotional expressions, and contextual meanings rather than imposing predetermined interpretations on the data.

During the interview process, the researcher used open-ended questions and avoided leading questions that could direct participants toward particular answers. Field notes were used to record not only participants' verbal responses but also relevant contextual information, emotional expressions, pauses, crying, and non-verbal reactions observed during the interviews. These notes helped the researcher distinguish between participants' actual narratives and the researcher's initial impressions.

During analysis, reflexivity was strengthened through repeated reading of transcripts, comparison between interview data and field notes, source triangulation with significant others, and member checking with participants. Initial interpretations and emerging themes were reviewed carefully to ensure that they remained grounded in participants' lived experiences. This reflexive process helped reduce researcher bias and supported a more transparent interpretation of how domestic violence was experienced, internalized, and expressed as depressive meaning by the participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using phenomenologically oriented thematic analysis. The analysis began with verbatim transcription of all interview data. The transcripts were read repeatedly to obtain a holistic understanding of each participant's experience and to become familiar with the emotional tone, context, and meaning of the narratives. During this stage, the researcher also reviewed field notes, affective expressions, pauses, crying, and other non-verbal responses recorded during the interviews as contextual data.

The next stage involved identifying significant statements related to experiences of domestic violence, emotional responses, depressive symptoms, self-blame, helplessness, economic dependence, social support, and loss of hope. These significant statements were then formulated into meaning units. Similar meaning units were grouped into broader categories, such as psychological violence, loss of self-worth, depressive symptoms, limited social support, reasons for remaining in the relationship, and hopelessness about the future.

After the categories were developed, the researcher clustered them into central themes that represented the shared meanings of participants' experiences. The analysis then proceeded through intracase analysis to understand the psychological dynamics of each participant, followed by cross-case analysis to identify similarities and differences across the three participants. Through this process, the study synthesized the essential meaning of depression among wives experiencing domestic violence as a gradual psychological process shaped by repeated violence, internalized self-blame, erosion of self-worth, helplessness, and loss of hope.

Beck (1976) cognitive theory was used during the interpretive stage to deepen the analysis of how participants' narratives reflected the negative cognitive triad. Statements related to self-blame and feelings of inferiority were interpreted as negative views of the self; experiences of emotional neglect, control, and limited support were interpreted as negative views of the environment; and expressions of hopelessness were interpreted as negative views of the future. To strengthen trustworthiness, the coding and theme-development process was supported by repeated transcript review, source triangulation, method triangulation, member checking, and documentation of analytic decisions, consistent with principles of rigorous thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017).

Ethical Approval

This study did not report a formal institutional ethical approval number. Nevertheless, because the study involved a sensitive topic concerning domestic violence and depressive symptoms, ethical safeguards were applied throughout the research process to minimize potential harm to participants. Before data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the interview procedures, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality protection, anonymization of identity, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequence. Informed consent was obtained before the interviews were conducted.

To protect participants' privacy and safety, interviews were conducted only when participants felt sufficiently safe and emotionally ready to share their experiences. Identifying information, including names, specific locations, and other personal details that could reveal participants' identities, was removed from the manuscript. Participants were identified using subject codes, and all interview data, transcripts, and field notes were stored securely and used only for research purposes.

Considering that recalling experiences of domestic violence may cause emotional discomfort, the researcher monitored participants' emotional responses during the interviews. Participants were allowed to pause, skip questions, or stop the interview whenever they felt uncomfortable. When signs of distress appeared, the interview was slowed down or temporarily stopped to prioritize participants' psychological well-being. Participants were also encouraged to seek support from trusted family members, close friends, mental health professionals, or relevant community support services if they needed further assistance after the interview.

These ethical safeguards were implemented to protect participants' dignity, confidentiality, safety, and psychological well-being during and after the research process.

Result and Discussion

Demographic profile

Out of 135 respondents, the majority are female ($n = 87$, 64.4%), while male respondents account for 35.6% ($n = 48$). In terms of age group, most respondents are aged 46–50 years ($n = 25$, 18.5%), followed by those above 50 years ($n = 22$, 16.3%) and 31–35 years ($n = 19$, 14.1%). Regarding educational background, most respondents hold a bachelor's degree ($n = 116$, 85.9%). In terms of school location, the largest proportion of respondents is from urban schools ($n = 58$, 43.0%), followed by semi-urban schools ($n = 48$, 35.6%) and rural schools ($n = 29$, 21.5%). Furthermore, most respondents are married ($n = 88$, 65.2%). In terms of teaching experience, the majority have more than 20 years of experience ($n = 37$, 27.4%). Lastly, most respondents teach 10–15 hours per week ($n = 35$, 25.9%) and spend 5–10 hours per week on administrative duties ($n = 50$, 37.0%) (see Table 1).

Mean Analysis

The level of job burnout and its contributing factors can be interpreted based on three mean score ranges: 1.00–2.50 (low), 2.51–3.50 (medium), and 3.51–5.00 (high). Table 4 shows that the respondents' level of job burnout is high ($\bar{x} = 3.708$), indicating that teachers generally experience considerable burnout in their work. In terms of contributing factors, Student behaviour recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.52$), followed by school performance ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.55$), school leadership support ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.79$), and workload ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.81$). Similarly, school performance shows a high mean score ($\bar{x} = 4.134$), indicating strong pressure related to academic performance expectations. Meanwhile, support from school leadership is high ($\bar{x} = 3.977$), indicating that respondents generally perceive adequate support from their school administrators. Lastly, workload is also found to be at a high level ($\bar{x} = 3.904$), indicating that teachers perceive their workload as heavy and demanding.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables. Job burnout recorded a mean score of 3.71 ($SD = 0.87$), indicating a relatively high level of burnout among the respondents. School leadership support ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.79$), student behaviour ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.52$), school performance ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.55$), and workload ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.81$) also recorded high mean scores.

Table 3 illustrates the descriptive statistics analysis for each statement measuring the dependent variable, job burnout. Based on the results, the highest mean value was 4.24 for the statement "I feel tired at the end of my working day." This was followed by the statement "I feel tired every time I wake up in the morning and go to another working day," which recorded the second-highest mean value of 4.21. The statement "I feel like I have reached the limit of my abilities" reported a mean value of 3.76, while the statement "I feel stressed when working directly with people" recorded a mean of 3.73. In addition, the statement "my work leaves me mentally drained" showed a mean value of 3.72. Furthermore, the statement "working with people all day requires a lot of effort" recorded a mean value of 3.68, followed by "I feel like I am working too much," which had a mean score of 3.57. The statement "I feel frustrated with my work" reported a mean value of 3.27, while "I feel emotionally exhausted from work" recorded a mean value of 3.19. Overall, the mean values for job burnout statements ranged from 3.19 to 4.24, indicating a

Table 1. Demographic Profiles

	Profile	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
Age group	Below 25 years old	20	14.8
	25 to 30 years old	15	11.1
	31to 35 years old	19	14.1
	36 to 40 years old	17	12.6
	41 to 45 years old	17	12.6
	46 to 50 years old	25	18.5
	More than 50 years old	22	16.3
Gender	Male	48	35.6
	Female	87	64.4
Highest Level of Education	Diploma	4	3.0
	Bachelor's degree	116	85.9
	Master's degree	13	9.6
	Doctorate	2	1.5
School location	Urban	58	43.0
	Semi - Urban	48	35.6
	Rural	29	21.5
Marital Status	Single	47	34.8
	Married	88	65.2
Years of Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years	25	18.5
	5 to 10 years	30	22.2
	11 to 15 years	23	17.0
	16 to 20 years	20	14.8
	More than 20 years	37	27.4
	Less than 10 hours /	24	17.8
Teaching hours per week	10 to 15 hours	35	25.9
	16 to 20 hours	25	18.5
	21 to 25 hours	15	11.1
	25 to 30 hours	24	17.8
	More than 30 hours	12	8.9
	Less than 5 hours	25	18.5
Administrative hours per week	5 to 10 hours	50	37.0
	11 to 15 hours	29	21.5
	16 to 20 hours	22	16.3
	More than 20 hours	9	6.7

moderate to high level of job burnout among the respondents.

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation analysis examining the bivariate relationships between the study variables and job burnout. All four variables were significantly associated with job burnout. School leadership support ($r = 0.326$, $p < 0.001$) and school performance ($r = 0.305$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrated moderate positive correlations with job burnout, while student behaviour showed a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.206$, $p = 0.017$). Workload demonstrated the strongest bivariate association with job burnout ($r = 0.866$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that each variable was significantly related to job burnout when examined independently. As Pearson correlation does not account for the simultaneous effects of other variables, multiple regression analysis was subsequently conducted to determine the unique predictive contribution of each variable and to evaluate the study hypotheses.

Table 5 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis examining the unique predictive contributions of school leadership support, student behaviour, school performance, and workload to job burnout. The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 81.23$, $p < 0.001$) and explained 77.1% of the variance in job burnout ($R^2 = 0.771$). Workload emerged as the strongest significant predictor ($\beta = 0.867$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H4. Student behaviour was also a significant predictor ($\beta = -0.171$, $p = 0.004$), supporting H2, although the negative coefficient indicates that its unique relationship with burnout differed in direction from its positive bivariate correlation. In contrast, school leadership support ($\beta = 0.058$, $p = 0.337$) and school performance ($\beta = 0.121$, $p = 0.103$) did not make statistically

significant unique contributions to job burnout after the other predictors were included in the model. Therefore, H1 and H3 were not supported.

This study examined the influence of school leadership support, student behaviour, school performance, and workload on job burnout among secondary school teachers in Kuala Muda District, Kedah. Overall, respondents reported a relatively high level of job burnout, reflecting the increasing administrative, instructional, technological, and emotional demands experienced by teachers, particularly in the post-pandemic educational environment (Munusamy et al., 2024; Thomas et al., 2024). This finding is consistent with previous studies reporting substantial emotional exhaustion and occupational strain among teachers facing increasing job demands (Abdul Aziz & Ong, 2024; Amzat et al., 2021). Among the variables examined, workload emerged as the strongest predictor of job burnout. Its very strong bivariate correlation with burnout was maintained in the regression model, where workload remained the dominant predictor after the other variables were considered simultaneously. Teachers are required to manage classroom instruction alongside administrative duties, assessment, lesson preparation, and co-curricular responsibilities, creating substantial physical and psychological demands. This finding is consistent with previous studies identifying excessive workload as an important contributor to teacher burnout (Saraih et al., 2024). From the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) perspective, workload represents a substantial job demand that may progressively deplete teachers' physical and psychological resources (Che Ani et al., 2023; Md Shah et al., 2024).

Student behaviour was significantly and positively

Table 2. Mean value

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Job burnout	135	1.44	5.00	3.7078	.86916
Support from School Leadership	135	1.13	5.00	3.9769	.79060
Student Behavior	135	1.88	5.00	4.3454	.52352
School Performance	135	2.38	5.00	4.1343	.55222
Workload	135	1.00	5.00	3.9037	.80977

Table 3. Job Burnout

Statements	N	Mean
I feel tired at the end of my working day.	135	4.24
I feel like I have reached the limit of my abilities.	135	3.76
I feel emotionally exhausted from work.	135	3.19
I feel frustrated with my work.	135	3.27
I feel stressed when working directly with people.	135	3.73
My work leaves me mentally drained.	135	3.72
I feel like I am working too much.	135	3.57
I feel tired every time I wake up in the morning and go to another working day.	135	4.21
Working with people all day requires a lot of effort.	135	3.68

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Analysis between the Study Variables and Job Burnout

Relationship	r	p-value
School leadership support → Job burnout	0.326	< 0.001
Student behaviour → Job burnout	0.206	0.017
School performance → Job burnout	0.305	< 0.001
Workload → Job burnout	0.866	< 0.001

Table 5. Multiple regression analysis

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t-value	P-value	Hypotheses decision
Support from school leadership	0.064	0.058	0.964	0.337	H1 Not Supported
Student Behavior	-0.283	-0.171	-2.928	0.004	H2 Supported
School Performance	0.191	0.121	1.644	0.103	H3 Not Supported
Workload	0.930	0.867	19.245	< 0.001	H4 Supported
$R^2 = 0.771$					
$F\text{-value} = 81.23$					
$P\text{-value} < 0.001$					

associated with job burnout at the bivariate level, consistent with previous research identifying classroom misconduct, in attentiveness, and disciplinary problems as important interpersonal demands faced by teachers (Amzat et al., 2021; Iqbal & Zahoor, 2024). However, when the four predictors were considered simultaneously, student behaviour remained statistically significant, but its regression coefficient became negative. This change in direction indicates that its unique association with burnout differs from its simple bivariate relationship once the shared variance with the other predictors

is taken into account. Given the particularly strong contribution of workload in the regression model, the negative coefficient should not be interpreted as evidence that problematic student behaviour protects teachers from burnout. Rather, the finding may reflect shared variance among the predictors, particularly given the strong association between workload and burnout. As the present analysis does not establish the statistical mechanism underlying this sign reversal, the result should be interpreted cautiously and examined further in future research. School leadership support and school performance also demonstrated significant positive bivariate associations with job burnout. However, neither variable remained a significant predictor after workload, student behaviour, and the other variables were considered simultaneously. This suggests that although leadership support and school performance are associated with burnout when examined independently, they did not explain substantial unique variance in burnout within

the multivariable model. For school leadership support, this finding differs from previous studies suggesting that supportive leadership functions as an important job resource that promotes teacher well-being (Lamas, 2016) Zin et al., 2023). Similarly, although performance expectations have been associated with occupational stress and reduced teacher autonomy (Aydin et al., 2019; Pietarinen et al., 2013), school performance did not independently predict burnout in the present regression model. One plausible explanation is that the variance associated with these factors overlaps with the stronger influence of workload and other work demands.

These findings are partially consistent with the JD-R model. Workload clearly emerged as the principal job demand associated with burnout, while student behaviour also demonstrated a significant unique association (Kline, 2023). However, school performance did not independently predict burnout, and school leadership support did not demonstrate the expected unique protective contribution after the other variables were controlled. These findings suggest that the relative importance of job demands and resources may vary when workplace factors are examined simultaneously (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Practically, the results highlight workload management and classroom behavioural support as particularly important areas for schools seeking to strengthen teacher well-being.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationships between school leadership support, student behaviour, school performance, workload, and job burnout among secondary school teachers in Kuala Muda District, Kedah. At the bivariate level, all four variables were significantly associated with job burnout, with workload demonstrating the strongest positive relationship. However, the multiple regression analysis provided a more differentiated picture. Workload emerged as the strongest significant predictor of job burnout, while student behaviour also significantly predicted burnout but showed an unexpected negative coefficient after the other predictors were controlled. School leadership support and school performance did not independently predict job burnout in the final regression model. Accordingly, H2 and H4 were supported, whereas H1 and H3 were not supported. The findings highlight workload as the most prominent factor associated with teacher burnout within the study context and suggest that workload management and support for classroom behavioural challenges should receive particular attention. Nevertheless, the unexpected direction of the student behaviour coefficient warrants cautious interpretation and further investigation. The findings are also limited by the use of purposive sampling, a cross-sectional design, and respondents from a single district; therefore, causal conclusions cannot be drawn, and the findings should not be generalised beyond the study context. Future studies should employ larger and more diverse samples across

different regions of Malaysia and further examine the interplay among workload, student behaviour, school leadership support, and school performance in explaining teacher burnout.

Author contributions

Author 1 was responsible for conceptualisation, literature review, data collection, formal analysis, and drafting of the original manuscript. Author 2 contributed to data collection, data analysis, manuscript preparation, and editing. Author 3 supervised the overall research process, refined the methodology, critically reviewed the manuscript for intellectual content, and approved the final version for publication. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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